



The War with Mr. Wizzle

Gordon Korman

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Bruno and Boots can't stand Mr. Wizzle, the new faculty member. He believes in demerits, computers, and a dress code. Mr. Wizzle is ruining MacDonald Hall. So Bruno and Boots, their friends, and the girls of Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School have decided to team up and get rid of him.

The War with Mr. Wizzle Details

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Author : Gordon Korman

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From Reader Review The War with Mr. Wizzle for online ebook

Emmy says

I remember this series from my fifth grade teacher reading it to the class.

In turn, I had found the books at a thrift store in a small town when my young sons and I were vacationing. I picked it up for them to read.

Very YA and innocently enjoyable!

Katie Fitzgerald says

Canadian children's author Gordon Korman has had a long career as the prolific writer of humorous, exciting, and easy-to-read novels geared toward grades 4 to 9. He started writing at age 12, when he wrote *This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall!* for a seventh grade English class. Over the course of nearly 20 years after the publication of this first MacDonald Hall book, Korman published a total of 7 titles about the boarding school exploits of best friends Bruno and Boots. This month, I read them all:

This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall! (1977)

Go Jump in the Pool! (1979)

Beware the Fish! (1980)

The War with Mr. Wizzle (1982)

The Zucchini Warriors (1988)

MacDonald Hall Goes Hollywood (1991)

Something Fishy at Macdonald Hall (1995)

The series stars best friends and roommates Bruno Walton and Melvin "Boots" O'Neal, who are known pranksters on the MacDonald Hall campus. Though the two boys often butt heads with their headmaster, the long-suffering yet fair-minded Mr. Sturgeon, whom they call "The Fish," they also have a fond affection for their school. The boys and their classmates also have many associations with students at Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School for Young Ladies, which is located across the road from MacDonald Hall, and whose high-strung Headmistress frequently overreacts to late-night visits from MacDonald Hall students by wildly wielding a shotgun.

Each book of the series focuses on a different major scheme involving Bruno and Boots. Sometimes, they seek to make a particular improvement to their school, such as a pool or a recreation center. Other times, they go to war with a particular teacher who is making their lives difficult, or with an outside force that threatens to close the school. In the final two books, they even befriend a Hollywood celebrity and uncover a phantom prankster.

What I love about these books is their sense of humor. Last spring, I attended a talk by two children's illustrators who insisted that the key to humor in children's books is underwear and toilet jokes. I found this to be a disappointing underestimation of what kids are capable of finding funny, but I was also hard-pressed to think of many examples of funny books, especially funny books targeted at boys, that could make kids laugh without resorting to crude humor. Thankfully, I have been reminded that this series fits that bill exactly. Perhaps because Korman started writing these when he was himself an adolescent, he completely understands what middle school boys find funny, and he delivers it in every single book. Pranks, schemes,

disasters, explosions, science experiments, sporting events - these are the backdrops for Korman's jokes, and most of the time, they are clever, respectful and well-executed. Even when the characters disobey their teachers, they often do so in the name of a noble cause that helps their school or their friends.

Also refreshing is the complete lack of serious dating in these books. There are some storylines involving long-distance and unrequited crushes, but none of the preoccupation with having exclusive girlfriends and boyfriends that seems prevalent in more contemporary books. The girls of Miss Scrimmage's (particularly Cathy and Diane) are not presented as potential romantic partners for Bruno, Boots, and their friends, but as partners in crime, good friends, and pranksters in their own right. All the female characters are actually very well-done, including Mrs. Sturgeon, the headmaster's wife, whose affection for Bruno and Boots often keeps her husband from acting rashly in his punishment of them.

Are the MacDonald Hall books great literature? Probably not. But neither are they to be completely dismissed as "fluff" or 'twaddle." For boys who like funny books, but whose parents would prefer not to promote toilet humor (or worse, crude jokes with a sexual basis), they are the perfect escapist read. Interestingly, these books have also recently been turned into a series of films, which are all available to stream on Netflix. I watched half of the first one, *Go Jump in the Pool!*, and noted some differences, mainly in the age of the characters (MacDonald Hall seems to be a high school in the movie world) and in the character of Miss Scrimmage (who is now a peace-loving hippie and not an unhinged woman with a shotgun), but overall, I didn't think it was terrible. I would definitely recommend reading the books first, but fans of the series will probably enjoy the film adaptations.

This review also appears on my blog, *Read-at-Home Mom*.

Lee-Ann Baldwin says

I just finished reading this to my daughters (11 and 8). Judging from the peals of laughter, it still holds up!

Leena says

My favorite Korman book - and that's saying a lot.

Kris says

I remember reading it and thinking what if there was a way for a computer to match peoples? This was when I was 13, I never imagined. I love all the Bruno and Boots books, the same way I love the *Little House on the Prairie* Series. I think my Mom had bought them so I would have something to read and didn't think I would wear them out from re-reading. They were the first books I can remember finding funny and make you laugh outloud.

