



The Blue Helmet

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Lee wants to be a Tarantula – a member of the biggest, most powerful gang in his neighbourhood. But when his initiation goes wrong and the police catch him robbing an auto supply store, Lee's father sends him to live with his aunt in New Toronto.

Lee feels more lost than ever. His mother's death from cancer, and his father's constant absence working two jobs mean he has practically had to raise himself. But though he initially resists his Aunt Reena and the customers of Reena's Unique Café – a ragtag collection of the unusual, the unkempt and the deeply eccentric – Lee gradually learns to open himself up to his new surroundings. When Lee strikes up an unlikely friendship he is suddenly confronted by the ravages of violence, and is forced to face the consequences of his own aggression.

The Blue Helmet is a powerful portrait of one young man's struggle to come into his own, and the peace that comes from the achievement.

The Blue Helmet Details

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Author : William Bell

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From Reader Review The Blue Helmet for online ebook

Sam - Spines in a Line says

I read this as a MYRCA novel and it's very well-written. A sad but nice story of a friendship that slowly grows between a boy and an old man.

Michèle says

The Blue helmet is a YA novel, but very suitable for an adult lecture.

The adolescent reader will identify with Lee Mercer, full of angst, recounting the events in first person. Confronted to bullies, he understood that he had to stand for himself. So he becomes a bully.

He lost his mother to cancer, and his father to overwork (he borrowed a lot of money to get his ailing wife on a long overdue trip to Italy, and cannot reimburse it), Lee dreams of integrating a street gang ("where everyone took care of others"). But his initiation takes a bad turn and he is expelled from school, confronted by his father and a police officer.

So off he is sent ("like an unwanted parcel") to an aunt who manages a restaurant in New-Toronto. Aunt Reena knows to leave him elbow room, but has her way. And Lee gets to know the maverick crowd patrons of the café, and befriend one odd bird in particular who lives in a taped-over house, adept of conspiracies theories (which provided interesting discussions). But Cutter harbors a deep wound inside, and what Lee will discover will leads to the title justification.

Why sometimes YA books are fairy tales:

Make no mistake I *looved* the book, the characters, young and adults, the situation. An adult reader will like the fast pace, the natural first-person narrative and Lee's funny metaphors. But, as a YA writer myself, I use what I call "YA Fairies": among them the Good Fairy, who facilitates or accelerates evolution of the story, sending help to the young heroes, cutting through red paper for instance; the Action Fairy, insuring that the rythm and action abounds.

Lee does delivery trips to clients. The three first persons Lee sees (referred by his aunt) are really interesting people. And those new friends paths will converge to advance the story. Take-off delivery clients take the time to talk to Lee, and even refer him to a pharmacist, a lawyer... and no problem at all; the lawyer will eventually be very useful (*pro bono!*). The YA "good fairy" at work!

A dramatic event (tampered by the good fairy), Lee will receive an unexpected gift, which will improve his situation, while prompting him to learn more about recent history of ONU Canadian peacekeepers sent in Yougoslavia (hence the title).

The blue helmet is a story of personal evolution, of maturing. Lee discovers that the horrors in this war reflects the war inside himself, manifested by his own habits to react with violence.

The YA "Action Fairy", the script, manages to give Lee at least two "rightful" occasions of slugging it off,

but his acts go almost overboard the two times, due to his angst. Such occasions are quite rare in real life, but that is an acceptable artistic license.

An other YA Fairy (the "let's make sure this novel is not seen as too politically correct" Fairy) is also at work, with the aunt and two other characters chain-smoking. One chain-smoking adult would have been OK and realist for me, but *three*? The story is not set in the 1960, but in 2003.

The tense relation between Lee and his father is more realistic. A breakfast incident at page 35-36 is brought with a fine-tuned sensitivity.

The end of the book brings a satisfying conclusion (the YA Good Fairy" has passed) even for the overworked father. By chance, I finished this novel smack on Father's day!

Enough fairy considerations! The overall impression is of a remarkable work of art and heart, and hold anyone interest. I, for one, felt really happy about ex-bully Lee's making friends, growing and finally overcoming of his inner demons. And the time frame, a year and a half, gives the hero a chance to really cement his friendships.

