



Dull Boy

Sarah Cross

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What do you do if you can deadlift a car, and you spend your nights flying to get away from it all?

If you're fifteen-year-old Avery Pirzwick, you keep that information to yourself. When you're a former jock turned freak, you can't afford to let the secret slip. But then Avery makes some friends who are as extraordinary as he is. He realizes they're more than just freaks, together, maybe they have a chance to be heroes. First, though, they have to decide whether to trust the mysterious Cherchette, a powerful wouldbe mentor whose remarkable generosity may come at a terrible price.

Dull Boy Details

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From Reader Review Dull Boy for online ebook

Cecilia says

Dull Boy is definitely an superhero origins story, and I have to admit that I typically find such stories a little boring. Throw me in the middle of some action-packed battle between world domination and salvation, and I am a happy camper! If there is a sequel, I hope to see less emphasis on backstory and more on how these teenaged superheroes find their place in the world!

There are actually 5+ superpowered teenagers in Dull Boy with Avery being the main focus. There are some really interesting superpowers including the "sticky" power where you might stick like glue to anything and everything. As an origins story, Dull Boy is also a story about these teenagers becoming friends and helping each other find a way to use their powers for good, even if it seems impossible to do so.

An interesting idea, but I am not sure if Dull Boy delivers as expected. While enjoyable, I did not fall in love with the characters or feel that I got a good sense of who they are. Only glimpses into their natures, but nothing solid in my mind. I like that there are 5 "main" characters, but not enough time was devoted to them except maybe Avery.

[More complete review here](#)

Alea says

Dull Boy was awesome, hilarious and pretty geektastic! I really liked the main character Avery, I usually prefer books in a female voice just because it's easier for me to relate to, but Avery was just a cool guy with a good heart. I really liked him, and he was pretty funny! I really liked the abbreviated swear words he used or thought, stuff like "What the F". That kind of stuff is just perfect to me!

And of course Avery isn't the only character. I loved all his new friends from Darla the super brain that has all sorts of crazy gadgets and a giant robot(!) to Nicholas the tortured boy with a power he can't control to Sophie who always seemed to be in a good mood and Catherine who is also hiding a secret... they all had something to offer to the story!

I never decided in my mind if Cherchette (crazy awesome name) the mysterious lady with powers of her own would end up to be good or bad and just let the story unfold in front of me. I really liked what I learned about her and from her, she informs us of about some background of where the kids got their powers that some authors might leave out but I'm so glad that Cross included, I'm all about the details!

Another thing I really liked was that throughout the book there are case files about each of the kids and their powers. I liked having that to refer to instead of just knowing what the story told us. All in all a fun and action packed book that seems to definitely set itself up for a sequel, can't wait to see what happens next!

Marye says

Avery is the guy of my dreams! Seriously, here's this kid that doesn't fit in, even with his friends. Because of his unique abilities he ends up finding the most wonderful group of true friends, which is almost unheard of in high school. I have never been a super hero kind of gal, but I was, and am, rooting for Avery! I'm looking forward to seeing what Avery can do in the future!

Magda says

A bit silly. This may have worked better as a graphic novel.

Bayla says

Buzzwords: Superheroes, male pov, friends, science fiction, secrets, misfits, good vs. evil but also shades of gray, coming of age

Avery has superpowers. He's not sure how he got them, but he wants to use them for good - and keep them secret, so he doesn't end up dissected in a lab somewhere. But when he finds others like himself, things may be about to change...

I picked this book up because I read and loved Sarah Cross' *Kill Me Softly*, and was not disappointed. I loved Avery's voice, and I really enjoyed how the superhero trying to save the world story became mostly about fitting in, about secrets, about friendship, and about trust and responsibility. Highly recommended for fans of superhero stories, but also stories about fitting in and finding your place in the world.

Sepideh Sahebsara says

yes

Alex says

For the most part, *Dull Boy* takes fun tone to the whole superhero idea. Avery loves his powers sometimes - he can fly and he's super strong. But with all that, it's hard to control himself. He wants to become a hero, not just a boy with powers. Hence, him being relegated to a school for dangerous kids after trying to stop a bank robbery and failing.

