



The Rise of the Dorkasaurus

Alan Sitomer

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Maureen, a thirteen-year-old self-proclaimed dork-a-saurus, is totally addicted to cupcakes and hot dogs and thinks that her body looks like a baked potato. Allergy-plagued Alice can't touch a mango without breaking out in a rash, and if she eats wheat, her vision goes blurry. Klutzy to the extreme, Barbara is a beanpole who often embarrasses herself in front of the whole school. These outcasts don't have much in common--other than the fact that they are often targets of the ThreePees: the Pretty, Popular, Perfect girls who rule the school. But one day Maureen discovers that the ThreePees are planning to sit next to Allergy Alice in the cafeteria and eat peanut-butter-and-banana sandwiches on whole wheat toast with mango marmalade for lunch. And Maureen decides that it's time to topple the eight-grade social regime. She joins forces with Alice and Barbara and the Nerd Girls enter the school talent show, determined to take the crown from the ThreePees. Will their routine be enough to de-throne the popular crowd? Or will their plan backfire and shake their hold on the bottom rung of the social ladder?

The Rise of the Dorkasaurus Details

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From Reader Review The Rise of the Dorkasaurus for online ebook

Mary Z says

Maureen doesn't have friends, and after an embarrassing video is unleashed on Youtube, she doesn't even have hope, but when she becomes loosely associated with two other losers, things begin to change.

The best thing about this book is the well-developed characters. The author doesn't rely on stereotypes, she creates real, three dimensional girls who aren't perfect, but are a lot of fun.

Maureen has a great sense of humor and talks with a sarcastic and dry wit that is a refreshing change of pace from the overly simplistic dialogue in cheap pre-teen lit. This book is a thoroughly enjoyable read, and middle school girls will love it.

Alanna (The Flashlight Reader) says

Am I allowed to say how much I LOVED this book? It was hysterical. Seriously. I snorted many a time while reading. I have to admit that I am a big fan of Alan Sitomer's books. I've read them all. Although he doesn't typically write books that I can relate to personally, my students adore his writing. They really hit home for teens in urban environments. Homeboyz, Hoopster, Hip Hop High School, and The Secret Story of Sonia Rodriguez are geared towards older teen readers (high school); but, Nerd Girls is perfect for middle school students! I have found the perfect read aloud book for my class next year. It's funny enough to keep their attention, and a perfect segue into some "harder" more traditional readings. You know you have to suck the kids in!

Don't read this book if you're looking for deep, complex characters. It's not here. I'll admit that Maureen, aka "Mo," does undergo a transformation throughout the novel. She's highly cynical and out right sarcastic (and I love it) for the majority of the book. By spending time with the other "nerd girls" and social outcasts of the 8th grade, she starts to develop real friendships. During this time her self image changes and she realizes that she has something to offer the world, even if she is the subject of an embarrassing top video on YouTube. Another great character is Allergy Alice. She undergoes a transformation throughout the book as well. Now, mind you that Allergy Alice is an absolute hot mess. She's practically allergic to air and everything else she comes in contact with. Her friendship with Beanpole Barbara and Maureen give her confidence and help her to cope with her fears. It's a really nice story of friendship perfect for middle school students.

If you're like me and you tend to be over the top sarcastic, this book is perfect for you. You'll enjoy the witty narrator and the other characters. It is so tongue-in-cheek (but in a middle school friendly way) that I can't wait to read it again. My students are going to die laughing, I just know it! I even bought two hardback (full price mind you) copies today! One for myself and one for my BFF that is teaching 7th grade with me next year. I'm making her read this to her students as well. As a matter of fact, I'm going to call her around 7 a.m. tomorrow morning to tell her that.

Lisa Schensted says

in a sentence or so: three nerdish eight grade girls form an alliance in an attempt to take the highly coveted talent show victory from the popular girls. along the way, they make many discoveries about one another and become true friends.