When I think back now, I don't know who I feel more sorry for - the students or the teachers.

Michelle Llewellyn says

Scholastic Apple Paperbacks from the 80's could always be counted on as the G-rated Disney label for books: fun, safe, lighthearted stories for children and tweens completely free of offensive material. I read this book years ago, unaware it was part of a series from Canada since the characters were so similar to Americans in speech and behavior. I had a faint recollection of a story about rebellious boys trying to out-smart their strict teacher. It was fun locating a used copy on Amazon and re-discovering this book again through adult eyes.

I won't give away any spoilers but I do want to warn the reader that the adults portrayed in this book are not, shall we say, "the brightest crayons in the box" as Bruno and Boots, the two school kids, manipulate their teachers in order to avoid changes to their comfortable boarding school life. You will laugh with nostalgia at everyone's 1982 archaic fears of what is now commonplace technology. Older Gen-X like me will remember a time when computers were just large boxes that processed data before evolving into the second appendages we all carry around today. Bruno and Boots could've saved themselves a lot trouble if they'd only had Facebook!

Read this and enjoy!

Kaylee says

Still a fun read, but this one felt kind of sloppy.

For example, Mr Sturgeon's wife, Mildred, has always been a sensible person, and she has always stood up for the boys, but in this book she's constantly telling her husband to "give Wizzle a chance" even after countless examples of Wizzle causing nothing but trouble for the school and the boys. In previous books, she was a character; in this book, she was just a voice of contention to give Mr Sturgeon someone to argue with, so he could voice his grievances. That is lazy writing, and not worthy of Korman's earlier books.

Anne Beardsley says

Funny. Silly. Improbable. Quite enjoyable. I love reading the funny Korman books.

Alison says

I was reading this aloud to the kids and it got put away for what turned out to be a long while. Brought it back for a road trip and every time I stopped to get a breath they asked if I was going to keep reading. Finished this book and they immediately dug out the next one.

Manybooks says

Although I was at first a bit disappointed that I never managed to read the fourth of Gordon Korman's *MacDonald Hall* novels as a teenager, in retrospect, I am actually more than a bit glad, as I have certainly not all that much enjoyed The War With Mr. Wizzle and frankly, if I had indeed read this novel in 1982 (when The War With Mr. Wizzle was originally published), it might very well also have tainted my prior enjoyment and appreciation of This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall!, Go Jump in the Pool! and Beware the Fish!. For to be honest, while main antagonists and arch villains Miss Peabody and Mr. Wizzle do at least mildly and on the surface rather painfully remind me of some of the more overbearing and dictatorial teachers I had to endure in especially some of my Junior High classes (and that pertains especially to one of my physical education instructors who with her obsession with running laps and aerobic exercising certainly does rather mirror Miss Peabody at least to a point), most of the scenarios portrayed in The War With Mr. Wizzle and especially the character traits, often Gestapo like attitudes (and behaviours) of Mr. Wizzle and Miss Peabody are simply too outrageously stereotypical and over-done to be either entertaining or realistic.

And really, while in a private boarding school like MacDonald Hall, a teacher, an assistant school official, (or in Miss Peabody's case, an assistant principal) might indeed be able to get away with heavy handedly doling out massive amounts of demerit points (and draconian punishments) for even minor mistakes and peccadilloes, I honestly cannot imagine that either students or indeed parents would accept having said individual(s) forcibly change a student's surname so as for it to be more computer efficient (such as how Mr. Wizzle with no criticism allowed simply changes Wilbur Hackenschleimer's surname to Hacken) or that the families of Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School girls would without comment and concern simply accept Miss Peabody's constant insults and put-downs of their daughters and the introduction of actual war games. So therefore, while The War With Mr. Wizzle has certainly been entertaining to a certain extent, the humour, fun and camaraderie of the first three *MacDonald Hall* novels (and that both MacDonald Hall and Miss Scrimmage students clearly and dearly love and cherish their respective academies), that has not really all that much come through for me in The War With Mr. Wizzle (with even the wedding of Mr. Wizzle and Miss Peabody at the end leaving me unbelieving and cold, although I guess I did kind of cheer the fact that by having the evil duo wed, they have now been permanently removed from their respective schools and the schools from their nefarious influence). And thus, only a very grudging and low three stars for The War With Mr. Wizzle (and indeed, I am most definitely more than a bit personally disappointed, as I was certainly expecting much more and a much better and less blatantly stereotypical story), so much so that I also have to now consider whether this novel, whether The War With Mr. Wizzle is a one-time glitch with regard to Gordon Korman's *Macdonald Hall* boarding school series, or whether the remaining three stories will also be a disappointment.

