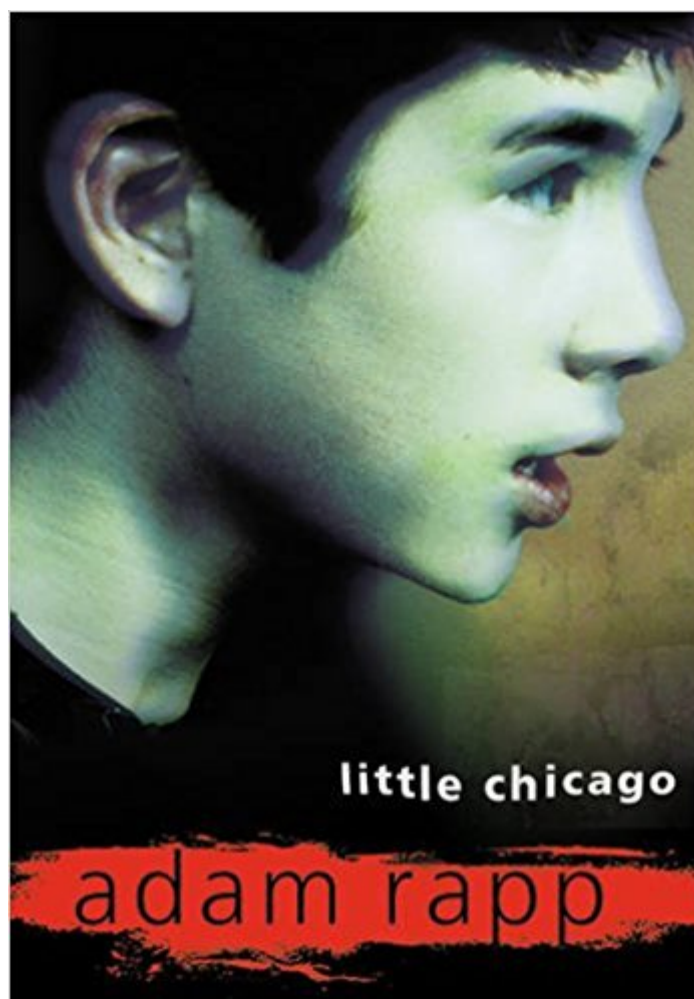


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Little Chicago



Synopsis

Little Chicago opens in the office of Children's Services, where 11-year-old Blacky Brown is being interviewed by a social worker trying to determine what has happened to him. His emotions are blocked at first, but then he reveals that he has been sexually abused by his mother's boyfriend, and is released into his mother's custody. Thus begins an alternately harrowing and hopeful story of a brave boy's attempts to come to grips with a grim reality. Blacky is helped at first by a classmate, Mary Jane, who has also been ostracized, and then by the gun that he buys easily from his sister's boyfriend. Little Chicago is an unblinking look at the world of a child who has been neglected and abused. It portrays head-on the indifference and hostility of classmates, teachers, and even Blacky's mother, once these people learn his secret. Like Sura in *The Buffalo Tree* and Whensday in *The Copper Elephant*, Blacky is one of Adam Rapp's mesmerizing voices, more so because it is a voice so rarely heard.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Rapp (*The Copper Elephant*; *The Buffalo Tree*) turns in his bleakest work yet with this abandon-all-hope story of an 11-year-old victim of sexual abuse and neglect. Blacky Brown, the narrator, is first met as he flees, naked, from the home of his mother's boyfriend in the middle of the night. Blacky does everything right: he asks his older sister for help (his single mother is at work),

