



Kate the Great, Except When She's Not

Suzy Becker

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Fans of Wimpy Kid and Dork Diaries will love this illustrated series by the *New York Times* bestselling author of *All I Need to Know I Learned from My Cat*. Meet Kate Geller, a sassy flute-playing artist, who comes up with an original way to redefine friendship.

Kate's older sister is way too perfect. Her younger sister is way too cute. And her mom wants her to be pals with her frenemy, Nora. Her art teacher, Mrs. Petty, is way too uncreative, and how can Kate pay attention at Junior Guides when her pod leader has a sweat stain the size of the town beach? Now she has to get through her Christopher Columbus role during Discovery Day and her "Colonial Buddies" report, but little does she know how much "help" she'll be getting from Eleanor Roosevelt and Albert Einstein.

This humorous debut novel features more than 350 illustrations.

Kate the Great, Except When She's Not Details

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Author : Suzy Becker

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From Reader Review Kate the Great, Except When She's Not for online ebook

Freya Hooper says

What this book is about:

Kate is in fifth grade and contending with the usual stuff: band, Junior Guides, sleepover parties. The bulk of the story centers around her friendship with Nora, a shy/loner girl in her class who Kate's parents have asked her to befriend. She begins by looking at Nora as the project she has to endure, but as time goes on she is able to crack through the veneer and develop a nice friendship with her, although not without some bumps in the road.

Why I love this book:

This is a nice entrant for girls in the illustrated novel category. Too often we think of boys as being the target audience for these type of stories, so it is nice to see Kate join the ranks of the Popularity Papers and Ellie McDoodle. While this book is not quite as strong as the other two series, there is certainly room for Kate to grow and it offers a nice alternative to girls who have read the others.

I like that Kate is focused on the things fifth grade girls really think about and avoids the trap of being too "insightful." This is what will make it work for kids. I found my second reading of the story much more enjoyable than the first, which also meant that the flow was a little off at times, but again, these are small fixes and I think the foundation of the book is a good one. I will be interested to see the next book in the series.

The copy I had of this book was an electronic version, so I am unsure of how the graphics will look on a hard copy of the story. I found myself often having to enlarge the illustrations on my Kindle app, but that may or may not be a problem with the hard copy.

Who this book is for:

Well I thought it was great for my daughter Kate who is entering 5th grade. Nice book for more reluctant readers.

Final thoughts:

Thank you publishers for more diary/illustrated novels that focus on female characters!

Lura says

Finished reading tonight! Really liked this slice of life story, especially liked the side art humor throughout the book. Chuckled and laughed at many of Kate's dry/sarcastic comments in her cartoon bubbles on the side. I am excited for this one to come out so I can share with my students!

Note: I received a digital galley of this book through NetGalley.

Teresa says

Aside from a few detail glitches--some details come from nowhere (stink bug?)--this hums along nicely. Katie is urged by her mom to re-friend a prickly former friend, a preschool classmate, Nora, out of sympathy, since her dad is now working out of town. Nora seems to LIKE having no friends, and isn't positive about becoming a member of the Junior Guides; the after school meetings are made trickier because they have a new leader, whose ideas for change aren't always welcomed, especially by Katie. However, when Nora say "pass" on a sharing activity, Katie sticks up for her, and they develop a grudging respect. (So does the new leader, it turns out.)

Plot complications: Nora and Katie are chosen as CO-leaders of the flute section, when Katie had been leader by herself. Nora asks for one of Katie's older sister's toy horses, thinking they're Katie's, and Katie agrees. Now what? Also, planning a sleepover party.

This captures the tricky dynamic of trying to blend old and new friends, and to include people who aren't that friendly. I like that Nora doesn't really change that much: she is funny, and kids come to appreciate that; she does try some new activities, but she doesn't morph into a bubbly buddy. The girls' friendships develop through some misunderstandings, and tough conversations involving telling the truth. Katie's comments and attitudes are funny and perceptive. Her parents are involved and thoughtful.

The frequent drawings add humor and sometimes move the plot, although some were a little too tiny to see/read the details.

Overall, a solid choice for fans of "Diary", with a much more likable protagonist.