At the school, and at a coffeehouse he frequents, he meets new friends. His old friends abandoned him for the most part, as Avery was constantly trying to find someone to help. (Think *Incredibles*.) With his new friends, they form a team of superheroes, trying to fight crime together. They laugh, they have fun, they fight and have the usual teen angst... and they beat baddies. Awesome right?

A lot of the book is made up of amusing ideas for the team to be heroes. There's also that Cherchette who's trying to recruit some of them... But there's also some real life issues: friendship, helping others, and believing in yourself to be good.

The climax is this huge action explosion that had me reading until late at night. The Cherchette plotline gets huge and there's lots of really interesting revelations. The ending is very open, and makes me wonder if there will be a sequel... one can only hope.

Final Impressions: Superhero fans rejoice. Sarah Cross delivers an excellent novel of teenagers just trying to fit in and be friends, but while saving to save others and each other. It's not uber-epic bad, where the kids are saving the world, but a lighter and sweeter tone. Just my cuppa tea.

Trike says

I'm giving this one 2 stars only because I can't do 1.5 stars. This is a book where the idea is better than the execution. The exchanges between the teenagers don't feel natural at all, which really makes the forward momentum clunky. Some people may say that's a silly thing to get hung up on, considering this is a story about kids with superpowers, but it's important to get smaller things right in order for the reader to buy in the big stuff.

That said, the idea of kids discovering they have superpowers has been done quite often, but Cross does give it a slight wrinkle. Unfortunately, she doesn't explore it fully enough so it feels undeveloped. It seems to me the motivation of the major antagonist is a rich vein to mine, but she seemed to shy away from it. Perhaps she's saving it up for the sequel.

The book is better for younger kids, probably 12-13 or so, but there are a few moments where characters say things like "WTF," which is probably not something most parents want their kids knowing.

Karin says

Avery lives for the darkness. Not for any deviant reason, but because he is less likely to be seen when he is flying around town. You see, Avery isn't like other kids. He has super strength and can fly. Since these powers developed, his life has totally changed. His normal friends are pulling further and further away because he is spending less time with them. Avery's friends are upset that he quit the had to quit the wrestling team, but he really didn't have a choice. His strength was too hard to control during practices and the matches.

By trying to be a good guy and save the day by using his powers for good, Avery sends his parents over the edge. They are already forking over a lot of money for his other unintentional damages and feels he is out of control. So, his parents decide to send him to a special school for troubled kids.

On his first day, Avery meets a strange girl. She ends up shedding a lot of light on the world for him. He discovers that he isn't the only one with special abilities and finds himself becoming a part of another

“family.” One that understands him and his desire to help the world and not just waste his powers on frivolous thrills and ways to get into the spotlight. But, in any superhero story, there has to be an evil mastermind. In **DULL BOY** that evil mastermind is Cherchette and she wants to gather all the kids with super powers together. Why you might ask? You’ll have to read **DULL BOY** to find out.

DULL BOY has it all – humor, friendship, family issues, a little romance, super powers. What more could you ask for? As a reader, I completely fell in love with Avery. Sarah Cross leaves the reader completely satisfied even though it is clear there will be a sequel. Visit Sarah’s site for cool info and fun xtras.

Yamile Méndez says

Very funny story. Avery is a normal boy who one day realizes he has super powers. I loved seeing how his character evolves as he tries to deal with having super powers, finding friends, and hiding his secret from his parents.

I won this book at a contest at Aprilynne Pike's blog, and I'm so happy I discovered this new author. The ending is wide open for a sequel, and I'll read Avery's future adventures when they come out.

Alexis W says

I really liked it. It was super funny. Nicholas absorbing Cherchette didn't really surprise me, but I didn't think about it really. But that his vortex transports instead of destroys, that was a surprise. But this just makes me think there would be a sequel. Why else would she leave it on that kind of cliffhanger? I'd read a sequel.

