



Aces Wild

Erica S. Perl

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Zelly Fried has finally convinced her parents to let her get a dog, with the help of her grandfather Ace. Unfortunately, said dog (also named Ace) is a shoe-chewing, mud-tracking, floor-peeing kind of dog. Despite Zelly's best efforts to drag Ace (literally!) to puppy kindergarten, his flunking report card says it all: "This Ace is wild."

Also wild is the other Ace in Zelly's life. Grandpa Ace has decided to begin dating again and is dining and dancing every night, against his doctor's orders. Determined to get both Aces under control, Zelly enlists the help of her two best friends, Allison and Jeremy (despite the fact that they don't quite see eye to eye). They need to come up with a plan, fast. But how? It's not like either Ace ever does what he's told.

Aces Wild Details

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From Reader Review Aces Wild for online ebook

Meghan Nels says

Aces Wild, while a companion to When Life Gives You O.J., is just as great and could be read w/o reading When Lifes Gives You O.J. first. I enjoyed the continued humor by Ace the dog, Ace the grandpa, and Zelly. I found myself chuckling throughout the book as I am sure many students will too. Students will probably relate to Zelly's difficulties with her new puppy, Ace the dog. This one is sure to be a hit - just like When Life Gives You O.J.!

Diane says

Be careful what you wish for ... In the previous novel (When Life Gives you OJ), Zelly spent a lot of time trying to convince her parents she was ready to take care of a puppy. In this sequel, Zelly gets her puppy, but is having trouble getting her puppy to mind. He's even flunked out of obedience school already. To make matters worse, she named the puppy the same name as her grandfather, "Ace." This adds to the chaos around the house. But Zelly keeps trying. She has reenrolled Ace in obedience school and she works with him all the time. And now her Mom and Dad have agreed to let her have her first sleepover if Ace passes his obedience test.

Courtney Umlauf says

Zellie Fried has always wanted a dog. She's finally gotten her wish, and Ace has joined the family. The only trouble is, Ace the puppy is soon followed by Ace the Grandpa. Recently widowed and having suffered a heart attack, Ace the Grandpa has moved in with Zelly and her family. Now there are two Ace's in the house, and they're both a little wild. Ace the puppy needs to graduate puppy kindergarten before Zelly is allowed to have a sleep over, and Ace the Grandpa is stirring things up by spending nights out on the town with one of his several "girlfriends". Will Ace the Grandpa ever settle down and act the way Zelly thinks he should after her grandma's death? And Will Ace the Puppy fail puppy training? Again?

Never have I seen a children's book that's more deserving of better cover art. This current illustration made me think this would be a very simple, rather cutesy story of a girl, her dog, and her crazy grandpa. It is that to some degree, but there's a lot more going on than I thought there would be. Ace the Grandpa is Jewish, a retired lawyer and judge from Brooklyn, and quite the character (my favorite by far). He's constantly using Yiddish terms and talking too loud. His character could have easily been a standard "zany grandpa" character with no dimension, instead he's very well rounded and realistic. Zelly's relationship with Ace the grandpa is somewhat complicated, as she gradually learns that just because he's made new lady friends doesn't mean that Bubbles, her grandmother, wasn't the love of his life. That part of the story was touching. However, the conflict between Zelly and her best friend seemed unrealistic to me, so overall I felt the story was a little unbalanced. But still on the whole, I honestly think that with a better cover and slightly different blurb, this book would get more attention.

On the other hand, as you can imagine, a lot of the humor in the story comes from having both a puppy and a hard of hearing Grandpa with the same name living in the same house. The joke of Zelly calling the puppy,

only to hear Grandpa respond with a loud "WHA?" got a little old. Also, the continued need to specify which Ace was being referred to was a bit annoying. That whole idea wasn't strong enough, in my opinion, to be used repeatedly through a book of this length. I can't help but think that in some condensed form, the premise would have made a spectacular picture book, rather than an OK middle grade novel.