Maureen, Alice, and Barbara each have their own unique brand of nerd. Maureen's body type is best described as a baked potato and she becomes a youtube sensation when the popular girls record her acting like a complete loon in defense of previously unknown Alice. Alice, who is at the root of Maureen's total humiliation, is allergic to anything and everything. constantly sucking on an inhaler is not exactly breaking down any social barriers for Alice. with Barbara, she's skinny as a rail and clutzy to the extreme. consistently tripping over her own feet, she spends more time saying "no, no, i'm okay!" than breathing.

quite without knowing it...or even wanting it... Maureen finds herself paired up with Allergy Alice and Beanpole Barbara at lunch. apparently, they are friends now, which Maureen finds humiliating. i mean, sure, she's the fat one...but she's not as bad as they are, right? regardless, they stick to her like glue and she's starting to get used to it. maybe, though she would never admit this to either of them, even likes having them around.

the girls bond over putting together a talent show routine to end all talent show routines in hopes of taking the coveted victory away from the Three-Pees. they are so named because they are Pretty, Popular, and Perfect. they are also awful. they constantly find ways to put down the Nerd Girls and generally make everyone else's life a living hell. what better way for the Nerd Girls to get revenge than to take away the one thing the Three-Pees want the most - the eighth grade talent show trophy?

the girls discover more about each other, and themselves, as they put together their routine. they learn about each other's families and that everyone has a reason for who they are, for good or for bad. they find out that they really do need each other and come to rely on each other though all the crap the Three-Pees throw at them. they don't think they can change the world for nerd girls everywhere...but they can find the confidence to live their lives the way they want to and be happy while doing so.

Maureen, the narrator, is a snarky little thing and i loved her. her own inner torment kept her authentic and vulnerable to the reader, which helped connect me to the story and the other characters. while i realize that an eight grade talent show is small potatoes, to them it was important. that's something for all of us to remember - especially those of us who spend time with young people. just because it isn't important to you, doesn't mean it isn't important to them.

for a surprisingly deep, funny, and heartwarming middle-grade read about three dorky girls trying to make it the only way they know how, give this one a shot.

fave quote: "I'm not just un-cool; I'm anti-cool. I mean, I even know how to properly use a semicolon in a sentence. What could be more pathetic than that?" (9 | 230 Nook)

fix er up: some of the phrases were already dated, or will be soon. but, perhaps that adds to the allure of the nerdishness.

L_manning says

When I first started reading this, I thought I was going to hate it. The beginning really turned me off. I'm glad I stuck with it however, as there were a lot of really good things about it. I'll start with what I didn't like first. The main character, Maureen, was not that sympathetic. I understand self-deprecation, but Maureen was a little too harsh on herself and everyone else she saw. Also, she didn't really read like a female character. It really did come across as a guy trying his best to get into the head of a tween girl, and it just didn't quite succeed for me.

I loved the general story though. Trying to get back at the mean girls is probably not the best motivation in the world, but it worked well in how it gave the Nerd Girls a chance to form true bonds of friendship. I liked that the ending wasn't completely resolved, but it still made me feel good about what happened. I think the idea of acceptance of people no matter their quirks is very important, and I think it was handled really well in this book.

Overall, I ended up enjoying the book a lot. That surprised me when I considered how I felt in the beginning. I think that girls will really enjoy the "girl power" in this book, and hopefully it can help them feel better about loving themselves as they are. So over all, I give this book the thumbs up.

Galley provided by publisher for review.

Glenda says

Get ready to relive middle school while enjoying a riotous romp with the self-proclaimed Nerd Girls, three teens who don't fit into the middle school social sphere. They're what "The Geeks Shall Inherit the Earth" calls cafeteria fringe. Q suffers from allergies that glue her to her inhaler as though it's an extra appendage; Maureen is "shaped like a potato," the result of her convenience store diet of stale cupcakes; and Beanpole is a complete klutz who trips over air (I can relate). Once they join forces, nothing can stop them, and in their quest to win the schools talent show, they learn some valuable lessons about their families, their teachers, their crushes, and themselves and the power of friendship.