Andréa says

Kate the Great Except When She's Not is an enjoyable read. However, there are so many books in the middle-grade doodle-accented diary-style genre now that any new additions to the field need to be particularly good to stand out from the crowd. *Kate the Great*, while enjoyable, isn't especially exciting or different. It's not as laugh-out-loud funny as other similar books, and there were times when some information seemed to be missing or skipped over. That being said, *Kate the Great* is still a good read for fans of the doodle-accented diary books.

Note: I received a digital galley of this book through NetGalley.

Dawn Moews says

Kate Geller is a lively 5th grader with all the excitement and challenges that life presents. She has a best friend as well as several other friends in her class and her Junior Guide group. She is looking forward to becoming section leader in band and leader of Junior Guides, but neither event happens in the way she expects.

Kate is a middle child in a happy, functional family--something that is all too often not the norm in books written for intermediate and middle grade readers. the family is loving, but normally has its moments when they experience challenges and conflicts. Probably Kate's biggest challenge this year comes about when her

parents ask her to befriend Nora Klein because her father will be working out of the country for most of the current school year. Unfortunately, Nora is not one of Kate's friends. In fact, she was Kate's biggest competitor for flute section leader in band, and she tends to be anti-social, sitting by herself and not talking to others on the bus or at lunch. Still, Kate decides to make the attempt.

This "project" plus the other challenges any 5th grader might encounter are the subject of this book. Kate is a charming character who I found to be believable and really pretty funny. The story is told from her point of view and enriched by Kate's doodling and drawing on the pages of the story. That does not, however, turn the book into a graphic novel--the pictures are there to enhance, not to carry the story.

This book is obviously the beginning of a series; the main conflicts of the story are brought to fruition, but the story leaves room to wonder what will be the next challenges/adventures in Kate's life. Also, the author/publisher makes it obvious with a two-page spread of little drawings and questions about what will come at the end of the book.

I do think the book will be well received--especially by intermediate grade readers. They will find a girl with many of the same issues they have, and they will enjoy getting to know her.

If it were an option, I would probably have given the book 3.5 stars.
(I-0, II-1, III-1)

Leah says

In the book "Kate the Great, Except when she's not" by Suzy Becker a girl named Kate Geller has to put up with her teachers, New junior guide leaders, and with her mom that wants to be friends with Nora's mom. But, Kate and Nora are frenemy's. Kate has to put up with this girl named Nora who never talks to anyone. Nora joined junior guides, so now Kate tries to be as nice as possible to Nora. Not only does Nora have to deal with Nora, she has to deal with school projects, and some family problems. Will Nora and Kate soon become friends?

Tami says

I was reluctant to read *Kate the Great* because I was afraid it would be a bad imitation of Lincoln Peirce's successful *Big Nate* series. I was relieved to discover Kate is a unique and quirky 5th grader. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the beginning of Kate's 5th Grade year. This volume only covers the beginning of school through Halloween so I know there is MUCH more to come!

Every kid has been forced through circumstances to either befriend or spend time with a classmate he or she neither particularly likes nor gets along with. Kate finds herself in just such a situation with Nora due to arrangements by their parents. Neither Kate nor Nora is happy about it.

As Kate spends more time with Nora they learn things about each other which both find interesting and admirable. In spite of themselves they develop a new friendship. Until the day Nora overhears Kate and her best friend talking about her. Kate must decide which is the right thing to do. Will her conscience give her the courage to apologize? Will Nora accept an apology if it is offered?

Kate the Great is a nice addition to the popular genre of humorous contemporary realistic fiction/graphic novel mash-up series for middle grade readers like Peirce's *Nate*, Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Russell's *Dork Diaries* and the wickedly funny *Dear Dumb Diary* by James Benton. *Kate the Great* is a good reading choice for middle grade girls--reluctant and avid readers alike. I am looking forward to the places to which Kate's journey will take her in future series installments.

Kate Hartley says

This is a great one for the 3-5 grade girls out there. This is a funny tale of trying to be friends with someone who just really does not know how to be friends. I may be bias since we're name buddies but Kates are normally just plain great!

Michelle Kidwell says

Kate the Great
Except When Shes Not
Suzy Becker
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Kate the Great Except When She's Not is a fun book for eight to twelve year olds. It is written in a fun and playful manner that I feel kids will find appealing. This book in a very fun way tells of ten year old Kate's life in a way that I think many kids in the eight to twelve year old age rang could relate to.

So for children who are eight to twelve year olds who like a fun and playful read Kate the great is a great book.