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Aeicha says

Erica Perl's *Aces Wild* is certainly a wild middle-grade romp full of puppy fun, zany characters, and a heartwarming story. *Aces Wild* is a sequel/companion to *When Life Gives You O.J.*, but I don't think one must read that book in order to enjoy this one (I haven't read the first book and was still able to understand everything that happens).

In *Aces Wild*, young Zelly finds herself the owner of a new, rambunctious puppy named Ace. Ace is cute and fun, but difficult to train. When Zelly asks her parents for a sleepover, they tell her that she must first take Ace to doggy school and get him trained, then she can have her sleepover. But the other Ace in Zelly's life, her loud, widowed grandfather, doesn't make puppy Ace's training lessons easier, especially when he starts to date the instructor. Zelly must figure out a way to control both the crazy Aces in her life if she ever wants that sleepover.

Aces Wild is a quick, fun read that tackles some serious stuff in a really heartfelt and age appropriate way. Erica Perl has created some truly memorable characters and brought them to life with humor and heart.

Zelly and puppy Ace's misadventures in doggy school will have readers laughing, but also rooting for this sweet pair. Perl takes a very relatable and common situation- a child taking on the responsibility of a pet- and created a very fun and entertaining story around it, while scattering very real and helpful lessons about pet responsibility throughout. And Zelly and Grandpa Ace's misadventures will leave readers thoughtful and moved. With widowed Ace and Zelly's frustrations with him, Perl has explored things such as grief, getting older, and life and death with sensitivity and in a way that younger readers will understand. I liked that, even though some serious real life stuff is explored, the tone is always quite light and never too heavy.

I really enjoyed the quirky casts of characters in *Aces Wild*. Zelly is super likable and relatable, with two really great best friends. Grandpa Ace is unusually charming with his loud, honest demeanor. And of course, puppy Ace just steals the show with his super cuteness! I also loved how Zelly's Jewish heritage is celebrated and very present throughout the story.

MY FINAL THOUGHTS: Zelly's exciting adventures with the wild Aces in her life will keep young readers captivated from beginning to end. *Aces Wild* is full of laughs, heartwarming moments, and endearing characters just waiting to be loved.

Jennifer Heise says

I enjoyed this more than I thought I would... there is a lot of humor and reality in this story, even though it's a

typical middle grade problem novel. I especially liked that, though Ace-the-grandfather presented as a crusty old guy, he was actually a lot more sympathetic than the middle grade heroine thought. I liked the use of Yiddish and of Jewish culture, and I loved the ending.

Ben says

This was a very good book. It was very funny (Especially Ace the Grandpa.) It was interesting that it was in Burlington, Vermont because I go there a lot. Also, the main character is Jewish and so am I. Overall, this was a very good book.

Paula says

With a grandpa who SPEAKS LIKE KANYE EXCEPT PARTLY IN YIDDISH, an all-over-the-place dog and a main character who sometimes has trouble figuring out who she is and where she fits in... what else could you ask for in a realistic middle grade girl novel? I laughed out loud at Grandpa Ace's sarcasm and got a little misty at his thinly veiled devotion to his granddaughter Zelly.

Bennett says

It was pretty good.

I felt that I was on a roller coaster: Something would catch my eye, then it would go back down for a few chapter. Then, it'd be interested again and I'd go back up.

It was kind of off-and-on. It was not as melodramatic as the first one (P.S. Yes, I like melodrama), and not as tear-jerking either.

For some sick and twisted reason, the characters seemed to act different than the first book. Jeremy seemed less shy than before. Maybe this was just the author's stupid ploy to make him seem "alive". But, they're just characters! They're not supposed to change like real people do!

This author writes beautifully, I admit. I'm surprised she not more popular and has only written a few books. I know this author could right a super-popular Harry-Potter-Hunger-Games Level novel if she'd tried. She should totally go into YA.