The author offers extensive references about the implication of Canadians UNFROFOR forces in Yugoslavia, 1993

An extract:

He had gone to a violent, far-off place to make peace, and he had brought the war home with him, in his mind, a bloodless wound deeper than any bullet could go.

J says

I'm sorry, but two stars is being generous. This really feels like Bell had two ideas (a gang story and a war story), and couldn't develop them enough, so he made them into one and the same novel. It really doesn't work. The Yugoslavia story is fantastic, and could have been a great full-blown novel. But the rest is just stereotypical, overdone, cliche...

Jenelldez says

I say some of the things in this book I never really expect it to happen but I can say it was a great book and I loved it

Trelawney says

I actually enjoyed this one. Reading the back of the book I thought it was going to be overly cliched, but the cast of zany characters, and the twist in the story totally surprised me. I thoroughly enjoyed this one, and

being a thinner book, it's a nice, quick read.

Aileen says

I can definitely see why teens would love this book. It centres around serious issues (PTSD, mental health, crime, violence, family relationships) and funnels them through the perspective of a "troubled youth". Ultimately, the message is affirming.

Cynthia says

Fast read ... loved it ... a story set in Hamilton/Toronto - well written - real life characters and a message to remember " I had to face the war inside myself before I could find peace"

Zaynäb Book Minimalist says

My kind of YA literature.

Not the over wrought love, nerd, bullied narrative. Well-written, and emphasize the need for young people to get involved, read more and be more aware of what is happening around them.

Glad it also explores other important topics, like the Serbian War, the coming of the Internet, conspiracy theories and of course how making friends with older people has its own benefits.

The author was all over the place, and some parts were really monotonous. But it is a small book, so I tolerated it.

I have been reading a lot of Canadian literature recently, and I am glad that I enjoy a lot of them.

Much more responsible writing coming from there. sick and tired of this high, proud, stereotype pushing American writing uggghhhh

Larisa says

Lee wants to join a gang that's big in his neighbourhood, when he gets caught stealing for the gang to prove himself, his father decides it's the last straw and sends him to live with his aunt in Toronto.

I chose this book because of the title, I myself have a blue helmet and was curious about what this book could be about.

I finished because I really liked what I read it was pretty interesting, I especially enjoyed Cutter's character, a genius held back by his own mind.

I would recommend this book to someone who likes William Bell as an author, he's a pretty good writer, I enjoyed him.

Briard says

First Reactions: This book was a different sort of book. Small and skinnier than other books I read, The Blue Helmet is about a teenager and finding his place in the world. He's hit a few rough spots and made a few mistakes, but then, don't we all make mistakes? It's how he learns to handle his mistakes and change that makes this book so enticing.

The story is in first person and Lee is telling about how even the smallest things can make a difference whether it's having a coffee in a café or making a delivery to some old guy and agreeing on having a cup of tea with him.

All in all, I enjoyed this short read and it got me through Wednesday!

Sarah says

Meh

Tanya says

I personally thought this book was boring, because of its slow pace and where the story didn't quite lead to anywhere. I felt the main character, like his job, was going back and forth, back and forth throughout the entire book. An interesting concept that could've been told in a more riveting and "fun" way. Some of the lines were hilarious and there was a unique freshness to it but still...it was dry and ...just boring. As a reader, you always hope that the story goes forward and up a notch, and that's what happens here. But some books just don't really reel forward. This book, is one of them. An award winning book? I just don't get how that happened.

The book's about this boy, Lee who lands at his aunt's house because he has no other option but to live there. He ends up helping his aunt open up a delivery service [and expansion to her hospitality service] and he ends up being the delivery guy. The rest of the story is on how he meets these interesting people, his customers, and the story goes on from there.

Kanna Stephan says

The Blue Helmet Really like the book the blue helmet and for me it is not boring at all

Jodie says

Interesting development of the main character and the conflict. This is a novel study for my Grade 9 Eng class...I think they will enjoy it!

Jc says

Winner of the CLA Young Adult Book Award in 2007.

Akudou Alawaweebaeha says

Terrible book. Don't read this please

I wasted my time in the grasslands and caught HIV.

Will Bell on 'goodreads' this book isn't a 'Good Read'

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