



Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher

Bruce Coville

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If Howard Morton and Freddie the Frog Killer were trying to hold you down so that Mary Lou Hutton could kiss you, you might run as fast as Jeremy Thatcher did the day he stumbled into Mr. Elives' Magic Shop. And if you stumbled into that strange shop, you, too, might be asked to make a choice. What would you buy? The Chinese rings? The Skull of Truth? Or the dragon's egg?

And if you did buy the dragon's egg, what would you do when you found out you were supposed to hatch it?

Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher Details

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Author : Bruce Coville

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Ellen says

I sometimes find it difficult giving an authentic rating to children's book—this is a perfect example. As an adult, I didn't feel especially moved by the story or (one-dimensional) characters, but as a kid, I'm sure I would have been filled with awe and wonderment. My four-year old son enjoyed it, so maybe it deserves a higher rating? As an adult, I give it a solid three star, but maybe as a kid I would have rated it four.

[Name Redacted] says

I have loved this book for as long as it has existed. It deals with remarkably mature themes, like loneliness, loss, fear, anger, unrequited love, sexual development, and premature fatherhood. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Shane says

Calvin seemed to like it well enough. Nothing special.

Calista says

This was a book from Rick Riordan's 'suggested reading page. What a fun little story. I want to read more about this mysterious magic shop. Jeremy is chosen to hatch a dragon egg. The bond they form and how he deals with the dragon are sharp writing. Check out this book

Mark says

Having read the four books in his Unicorn Chronicles of Luster last year and thoroughly enjoyed them I spotted this book on a stall in a Church Christmas Fayre and picked it up for ten pence. A ten pence well spent. The man is absolutely brilliant and I only wish I had been born in 1993 instead of '63 and then I would not have to justify my intending to devour everything he has written as 'research' for my studies in children's literature and faith.

The story is of a young man who stumbles upon a magic shop whilst fleeing two bullies and a girl of 11 who is desperate to kiss him. (It is only the girl who wants the snog, you understand). In this shop he is 'chosen' by a dragon's egg and becomes its Hatcher, the person responsible for the safe arrival and then nurturing of

the infant dragon.

The developing relationship between Jeremy, the boy, and Tiamat, the dragon, is really endearing and full of great imaginative strands and creations. The telepathic communication and the development of this skill between the two is clever and, strange to say, totally believable and the personality of the dragon becomes clearer and clearer and more and more real. As with the Luster stories, Coville paints in the back story although inevitably with only a 150 pages in which to do this, it is curtailed somewhat.

Coville has, running alongside the developing relationship, other storylines which would be of significance to the readers for whom the book was actually written. A hated bully of a teacher who happens to be the teacher of Art, his favourite subject; the awkwardness of the first stirrings of boy/girl attraction; the difficulty of maintaining a best friend relationship when that best friend begins to look at the world differently. And then there were also two lovely themes linked to the dragon and seemingly the crux of the message. Firstly, at one point Jeremy realizes that hardly anyone can actually see Tiamat...this leads him to two related reflections; perhaps belief/love is the key to sight and thus maybe the world full of, as yet, unseen, unnoticed wonders?

The second overall theme is the most important

'Nothing you love is lost. Not really. Things, people - they always go away, sooner or later. You can't hold them anymore than you can hold moonlight. But if they've touched you, if they're inside you, then they're still yours. The only things you ever really have are the ones you hold inside your heart.'

Coville is a great gift to the literature of enchantment because he enhances that sense of mystery and wonder and he feeds the marvelously important gene of hope which strains to see beyond and then imagines glories hidden and yet waiting. This is another book for the ever growing pile to be given to my, hopefully, ever growing number of great nephews and nieces.

Melissa McShane says

I like it when my kids want me to read books they love. This is a sweet story about a boy and his dragon, or at least the dragon he's been chosen to care for from hatching to adulthood. Jeremy's experience is a lot like caring for an infant, and I think most parents would love to have an instruction manual like his. There's a lot of wisdom here that kids will appreciate because it doesn't sound like preaching, such as how having a desire for something makes it more likely that you will find it, and that no matter how much work you put into helping someone grow, eventually you have to let them find their own path or all that work will have been pointless. It's not quite the kind of middle-grade fiction that adults (in my opinion) can fully enjoy, but it's an excellent choice for intelligent young readers who aren't quite ready for YA fiction.

Leah Marshall says

I read this about twenty years ago, but I still remember it. It's one of the first novels that I read myself and thoroughly enjoyed.

Margaret Boling says

3/31/2017 ** So...I've "sold" this book dozens of times, but I realized I'd never actually read it. What brought it to my attention this week? I bought a puppet - a Folkmanis dragon. I envision using the dragon as a mascot for my library, and maybe as a vehicle for doing author interviews and student reader interviews.

Obviously, my dragon needs a name. So what do I do? Go to a wiki page of dragons in children's literature! So many choices: Norbert from Hagrid in Harry Potter, dragons from LeGuin, from Weis & Hickman, Paolini, Tolkien, Tamora Pierce. Oh, and Coville.

Meet Tiamat, a female baby dragon from an egg bought at Mr. Elives' Magic Shop. The only problem is that Tiamat in the book is red. Oh well...can't have everything.