and when she and a friend take him to the hospital, he tells the social worker from Children's Services about the boyfriend's abuses. At school he reaches out to his best (and only) friend. But Rapp knocks out every apparent support. Blacky's mother wants to keep seeing her boyfriend and seems repulsed by Blacky; the social worker doesn't follow up; the erstwhile friend tells all the kids at school, who taunt him. When Blacky befriends the other school pariah, who encourages Blacky to resist the bullying, she becomes the victim of a prank so brutal that she is last seen unconscious, lying on a stretcher. After several more traumas, the conclusion leaves Blacky to a grim fate. The unrelenting darkness, which may seem brave or honest to teen readers, loses some of its authenticity in Blacky's delivery; although it generally reflects Blacky's naivete and slow-wittedness as well as his shock, it also contains metaphors and vocabulary that, more sophisticated than the messenger, reveal the hand of the author at work. Ages 12-up. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Gr. 10-12. Rapp's latest novel opens as 11-year-old Blacky Brown runs from his mother's boyfriend, who has sexually abused him. Blacky is examined at the hospital, then released to his impoverished, single mother, who leaves Blacky to face the ramification of the incident on his own. His drug-addled older sister and remote younger brother are no help, and when Blacky tells his only friend, he's rejected, the whole school finds out, and vicious bullies harass him. He finds solidarity with the other school freak, a girl whose friendship sustains him. But as the disturbing open ending shows, that's not enough to shield him from his own self-loathing and the cruelty and neglect of others. Written in Blacky's voice, this unrelentingly bleak novel shows the terror, bewilderment, and damage of child molestation. Some of the scenes' repellent details verge on the gratuitous and occasionally the sensational: Blacky's mother's oozing eczema, for example; a scene in which another man forces Blacky to handle his penis. But Rapp creates a powerful voice in Blacky, whose honest, raw account shows desperate struggles just to keep breathing and moving: "My legs are ok, I tell myself. My legs are good." Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I really enjoyed this book. It is "young adult" so it's easy reading. I'm really glad that it's not a true story because it's very sad. Blacky, an 11 year old boy living with his single mother who is dealing with deep depression issues. A genius little brother who seems to be clueless about the tragedy around him. And a slutty older sister with drug issues. Then one night Blacky get molested by mom's ex boyfriend. Mom seems to silently blame Blacky and Blacky is really confused because the ex

seemed to be the only person in his life that he loved and showed him love. Very sad... I do wish the author would have followed up on the charges against the man but even leaving out key parts of the story I gave it 5 stars because the author makes you fall in love with that poor little kid, Blacky.

Little Chicago is a wrenchingly sad story a young boy's dark emotional free fall. After being sexually abused by his mother's boyfriend 11 year old Blacky slowly descends into emotional chaos as he tries to right himself in a world full of vicious bullying schoolmates, clueless teachers and Social workers and mother immersed in her own self pity. The author's use of the boy's voice is authentic and very well done. One cannot help but ache for Blacky and hope for his redemption. Does it happen? Well read the book and see.

great

Adam Rapp's *Little Chicago* presents a portrait of an eleven-year-old who lives largely in a world that misuses and neglects him. Blacky Brown, the book's protagonist, is introduced to readers first while running through the woods in the middle of the night, escaping from the house in which he's just been sexually abused. The book's darkness hardly subsides from this point. Blacky experiences neglect from his depressive mother, peer ridicule at school, a substandard living situation at home, and virtually no help from any of the clinicians put in charge of his case. He is passed around, treated poorly, and only able to confide in one person-Mary Jane Paddington, a girl at school who is equally outcast by classmates. Though the relationship that develops between the two of them is one of the only points of hope in the book, it is scarcely developed. Rapp's style is coarse and bristling, full of short sentences and poignant remarks. But this style is so regimented that it becomes predictable, and often it becomes impossible to ignore the author behind the characters. Many moments of beautiful writing and collage-like images emerge throughout this text, largely because of the sparseness of language. However, the vulgarity of language used by characters, at times, furthers the darkness and rawness of Blacky's experience, but may well pose a problem for younger readers. Though the book targets readers twelve and up, the substance and language of the text is certainly mature and may be unsuitable for many young readers. This text might be most useful for readers who want a hard-hitting book about the traumas young people sometimes face and are able to sort through the painful and sometimes graphic aspects of the book in order to find its virtues.

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This book was the best book I have ever read. I must warn you though, for me, it was also the most heartbreaking. I do not think this book is really a good choice for someone with depression, like me, but I am still glad I read it. Rapp's voice as an author is amazing. He has an ability to be a child in his writing. Blacky Brown is an eleven year old boy who I absolutely fell in love with. I love children and so it was awful to read about him going through the abuse and the cruelty from his peers and loved ones, the confusion and hopelessness. Awful only because I felt sorry for him, but the writing is still excellent and seems very true even though it is fiction. The poor boy almost seems as if he is too young to even understand how miserable he is. I would want to save any boy from the fate of Blacky Brown. He is a good kid. This book is brutally honest and depictive, there is a good deal of sexual content and I would never let anyone young read this. I think 16 or older would be sufficient, even though the main character is only 11. This author deserve credit for writing a very gutsy book, a tragedy which I will not forget.

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