Five stars for a fun children's book.

melydia says

I picked this up because my real name is Kate and one of my best friends is also named Kate. It's a diary of a fifth grader as she faces unfriendly classmates, band class, familial miscommunications, new girl scout leaders, and critical art teachers. It's a fun little story that reminds me (sometimes unflatteringly) of my life at that age.

Ms. Yingling says

In this notebook novel, 5th grader Kate has to put up with annoying teachers, a new Junior Guide leader, and her mother, who is trying to get her to be friends with Nora. Nora's father is working out of town, so her mother signs her up for Junior Guides because she seems to have no friends. Kate has her own thoughts as to why Nora seems to have no friends-- Nora is off putting and seems not to want any. Kate's a good kid, so she

tries to be as nice as she can. There are other things going on-- class projects, parties, and various friend, teacher and family problems, all accompanied by Kate's lists and art work.

Strengths: This book deals realistically with problems that elementary students face, and notebook novels are always popular. This is far more age appropriate and more positive than *The Dork Diaries*, so elementary libraries will want to investigate this for purchase.

Weaknesses: Too young for middle school (there is quite the subplot about Nora asking for one of Kate's sister's collectible horses, and Kate getting into trouble for letting her have one), and nothing particularly amusing or innovative.

Lisa Straubinger says

I ended up liking this middlegrade novel more than I thought. It is part chapter book/part journal. Suzy Becker includes doodles to support what is going on in the story. Kate is a 9, going on 10, year old who is navigating the world of 5th grade, friends and family. She stumbles along the way and learns from her mistakes.

Anastasia Tuckness says

This was the most normal book I've read in a long time. Granted, my recently read books include titles like *Rutabaga the Adventure Chef* and *Apocalypse Bow Wow*, so that's not really saying much, but still! Kate is a super normal tween with normal tween issues and problems. She has a mom and a dad and two sisters, and they all live together. She has a dog, she plays the flute, she takes the school bus, and her main difficulty in life is that her mom wants her to try to be friends with someone who's a bit difficult. And that's really all there is!

It's written in an illustrated diary style format, which many readers will appreciate. Still, it's a pretty solid book--it took me longer to read than I thought it would, so be aware of that when recommending it to reluctant readers. I think it's more like Grace Lin's *Dumpling Days* than *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

On to the plot--

Kate has known Nora for a long time, but has not been friends with her. Nora is pretty standoff-ish. But Kate's mom asks her to try again at the beginning of 5th grade, and so she does. It's a little rocky, but she perseveres, partly because her good friend Brook helps her.

It's an interesting "frenemy" story, because Nora never bullies Kate, but she does engage in passive-aggressive behavior. It seemed very realistic to me!

Other things to remember: they have "junior guides" (i.e. girl scouts) after school. They have band and art. Kate really wants to be a leader in each thing.

At one point Kate ends up giving Nora one of her sister's horses, which sets off a train of misunderstandings/lies.

All in all, a very realistic book about a regular girl!

K says

This book was terrible. Hard to follow and just not all that funny or original.

Katie Fitzgerald says

Kate is nearly ten years old, and has just begun her fifth grade year. Though she already has a best friend, her mother wants her to show an interest in her fellow Junior Guides member, Nora, who has trouble making friends. Though Kate tries her hardest to befriend her, Nora makes it difficult by keeping to herself and behaving oddly.

There are so many middle grade novels written in diary format that another one seems superfluous, but if there must be more, they all ought to be like *Kate the Great Except When She's Not*. Kate's voice is engaging, with the right mix of sarcasm and sincerity for her age and worldview. She is neither cruel and opportunistic like Greg Heffley nor sweet and innocent like the title character in the *Just Grace* series. Rather, she is a healthy mix of flaws and strengths that most readers will find relatable. Her observations of adult behavior are especially insightful, and they critique some of the injustices of childhood without making the adults into inept fools, which is refreshing. The friendship storyline is also given new life in this book. Nora is an especially well-developed secondary character whose involvement in the story deviates from the usual "outsider who is bullied" trope.

Based on its cover alone, *Kate the Great* will appeal to readers who have enjoyed *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Dork Diaries*. It is also actually a nice alternative to those books for kids who don't want to read about dating, romance, or catty backstabbing. In that sense, its closest readalikes are the *Aldo Zelnick* and *Amelia Rules* series.