Rebecca Jacobson says

The book “Dull Boy” by Sarah Cross starts off in a picturesque suburban town, just like any other. The main character Avery Pirzwick is just trying to be a dull average boy, but he is actually quite unordinary. In fact he has superpowers, the strength of a hundred men, the speed of a cheetah, the flight of superman, and the need to help anyone in trouble. I know what you’re thinking why should I read “Dull Boy” there is nothing in common between me and Avery. Have you ever felt misunderstood, troubled, lost within yourself then I implore you to read this book, for you will feel such a strong attachment to the main character and relate to him immensely. Avery finally figures out how to cope with his powers when he meets other teens in his predicament. Later in the story we see the main conflict arise, Cherchette the antagonist, comes into the picture, she offers refuge and control of their powers, but as usual the teens discover that she has malicious ulterior motives.

Overall the buildup was quite climactic and Sarah Cross does a great job with building up the action and keeping the reader on their toes. This book was really great but I would not suggest it if you enjoy non-fiction. “Dull Boy” is filled with superheroes and is extremely fantastical and adventurous, which correlates directly with fictional writing. This is why if you are someone who enjoys serious reads than I urge you to not read this book. This work of fiction teaches a few very important lessons, such as choosing between right and wrong, and accepting one’s differences. The themes explored in “Dull Boy” are not only relevant to adolescents, as the reader experiences through the protagonist’s point of view, but also in adulthood, as standing up for those who cannot defend themselves is a virtue that both adults and children should strive to embody.

TheBookSmugglers says

Full Review Link

Avery is your average fifteen-year old boy. Average grades, average friends, average looks. Except Avery is hiding a decidedly UN-average secret: he actually possesses superstrength and the ability to fly. The previous year, Avery saved a baby from being crushed by a car in a superhuman feat that others chalked up to adrenaline but in actuality was the unleashing of his Superman-like powers. Since then, he's been struggling to keep his powers secret (for fear of being relegated to a government laboratory for the rest of his days) and maintaining his average – dull, if you will – image. But it's hard to keep something so extraordinary under wraps, especially when you're a teen and want to explore the extent of your strange new talents – and Avery's friendships and relationships with his parents suffer as a consequence (getting pranked into waiting for a surprise party in a public coffee house while wearing pokemon decorations is no fun; neither is having to deal with the guilt of denting household appliances after dropping the washer and drier while juggling them).

But then, something even more extraordinary happens to Avery, who thinks he's seen it all...he discovers that he's not alone.

Under the leadership of a truly bizarre girl genius named Darla, Avery joins a hodgepodge team of heroes – including a pretty artsy gal with gecko-like powers named Sophie, a troubled walking vortex named Nicholas, and the reluctant, but totally awesome and eerily feline Catherine. Together, these five teens decide to put their powers towards the greater good, embarking on rescue missions and thwarting small time crooks. Of course, things are never so simple in the world of superheroes – and where there's a hero, there's almost always a villain. Enter the beautiful ice queen Cherchette, her frosty son Jacques, and Cherchette's shapeshifter sidekick Leilani. Cherchette contacts the teens, asking them to come away with her, promising to teach them how to control their powers – but Avery isn't sure. Darla's convinced that she's up to no good, but for the troubled Nicholas with his significant and destructive powers, Cherchette seems like the only real way he can control his powers.

Then, there's the question of why Avery and his friends have powers in the first place, and just how they received them. Together, the teens must uncover the mystery of their origins and whether or not to trust the mysterious Cherchette...

Dull Boy is one fantastic little book, and probably one of the best-kept secrets in blogland. It's a classic superhero origins story with a geeky twist; involving cool superpowers, wicked inventions like killer robots (in my opinion, there's a shocking dearth of killer robots books these days, and it's wonderful to see Ms. Cross bringing them back), and most importantly, wonderful characters. While Dull Boy is pretty standard fare so far as plotting is concerned, the characters are all-out fabulous and make this a book easily worth the hardcover price tag.