Alan does play into stereotypes, but his use of hyperbole, paradoxically, gives the characters a cartoonish feel while also investing them with humanity. The three nerds aren't flat, and I love Maureen's dry wit and sarcastic middle school tone.

More importantly, "Nerd Girls" takes on an important school issue with humor: How do students and teachers handle bullying? Sometimes we need some levity in the midst of a crisis, and teens will find themselves drawn to "Nerd Girls" for its humor and compassion.

Cyndi says

An adorable YA book. Three young outcast girls group together to compete in a talent contest instead of the mean girls who usually win. Its an excellent story of friendship and self discovery. ?

Molly Jo says

I thought so much of this book was absolutely adorable! I was seriously laughing out loud at parts when I was reading. I kept waking my dog up. Let me tell you, not much will make you feel as guilty as the sleepy eyes of a dachshund.

Maureen is floating through middle school on her own. Both her best friends have moved away and she's not the type to make friends easily. The bane of her existence are the ThreePees, the three most popular girls in school, who are also the biggest jerks on the planet. In deciding to defend Allergy Alice, Maureen ends up humiliating herself in front of the entire cafeteria, which happens to include the cutest guy in her grade. Earning the respect of Allergy Alice and Beanpole Barbara wasn't exactly what Maureen had in mind, but together they decide to take down the ThreePees reign and beat them in the talent show.

I will admit that reading Nerd Girls was slightly painful at times since middle school in general was painful for me. Revisiting those days was definitely not my favorite part of the experience. Maureen defines herself as looking like a potato, and I was always a little overweight at that age. As painful as it was, had I read this when I was 11, I would probably have been able to relate to the characters. Especially Barbara, because I'm such a klutz!

Maureen starts out as something of a jerk. I wasn't sure I was going to like her character at all when I started reading. She's downright rude to Alice and Barbara, which really kind of pissed me off. She saw in the things she was trying to ignore in herself. Maureen sees herself as being above the other girls in some ways, and it's almost like she deigns to associate with them. The girls come closer together over their common enemy and bonds form that Maureen never expected. Maureen learns not only the true meaning of friendship, but how her family comes together to support her when she least expected it.

The writing was absolutely hilarious! I would love to read more by Alan Lawrence Sitomer, especially if there are more about the Nerd Girls. I think this book would be great for any girls in middle school. It addresses the awkwardness that comes with that phase of growing up, and even touches on the fact that the cute boys aren't always the smartest, or best for you. Even though Maureen starts out as something of a jerkface, her transformation is quality. I didn't feel like anything was far-fetched, either. It was pretty much the same hell that my middle school experience was, only the popular girls were a little nicer to me. I think they thought my reading was cute.

Beth G. says

I have a 3.73 grade point average and my body looks like a baked potato. My eyes are brown, my hair is brown, and sometimes when I snack on too many fig bars and run real fast in PE, I end up with brown streaks in my underpants, too. I'm not just un-cool; I'm anti-cool. I mean, I even know how to properly use a semicolon in a sentence. What could be more pathetic than that?

With that opening paragraph, Sitomer immediately pulled me in to Maureen's story, and then just as quickly pushed me back out. I hate to grammar nit-pick, but splitting an infinitive in a self-congratulatory comment about the proper use of punctuation is just unfortunate.

Unfortunate is a good word for Maureen. Her two best friends both moved away over the summer, so she is left alone facing the trio of eighth-grade bullies known as "the ThreePees" (for Pretty, Popular, and Perfect). She tries to stop them from tormenting Alice, a new student who happens to be allergic to every substance known to man, but they retaliate by uploading a humiliating video of her to YouTube. Her own older brother and younger sister think the whole thing is hilarious, and her mother is the sort of unrelentingly positive thinker who simply refuses to deal with the problems right in front of her. Nearly against her will, she bands together with Alice and another class outcast known as Beanpole Barbara to get back at the ThreePees by beating them in the school talent show. Now, if only they actually had a talent....

