



Jennifer Murdley's Toad

Bruce Coville

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Jennifer Murdley had no idea what she was getting into the day she bought the big toad from the strange man who ran Elives' Magic Shop. The thing didn't even start talking to her until she had it out of the shop. And once the toad did start to talk, it still kept a lot of secrets. So Jennifer didn't find out about his strange birth... or the treasure hidden in his forehead... or the witch who was out to get him... until she and her friends were in more trouble than they had ever dreamed of!

Jennifer Murdley's Toad Details

Date : Published June 1st 1993 by Aladdin Paperbacks (first published 1992)

ISBN : 9780671794019

Author : Bruce Coville

Format : Paperback 159 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Childrens, Fiction, Young Adult, Middle Grade

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From Reader Review Jennifer Murdley's Toad for online ebook

Jessica says

My son had to read this one for school and he really didn't want to, so I read it with him. I remember the title from being a kid, but couldn't remember anything else. The message was a little heavy handed. Overall it was a fine adventure, but at the end neither me or my son were very impressed.

Shannon Rohrer says

Another nostalgic read for me: one of those, "I read this multiple times years ago, and needed to revisit it" cases.

I'm glad I did. For one, the premise behind the story--a magic shop that moves around, a talking toad bearing powers unbeknownst to even him--is fascinating. But more than anything, there was a deeper message in this story.

Meet Jennifer Murdley: an average fifth-grader--"the kid in the plain brown wrapper". Told by people she knows and society in general that she's "ugly", poor Jennifer just can't seem to catch a break. What starts out as a day where she's forced to wear a pair of her brother's underwear--a fact that causes her no end of grief, once it gets around at school--turns into a magical, yet troublesome adventure when she happens upon the magic shop.

Enter Bufo, the talking toad Jennifer buys from said shop: witty, intelligent, and a voice-talent to boot, things go from difficult to downright impossible when Jennifer takes Bufo home. From getting her in trouble at school, to passing around a toad-transformation epidemic with a kiss, this sharp-witted amphibian causes no end of grief for the story's heroine. And yet, he's a source of entertainment too, and surprisingly enough, comfort.

I won't go too in-depth, here. I will say it's definitely one of the better middle-grade books I read growing up, and an excellent re-read, years later, bearing a message that's as true now as it was then; that the beauty within is the only beauty that really matters--a message everyone can benefit from.

Sarah says

This is a great series for my students! I read aloud The Monster's Ring to them and they loved it so much that I decided to also read aloud this one. Without even prompting them, they are busy comparing and contrasting Jennifer Murdley's Toad to A Monster's Ring. Once we are finished, I think I'm going to have them create their own version of a Magic Shop Book. I'm hoping that a number of them will read more Magic Shop books over the summer independently or with their parents.

Megan Green says

I loved Bruce Coville as a kid and it turns out I still love his books as an adult. I'm reading this series out loud with my sons and it's one I missed as a kid. The boys loved the story and it was a lot of fun to read out loud. We'll be reading the next one in the series!

Ivonne Rovira says

It's exceptionally difficult to weave a tale that illustrates that it's inner beauty — not outer — that's important, but Bruce Coville rises to the challenge.

In this third book in his Magic Shop series, Jennifer Murdley — plain-faced, beady-eyed, heavy-set — laments her looks and the bullying she receives at the hands of pretty, blonde Sharra Moncrief. Could magic be the answer?

Jennifer Murdley's Toad boasts several twists — and the promise of sequels! In addition, without lecturing nor a sugarcoated ending, Coville masterly weaves a story that's as amusing and enlightening for adults as for children. Congratulations, Bruce, for a fabulous read for all ages!

Sean Harding says

Book three in this loose series of tales around the strange magic shop, which in reality is the hook to link the series together, all separate individual tales with no real relationship to each other.

Jennie says

A poignant read, especially for today's girls who are bombarded by the media with impossible standards of beauty. Although Jennifer is sincere, intelligent and loyal she suffers from a poor self image. Children will enjoy the fantasy elements of the story as a "magic shop" book and hopefully take the message to heart.

Melanti says

[I'm glad he didn't go with the typical "Fairy tale" ending of Jennifer turning pretty at the end. That would have ruined it, I think. It works a lot better with her just gaining self-confidence. (hide spoiler)]

Zinger says

This is an ok book for a beginning reader who is stuck somewhere without anything else to read. But if you

have something else to read or do, I would recommend doing that.

Susan says

Excellent book for your students who do not like to read.

Kerri says

I vaguely remembered this one from when I read it in about 2nd or 3rd grade. I thought this one was cute and has more of a story than Jeremy Thatcher did. I liked how Coville brought in the old fairy tale (Diamonds and Toads I think is it's name?), it was a fun addition. This one obviously is talking about the nature of Beauty. What a thing to tackle.

I liked what Coville says in the afterword:

"We all know that beauty is only skin-deep, you should never judge a book by its cover, etc., etc. Now I will make an embarrassing confession: Even though I know those things, I spend a ridiculous amount of time in front of my mirror, studying my looks, trying to figure out if they are good enough. I know this is foolish, but that doesn't stop me. And I am not alone; the culture we live in is obsessed with beauty over brains, skin over soul, heartthrobs over great hearts. I don't have any answers for how we can get past that nonsense, but I thought the issue was at least worth looking at."

Thank you for looking Mr. Coville, and for your input.

Michael says

I was an assistant on this book. It is one of Bruce's best novels, a book as funny as it is harrowing and heartbreak. For some, *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher* is their favorite Magic Shop Book, but for me it is tied between *Jennifer Murdley's Toad* and *The Skull of Truth*, serious books that are seriously hilarious.

Qt says

I liked this Magic Shop Book as much as I liked "Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher." The characters and plot are completely different (save for one or two minor recurring characters), but the humor and heart is the same. ("Jeremy" is perhaps a bit more "magical," in my opinion, while "Jennifer" has more of a modern fairy-tale feel.)

The backstory of the title toad is quite interesting, especially to fans of fairy tales, and the theme of self-image and outside appearances is also touching and well done--a serious issue handled in a fantastical and engaging way. The climax is exciting and of course, the humor is funny as always :-)

C-shaw says

I love these Magic Shop books! I bought Books 2, 3, and 4 in hardback from a book club several years ago, never got around to reading them until now. They are delightful middle-school-age children's books with incredible illustrations. I want to read more of them.

Tori says

I remember reading this book for a book report when I was in elementary school. I loved it then but I couldn't remember why. Now I do. It's a great, fun story with a message about inner and outer beauty that comes across without being too preachy. I think my only problem with the story was the cover of the book from the edition that I read way back when. The whole point of the story is that the main character is ugly. Her family is as kind to her about it as they can be, but even still, they think she's ugly too. But on the cover is a pretty blonde child. I think the publisher should have read the book more closely before going along with that cover!