Narrated entirely in the first person present tense by so-called “dull boy” Avery, the voice is one of the greatest strengths of the novel. As regular readers of this blog know, I'm extremely discriminating when it comes to the dreaded first person present tense – it's a style that is extremely difficult to pull off, most often resulting in some lame-o Captain Kirk style cheese. But in Dull Boy, Avery's narration is pretty damn near flawless. As a hero (literally!), Avery is awesome – he's got this fantastic, hilarious internal monologue with

a fun sense of humor that truly delights. For example, of his first encounter with Darla:

Anyway: so the open-mike thing starts, and the first person to bound up there is the geek-goth-punk-circus girl. Seriously, I don't know what she's supposed to be. Tack on a pirate patch and it might start to make sense.

No, it wouldn't. [...]

Hmm. Maybe I judged this girl too harshly. I cross my arms over my chest, nod my tentative approval. This might be awesome. I hope it's about Optimus Prime.

She reads, complete with dramatic pauses and Shakespearean gestures[...] WTF kind of poem was that? That was horrible! It's worse than the limericks I wrote for our poetry unit in seventh grade. Plus, the whole time she was reading it, she kept looking at the angry floor-sweeping girl with these "meaningful" glances.

Wait – was that a lesbian crush poem?

LOVE Avery. But even more than Avery with his wonderful inner monologuing, there are the female characters in Dull Boy that steal the freaking show. First, there's Darla (said geek-goth-punk-circus-pirate girl, above). She's a RIOT. A genius with an impressive IQ but the social skills of a toddler, Darla is the brains of this Teen Titans style operation. She's the Xavier to their X-Men, the Oracle to their Birds of Prey, the Morpheus to their Matrix, the Splinter to their Ninja Turtles. Well, she's all of these things as well as being one brilliant, opinionated, hot-headed and completely hilarious chick. I loved her from first sight – from her brilliance with mad-scientist style inventions (boomerang bombs and awesome robots), contrasted sharply with her own sense of awkwardness and a deep-seated desire to belong.

Then, there's my favorite character in the whole book – the Selina Kyle-esque Catherine (minus the suavity & gorgeous looks part). With her super sharp claws, her messy brown hair, her feline sense of agility, speed and balance, Catherine is a Catwoman for the younger generation. Like any cat, Avery and Darla have to really work to get her trust and attention as she basically just wants to be left alone. She's fiesty, standoffish, and totally not interested in a thing Darla has to say to her...but this is part of Catherine's charm. Catherine too guards a secret and tries to keep people away in a manner resembling a defense mechanism – but when we finally learn her particular story, it's a moving thing.

The other three main characters are similarly well-drawn. There's Sophie (whom Avery has a crush on), with her less-spectacular powers of stickiness. Though she's of no interest to Cherchette (she's only interested in more impressive powers), Sophie is a strong female character in a way separate from Darla's brilliance and Catherine's take-it-or-leave-it attitude; she's milder mannered, softer, and more understanding of others. It's Sophie that brings Jacques into the team because of her ability to trust and accept. Her manga-drawing, Hello Kitty loving side just adds to her charm. Then, there's the tortured Nicholas – whose particular brand of uncontrollable superpowers can mean complete destruction to anyone unfortunate enough to be near him. I really felt for Nicholas reading this book – from his military father's gruff expectations, to his fear of harming everyone around him. He's very Rogue (of the X-Men), and I mean this in the best way. Finally, rounding out the team, there's Jacques – with lesser powers than his mother and completely ambiguous in his initial motivations and intentions to Avery. Jacques is a character that we learn about in layers; initially he seems untrustworthy, but by the conclusion of the novel, we finally know where he stands. It's expertly written by Ms. Cross, and I enjoyed the uncertainty of the character.

Speaking of uncertainty, what's a superhero book without a nefarious villain? Well, in Dull Boy, things

aren't quite so dichotic. Cherchette of the questionable intentions and likely villain isn't so simply "good" or "evil" – like the best comic books, she's a layered character with her own convictions from a troubled past, and the revelation of her backstory is expertly done. It's an impressive feat, and Ms. Cross handles her characters with aplomb.