Nerd Girls is reminiscent of Benton's Dear Dumb Diary series, minus the illustrations. The characters and situations in this book feel about as realistic as an episode of Glee. Both teachers and students are caricatures, and convenient twists occur that simply could not happen in real life. The dialogue rushes headlong past "witty banter", with characters uttering lines that sound like they should be accompanied by a laugh track. Barbara and Sophia, especially, get stuck with the comic relief roles. Plot points come pell-mell, with little to no foreshadowing or subtlety. The big secret that Alice is hiding is revealed in an info-dump late in the book, and, oddly, still does not explain something that seemed like it should have been a big clue. Perhaps it will be explained in a later installment in the series, if readers still care enough about the flat characters to read them.

Megan says

3.4

Alanna (The Flashlight Reader) says

Am I allowed to say how much I LOVED this book? It was hysterical. Seriously. I snorted many a time while reading. I have to admit that I am a big fan of Alan Sitomer's books. I've read them all. Although he doesn't typically write books that I can relate to personally, my students adore his writing. They really hit home for teens in urban environments. Homeboyz, Hoopster, Hip Hop High School, and The Secret Story of Sonia Rodriguez are geared towards older teen readers (high school); but, Nerd Girls is perfect for middle school students! I have found the perfect read aloud book for my class next year. It's funny enough to keep their attention, and a perfect segue into some "harder" more traditional readings. You know you have to suck the kids in!

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to cope with her fears. It's a really nice story of friendship perfect for middle school students.

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Leslie says

REVIEW: NERD GIRLS by Alan Lawrence Sitomer ***

I loved 8th grade: there is your first sign I was a nerd. So I was prepared to like NERD GIRLS by Alan Lawrence Sitomer. I was surprised by why I liked it, though. Maureen is a poster girl for nerds in this delightful quest for 8th grade acceptance: baked potato-shaped (her words), socially awkward and way too smart to have fun in middle school. She is even hard to like sometimes, especially when she tries to push away the only two girls, Alice and Beanpole, who do not laugh at her after 1000,000 people have viewed her humiliating mango banana peanut butter sandwich stuffing extravaganza on YouTube, posted by the ThreePees-pretty, popular, perfect. These three nerd girls plan to survive the ThreePee girls who make their lives miserable. Like most YA fiction, plot drives this smoothly written novel, but the author goes one step further. Sitomer's characters are exaggerated, suffering every single indignity that middle school has to offer. But they are also authentic, and that makes all the difference. Somehow Maureen's prickly nature is overcome by the determination of her two new friends to make her cop to what is cool about her life—and isn't that what you need friends for? Older brothers stink, and so does Maureen's, until he decides that he can torture her, but no one else better try it. And all three girls have families who care about them, but are sometimes clueless. And the conclusion? Well, it may not end the way your mom thinks it should, but any 8th grader will tell you, this is as good as it gets. And a teacher could do wonders with a whole class reading of this great read, using themes, character development, or setting for starters. Kudos to Alan Sitomer for writing another fun, purposeful novel AND for giving every kid hope for surviving middle school.

Kaethe says

Maureen is shaped like a baked potato, and eats cookies when stressed. There are three popular girls who are pretty: one is stupid and one is vapid and one is evil.

I couldn't stick with it past the stereotyped characters to find out what the plot might be, although I could guess. It read like the novelization of a Disney Channel movie.

Library copy.

Emily says

"Mom, this situation calls for chocolate...It's what I like to call a Double Fudger." I am a huge Dorkasaurus fan, firmly in Maureen's corner as she does battle with the ThreePees - Pretty, Popular, and Perfect.

I wish I were a Language Arts teacher, because this character is the best demonstration of voice I have ever seen in teen literature. Maureen is hilarious, in a darkly sarcastic way that should be uncomfortable coming from an eighth grader but isn't. She describes herself and the Nerd Girls as "the leftover grapes at the bottom of the bowl." Her acceptance of her own unacceptability is challenged as she stands up for her Nerd Girl friends over and over again.