Christopher Paolini says

The idea for the Inheritance Cycle came from my love for the magic of stories and how they can transport the reader into fantastical places. Also, I was inspired by this book, *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher*, by Bruce Coville, the tale of a boy who buys a "stone" from which a dragon hatches. I liked the idea so much, I couldn't get it out of my head. So I asked three questions: what land would a dragon egg come from, who would find it, and—since dragon eggs can't be common—who else would be looking for it? My quest to answer those questions led me to envision the story that became *Eragon*.

Ivonne Rovira says

I've read Jennifer Murdley's *Toad and The Monster's Ring*, but this is my favorite novel in the Magic Shop Series thus far. The eponymous Jeremy learns a lot about what's important and about judging people, but author Bruce Coville never lets the message slow down the action in a book that young and old alike will love.

Scott says

Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher is several ingredients shy of a good novel.

First, the prose was shoddy. I think the manuscript could have used another rewrite or two before it was published. The author and editors must share the blame for this.

For example, participial phrases were glaringly overused on every page. In some paragraphs, they appear in every sentence:

“Feeling slightly foolish, he tiptoed down the stairs. The kitchen cats twined around his feet, begging for a snack. Ignoring them, Jeremy slipped out the back door.”

Sometimes there are several smashed together in a single sentence: “Looking up, he saw Tiamat wheeling through the sky, looking like a string of rubies in the sunshine.”

And sometimes they are even misused, causing logical errors: “Retrieving the box, Jeremy headed up the stairs,” and “Slipping the instructions under a pile of his drawings, Jeremy headed out of this room and down the stairs.” The author apparently doesn’t realize that this grammatical construction means that the subject is doing two things simultaneously, not in sequence. But then again, where were the editors to catch this?

The pacing of the book was also too fast in most places. It was also unnaturally choppy. For example, Jeremy stalls before going out to help his mother rake leaves. But as soon as he goes out, he is back again. So then why did the author even bother to keep telling me that he had to go out? This was one of many scenes that jumped around.

The overly quick pacing also ruined potentially delightful, vivid scenes.

For example, the mysterious magic shop appears and then disappears so fast that I almost wasn’t sure whether I read it correctly. With some attention to detail and timing, it could have cast a magical mood, drawing me into the story.

The time that Jeremy is flailing his arms in a telepathic attempt to shed his skin could have made me laugh had it been written skillfully. The moment when the cat pulls the tablecloth off the table could have also been hilarious with more attention to timing and detail. Instead, it was cliché: “With a resounding crash, everything — plates, candles, silverware, and food — fell to the floor.”

And the ending was sappy, not moving.

Other scenes were just plain pathetic, such as when the newly hatched dragon tried to shake Jeremy’s hand by biting his finger and wagging it back and forth. So shaking hands is a ritual that dragons know innately? But since they aren’t born with hands, they shake people’s fingers with their teeth instead? The premise was so absurd that it bothered me long after I turned the page.

The characters’ names were another irritant. I can forgive the cutesy rhyme in the book’s title. But doesn’t Mary Lou Hutton sound a little too much like Mary Lou Retton, the olympian gymnast? And Jeremy’s best friend is named Specimen. Specimen? Give me a break.

I liked the characterization of the veterinarian father, since he was different than the overused stereotypical dads in this sort of novel. But the mother’s speech was completely unnatural to the point of breaking the story flow. If the writer had any personality in mind for the mother when he wrote her dialogue, he failed to convey it. The librarian had a completely different personality when she appeared near the end of the book. WTF?

I got the idea the author was in a haste to write this book. So I was in a haste to finish it.

Then again, I'm not sure if better prose and more revisions could have saved this story. The book seemed to lack a compelling plot until page 125 (out of 181), when Jeremy receives a letter from Elives about what is going to happen to the dragon.

On pages 129-130 we and Jeremy learn from a library book about why dragons are being hatched in this world. I found this part intriguing. Suddenly, the story had a reason for being, although it was almost finished by that time. I wish I had known about it much earlier in the book. It would have given more depth and meaning to the otherwise plotless chain of pointless charades.

The story seemed to be rife with potential, hinting at both mystique and humor and bringing fantasy into an otherwise realist setting. But through sloppy writing it delivered very little in the way of enjoyment. A waste of time.

Reymigius says

This book tells a story about a boy's unexpected companionship with a dragon. It depicts the awkwardness, the silliness, and the beauty that could happen between the two, which are completely different creatures, perfectly. The plot itself is quite too simple in my taste, but I won't protest since this is a book written for children.

Emily McConnell says

This was an adorable, sweet story. I really enjoyed it. So innocent and fantastical, adventurous and yet kind, sweet. Its the story of a young boy who loves art and imagination, and he gets a subject to draw unlike anyone else's---a dragon! From beginning to end its a delightful book, and I enjoyed reading it for the sake of getting ideas on writing children's fiction. A must read for any kid who loves dragons. Illustrations are pretty cute, too.

Earline says

Still one of my favorites after all these years. The ending actually made me cry, which is very unusual for me. Love it.

Kerri says

I was going to listen to these books on audio while I did chores and such, but realized that I read them a lot faster than the recordings. I first read this book probably around 2nd or 3rd grade and have remembered it very vividly so I figured I would revisit it and read the rest of the series.

This one was how I remembered. It is just a fun story, no real "moral" or lesson or anything, not much (if any) character growth, just a simple little story about a boy with a dragon. I guess the take away is that you never truly lose those you love, not really.

I wanted a dragon when I was a kid. I *still* want a dragon but, ah well.