While *Dull Boy* isn't particularly groundbreaking or deep, it's a well written book, and so far as I can tell a hidden gem with massive crossover appeal. Young adults and adults alike can appreciate this superb story, and I'm already eagerly anticipating the sequel. In a world where so many whiney or wishy-washy heroines seem to prevail in teen literature – ahem! *Twilight* – *Dull Boy* is an exhilarating breath of fresh air. THIS is a book I want my ten year old sister to read, with complicated but unique heroines that don't rely on love interests to define them.

Absolutely positively recommended for all readers.

Verdict: With a plot that zips along faster than a speeding bullet, characters more powerful than a locomotive, and a narrative ability to leap tall buildings in a single bound, *Dull Boy* completely delights from start to finish. Absolutely recommended.

Rating: 8 Excellent

Bridget says

I know, I know. I can hear you saying, dude! What is up with all these high star YA reviews lately? Have you just given up on adult life and decided everything you read is awesome because your brain is broken now?

First of all, my brain is NOT broken and I have not given up on being a grown up (...mostly). Second of all, have you *read* these YA books I've been rating? They are AWESOME. I don't know. This is the year of great books or something. Maybe just my year of great books? Whatever.

Reasons why you should read *Dull Boy* next weekend instead of going to see the new Transformers movie*.

1. *Dull Boy* is about teen kids with weirdo super powers. Transformers 2 (or whatever it's called) is about a teen kid who is emo because he has to help save the world, like, again. GEEZ. Super powers will always win over emo whining. ALWAYS.
2. In *Dull Boy*, Girl Character 1 tells Girl Character 2 that her cornea should just take one for the team. In Transformers 2, Sam is whiny because dueling robots aren't supposed to be his problem for, lo, he is in college now and too cool for these shenanigans, and then no one slaps him upside his stupid head. People telling other people to suck it up is way more gratifying than robots just letting their human friends complain that life is hard. Like, be assertive robots! You're made of metal! Don't let some punk kid sass you!
3. *Dull Boy* has a girl character wearing a homemade Marie Curie gangsta shirt. Scientists are, indeed, gangsta. Transformers 2 has Megan Fox in short shorts. Marie Curie and her radiation are bad ass. Megan Fox's shorts are not. Although, she does have pretty awesome legs, so maybe this one's a tie?
4. *Dull Boy* is witty and funny and sometimes completely absurd. Transformers 2 will probably only be one of those things. (Note: if Transformers 2 is witty I will eat my hat. Or I would, if I were wearing a hat. Which

I'm not.)

See? Four reasons to spend the 12 bucks you would have used to go to the movies on a nice shiny copy of *Dull Boy* instead. There are probably more, but I need to go sell something on ebay now so that I will have enough money to buy my copy of *Dull Boy* and also see *Transformers 2*. I have a weakness for shiny robots that complements my yen for superheroes. Such is the burden of being me.

What? Four is not an aesthetically pleasing number? You want five reasons? Fine. Avery is a much cooler name than Sam. There. That's five. Are you happy now?

Good. My work here is done.

*all assumptions about said *Transformers* movie are from a single viewing of the trailer in the theatre, but whatever. I am sure I'm right. So there.

Elisheva Rina says

What I really like most is the narrative tone. It's sarcastic. The introspection is a little much, though. Overall, I think the plot is weak. You do find out how Avery and his friends got their superpowers in the first place, but if I would tell you, it would be a spoiler. Avery is pretty well-developed, but the other characters are kind of boring. Actually, Avery makes a lot of stupid choices and doesn't realize a lot of obvious things when they are happening. And one of the girls isn't supposed to have a superpower...but there is a scene that insinuates she does, where she seems to produce electricity? Am I just not understanding the story? This book should be the first in a series, but it isn't. And I'm annoyed because the ending is so abrupt.

Sean Martin says

I really wanted to like this one, and it was ok, but overall felt a bit thrown together. Character motivations didn't feel well thought out and the action went too fast in places while dragging in others.

Dana says

So what do you when you have amazing powers? Do you protect yourself from Bullies, save yourself from public humiliation along with your friends or are you gonna whine about it and do stupid things?