LobsterQuadrille says

Bruno and Boots are back with a vengeance! This time their goal is to get rid of Walter C. Wizzle, a new staff member who is bent on modernizing Macdonald Hall. Meanwhile, the girls at Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School are trying to get rid of their tyrannical ex-Marine assistant Headmistress, Gloria Peabody. The students of both schools, with Bruno and Cathy as the usual ringleaders, get into all kinds of trouble with their schemes to get rid of Wizzle and Peabody, until they finally come up with a plan that's so crazy, it just might work.

Like the other B&B books, this is a wacky, lighthearted, and hilarious story full of surprises and great wit. Here are just a few of my favorite quotes:

- "Surely The Fish won't let him ruin Macdonald Hall," said Cathy. "It means too much to his cold, fishy heart."

- *What is your critical opinion of Keats?* Without bothering to read the multiple choice answers, Pete raised his hand. "Mr. Stratton, sir, what's a Keat?"

- "William, your attitude is deplorable," scolded Mrs. Sturgeon. "In no time at all I'm sure Mr. Wizzle will fit nicely into Macdonald Hall."

"Mr. Wizzle will fit nicely into the furnace," replied her husband evenly.

"I didn't hear that, William!"

- Diane was unconvinced. "She'd probably be charmed more by an M-16 rifle."

- "Her girls are doing the whole affair. Do you know what that means? We're having Scrim-food, Mildred-- Scrim-cakes, Scrim-punch, and Scrim-wiches. My stomach may never be the same."

Jessica Lynch-Jonely says

I remember reading this several times when I was a kid, and loving the antics. I would like to get my hands on the original (not updated) version so I could also laugh at the technology references.

Taylor says

Bruno and Boots make me smile and laugh the whole way through the book! Walter C. Wizzle arrives at Macdonald Hall and with the help of his computer, begins modernizing what he calls an "out-of-date" school by enforcing a dress code and handing out demerits. Bruno is enraged and enlists the help of friends to start an anti-Wizzle committee that will do whatever it takes to get rid of Mr. Wizzle.

Emily F says

Children's fiction.

A humorous book about two boys and their escapades at a Canadian boarding school

Luke says

Who would have thought that, in reading this book to my kids, they would then have so much fun playing at assigning everybody demerits, lines, and laps?

Rebecca Rosenblum says

This is actually a slightly different book from *The War with Mr. Wizzle*--it has been updated with current technology, as the original version came out in 1982. It doesn't really jar anything--the only thing I even caught was a mention of PowerPoint--but I imagine it makes it easier for the current generation of whippersnappers to be engaged. With some of Korman's books I don't feel the age gap between myself and his intended audience at all, but in this one I do. I get why my 10-year-old self loved this so hard, but my 37-year-old self found it pretty silly and improbable. Still enjoyed it ok, but probably won't read again (so if you want my copy, let me know!)

Jane says

To be honest, *The War with Mr. Wizzle* is not my favourite Macdonald Hall book. I mean there were still some laugh-out loud moments and the characters still get into ridiculous hijinks, but I don't know, the book overall felt a bit flat to me. I guess, it's because the matchmaking of Mr. Wizzle and Ms. Peabody and the success of it felt weird to me. I think this is a matter of personal opinion so don't let my discomfort dissuade you from reading the book if you're a Korman & Macdonald Hall fan or if you're looking for some lighthearted reading.

Punk says

YA. Another Macdonald Hall book. Walter C. Wizzle and his Magnetronic 515 have come to whip the Hall into shape and they've brought a dress code with them. The boys are now required to wear a shirt and tie at all times, and you know Bruno's just not going to put up with that.

My love for Elmer multiplied tenfold upon learning that he "habitually sported a white shirt and neat black tie." I can only hope it was a thin black tie. That's the good news. The bad news is that this book is a pretty mediocre offering. Bruno and Boots break up and then make up with so little fanfare I barely noticed either happened, and Korman failed to sell me on the Wizzle/Peabody solution, but the worst offense had to be the sudden POV changes with absolutely no warning, especially in the last half of the story. It's really a mess.

Two stars. Mostly because of the POV whiplash. I don't expect a lot of these books, but I would at least like to know whose POV I'm following.

Michelle says

This is my favourite one of the Bruno and Boots series... The author is Canadian, and I have not been able to find these books in the States, so I was happy to find them on this site. If you can find them, they are some of the funniest children's books around. The author started writing them when he was 15 or 16. When I was a kid, I remember seeing my dad laugh until he cried while reading this book (well, one of the books in the series, there's a few).

Alana says

I read this book as a kid and loved it. I loved almost anything by Gordon Korman. This book is about two mischievous boys that go to an all boys boarding school in Canada. It is hilarious! It's all about kids versus the adults which as a kid, makes it a very exciting read.