Alternate Rating: C

Jacqueline says

Sweet follow up to When Life Gives You OJ following the relationship of 11 year old Zelly Fried and her boisterous grandfather. This sequel deals more with the adjustments of moving to a new city and accepting the loss of her beloved grandmother, Bubbles. There is a lot of action with the antics of Zelly's rambunctious

puppy, her younger brother, and her grandfather. Zelly's emotional turmoil is depicted both poignantly and humorously. Characters are well-drawn, particularly Ace-the-grandpa.

Marjorie Ingall says

Ha, bookblogger-of-awesomeness Paula Willey said that Zelly's grandfather SPEAKS LIKE KANYE EXCEPT PARTLY IN YIDDISH. So true! Capslock zayde!

This sequel to When Life Gives You O.J. is as delightful as its predecessor. Maybe more. For me, Jewish-inflected, funny, contemporary books are the Holy Grail (was that a religiously mixed metaphor? YES) and Erica Perl delivers. In this one, Zelly has named her new dog (SPOILER ALERT FROM FIRST BOOK OH WELL) Ace, because her grandfather has promised to stop going by Ace, but then he reneges, leading to lots of goofy wait-Ace-ate-a-shoe-oh-wait-you-mean-Ace-the-Grandpa-style humor that 8-year-olds will find hilare. Ace the Dog is rambunctious (hm, so is Ace the Grandpa) and has already been asked to leave obedience school once. But now he has to pass for Zelly to get her parents to agree to a sleepover party. **WILL HE PASS?**

Aces Wild was a great bedtime read-aloud: Lots of dialog, funny, not too scary or suspenseful, appealing to both the 8-year-old and the 11-year-old. And just like When Life Gives You OJ, the emotion sneaks up on you. Ace (Grandpa) is relatively newly widowed, and both he and Zelly miss Bubbles desperately. Now that Ace is starting to date (and everyone knows that a vibrant newly widowed man is to Jewish ladies of a certain age as lox dropped on the floor is to a beagle), both he and Zelly have to work through their feelings about change. I got misty several times and didn't feel manipulated about it. And since my kids love nothing more than to hear me read in a strangled not-gonna-cry-flappy-hands-chest-clutchy voice, win-win.

Erica Perl says

Get excited - Zelly, Ace, and of course O.J. (from WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU O.J.) are back! I am the author so I am, admittedly, biased. Hope you are wild about this book, too!

Megan Rogers says

Read aloud with Scarlett. Cute story of a girl and her puppy. Funny, lots of Yiddish, which is always fun.

Brenda Kahn says

Zelly Fried is back. When we left her, she had traded in her OJ dog for a rescue puppy that she named Ace. Now the dog is in serious need of training and already an obedience school drop-out. But Ace the dog isn't the only member of the household running amok. Ace the GRANDPA who speaks in ALL CAPS has at least three girlfriends and Zelly fears he's not following the doctor's orders after his heart attack.

This is a sweet, gentle, tween read.

The Styling Librarian says

Aces Wild by Erica S. Perl – a companion to When Life Gives You O.J. – Realistic Fiction, 3rd grade and up – I love the innocence that is connected with this book that leads to discussions of memory, responsibility, friendship, how you present yourself to others, hope, and family. My favorite character is Ace, the grandfather that is, not Ace the dog who is also a character. His bombastic personality with Yiddish sprinkled throughout the story makes me want to read more, more, more of his scenes. I loved how Zelly has to work hard to earn the right to have a sleepover versus having very permissive parents saying “yes” all of the time. I also love how Zelly comes to the realization of why it is important to help herself and her family by training her new cute puppy Ace... Well done for a sequel but also simply a stand alone book! I highly recommend!

Meg says

So much fun. A stand-alone follow-up to Perl's much loved When Life Gives You OJ. The characters continue to charm and Zelly, now with a dog of her own, has her sites set on an all-important rite of passage: a sleepover. But when her parents insist that she must get her puppy trained before any sort of sleepover will occur, her trusty grandfather Ace steps up to the plate to offer his guidance and unsolicited advice. Lots of Yiddish included. Oh vey!