Apparently... The "hero" on this book is the third option. The protagonist Avery flies every night for some superpower action and (surprise!) finds nothing. Then accidentally meets three weird people and finds out they're like him. Because he had the idea to save someone, he gets in trouble with the cops and gets sent to reform school. The robbery was surprisingly a plot by a Cruella DeVille impersonator to go Pro.)fessor X on him. She wants him to join and train him etc etc. In school he meets a badass chick with an even badass mood swings. Oh, BTW she's like catwoman with clawlike nails. Who Avery claims that "He'll look after

her and keep an eye on her." But guess what, she ends up being the one saving his ass. He also does more stupid things by going to the principal saying things like I got in trouble because I was imagining I'm Wolverine. And did I mention his friend is a bossy psychopath who thinks everything is about her. (strangle self.)

okay that's half the book. I can't tell you the other half because I'm dying of boredom/cliche-edness or I'm dead asleep. Also, it's ok. If you like superhero novels then this is it. But I'm telling you the only character in the whole book who seems real is Sophie. So read at your own risk.

Laura Scott says

I would have given it a four star but i didn't really like the language sometimes.

Mark Freeman says

Dull Boy by Sarah Cross

Description provided by Amazon.com.

What do you do if you can deadlift a car, and you spend your nights flying to get away from it all? If you're fifteen-year-old Avery Pirzwick, you keep that information to yourself. When you're a former jock turned freak, you can't afford to let the secret slip.

But then Avery makes some friends who are as extraordinary as he is. He realizes they're more than just freaks—together, maybe they have a chance to be heroes. First, though, they have to decide whether to trust the mysterious Cherchette, a powerful wouldbe mentor whose remarkable generosity may come at a terrible price.

I have to admit, I'm a geek, so when I first saw this book I had an inkling I would like it. Superheroes, in any context or medium, usually are a safe bet with me. I was a comic fiend through my middle and high school years, and even though I spend WAY less on them now-a-days it doesn't mean I'm any less drawn to them. The fact that comics have become so mainstream is a good thing in my opinion. Don't get me wrong, I don't love every movie being made – and some just make me sad, but when they nail it with the likes of Dark Knight, Ironman, and the Watchmen, I get just as excited as my twelve year self did while reading X-men the day it hit the newsstand. So, in short, I like superhero-ish things. Movies. Comics. Graphic novels. And now, novels.

But let me get back to Dull Boy and my reason for writing this review. Dull Boy joins the burgeoning new sub-genre within sci-fi/fantasy of the sueprhero novel. Yeah, graphic novels have been around for a couple decades now, and novelizations of some comics and movies have been done before, but books like the Fortress of Solitude by Jonathan Lethem or Soon I Will Be Invincible by Austin Grossman have been few and far between. In a sense, I think, it's a challenge for these authors to attempt to write a superhero book without that visual component we've associated with the genre for so long. Cartoons, comics, movies have always drawn the characters and action for us, so when authors like Cross, Grossman, or Lethem put their work out there, they're doing it with a handicap, I think.

Cross doesn't let us down, though. Her book is one part teen angst and three parts hero action. Her team of young heroes are well written and likeable. She captures the awkwardness of adolescence nicely while adding the extra burden of superpower-freakishness believably and well. Think Catcher in the Rye meets the Teen Titans or New Mutants.

It is quick and fast paced, and captures the traditions and charisma of comics from a decade or two ago. If you like the Incredibles or even Dr. Horrible and His Sing Along Blog, I think you'll find yourself enjoying *Dull Boy*.

The only thing I can find fault with, and it's by no means a deal breaker, is the title. I just don't think it captures the book, characters, or story well. I think, and forgive me for this, it's dull.

The story wraps up well, and does open itself up for a sequel, which I hope is forthcoming shortly. I enjoyed this novel very much and think if you're a fan of comics or the superhero genre you'll like this book.

Lauren says

A remix of the X-Men, *Dull Boy* tells the story of a teenage boy trying to hide his superpowers before discovering he's not alone. The book starts strong but rapidly flags. Given the cliffhanger and the lack of a plan for a sequel, this one's a pass (even without getting into its other problems). Not recommended.