I love the ongoing battles between the Nerd Girls and the ThreePees - what villains! Middle school girls are cruel, and the ThreePees are over the top. The reader is dying to see the Nerd Girls crush them, but (spoiler alert)the author turns away from revenge at the last minute and focuses on the personal growth Maureen and her crew experience through their friendship. Unfortunately, their sense of justice is a little twisted - Maureen chooses not to tell on the ThreePees, even though they are clearly in the wrong. As a teacher of children who come from the "snitches get stitches" culture, this is not a message I like. However, it could serve as a starting point for a great discussion about justice - a favorite topic of the teacher, Mr. Piddles. (The nicknames are beyond funny throughout the book.)

In the age of Twilight and Bieber, it is about time for a protagonist like Maureen, who uses "dorkasaurus" and "freakazoid" as terms of endearment. This is a girl who has a voice and knows her mind, even as her image of herself begins to change.

Josh Newhouse says

3.5 stars to be precise... I was not enamored at first as the characters were rather overdrawn and unlikable but as it went through their geeky charm grew on me like a fungus or perhaps ear wax... the bad kids were a little too cliched, but it feels like the characters were developing by the end and I could see following them in a sequel...

Cute book for middle-school girls, though guys will probably run!

Katie Fitzgerald says

I have a 3.73 grade point average and my body looks like a baked potato. My eyes are brown, my hair is brown, and sometimes when I snack on too many fig bars and run real fast in P.E., I end up with brown streaks in my underpants too.

This is how the first chapter of Nerd Girls: Rise of the Dorkasaurus begins. The voice is that of thirteen-year-old Maureen, who describes herself as "not just uncool", but "anti-cool." Maureen usually observes the world from a position of solitude, alone in the cafeteria, trying to avoid catching the attention of the ThreePees,

three nasty girls in her grade who are pretty, popular, and perfect. One day, though, she hears a rumor that the ThreePees are out to get Allergy Alice, another unpopular girl who is plagued by severe food allergies. They plan to expose her to the foods that make her sick, just to see her reaction. Tired of living in a world where the pretty, popular, and perfect always win, Maureen decides to foil the ThreePees' plan of attack, and put them in their place. Unfortunately, things don't go as planned, and Maureen winds up the butt of the joke. Instead of being forced to forge on through middle school alone, however, Maureen is suddenly the object of admiration of not just Allergy Alice, but also a third nerd, Beanpole Barbara, who is a huge klutz. The three girls form an alliance of convenience at first, but become friends after promising one another that they will beat the ThreePees in the upcoming school talent show.

The real strength of this book definitely lies in the narrator's wonderfully authentic voice. The plot is nothing new, and many of the supporting characters felt cartoonish and overdrawn to me, but Maureen came across as extremely realistic. There have been a lot of books about unpopular girls suffering through middle school, but few of them have had such a snarky and flawed main character. Often I think fiction presents unpopular girls as nice kids who never do anything wrong but somehow fall victim to the popular kids anyway. Maureen is different. Her intentions are mostly good, which is what keeps the reader's sympathy on her side, but she also has her own issues to deal with, including her weight and the fact that her father has abandoned the family. And she has an attitude that spices up the prose quite a bit, and makes her feel like a three-dimensional thirteen-year-old girl. I saw a lot of my thirteen-year-old self in Maureen, and I suspect a lot of girls will as well.

Overall, for me, this book was just okay. It reminded me a lot of the movies and TV shows shown on the Disney Channel, especially in its portrayal of popular girls and the wars that develop between cliques. There is certainly a big audience for that type of material these days, and I'm sure girls in 4th to 8th grades will relate to it, and eat it right up. But there are better written books on this topic, and I'm not sure I'd recommend this one for anything beyond beach reading. For stronger writing on the same subject, try *Revenge of the Snob Squad* by Julie Anne Peters (which I will review next week), or *The Melting of Maggie Bean* by Tricia Rayburn.
