



Marcelo in the Real World

Francisco X. Stork

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Marcelo Sandoval hears music no one else can hear--part of the autism-like impairment no doctor has been able to identify--and he's always attended a special school where his differences have been protected. But the summer after his junior year, his father demands that Marcelo work in his law firm's mailroom in order to experience "the real world." There Marcelo meets Jasmine, his beautiful and surprising coworker, and Wendell, the son of another partner in the firm.

He learns about competition and jealousy, anger and desire. But it's a picture he finds in a file -- a picture of a girl with half a face -- that truly connects him with the real world: its suffering, its injustice, and what he can do to fight.

Reminiscent of "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" in the intensity and purity of its voice, this extraordinary novel is a love story, a legal drama, and a celebration of the music each of us hears inside.

Marcelo in the Real World Details

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Author : Francisco X. Stork

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From Reader Review Marcelo in the Real World for online ebook

jesse says

3.5/5

pl?o? l??? ??? u? ol?????

marcelo can be a bit naive, but not in an annoying way. he's naive in the way that makes you wonder how the hell you turned out so bitter and question why the world can't be as simple or straightforward as someone like marcelo sees it. marcelo is just a great person and anyone would be lucky to have him as a friend. many of the people marcelo encounters at the law firm treat him like crap or act as though he's stupid. so being marcelo's friend would probably lead me to an aggravated assault charge or two, but marcelo is constantly running into people who need to get **bitch slapped**.

[fya | megan crane]

some notes:

the relationships were not fully fleshed out, but that was fine. i wasn't really that interested or invested (what i read about that anyway) in any of the other characters (parents, jasmine or the rabbi for example), but i appreciated them nonetheless. marcelo was an endearing literary character, i was glad i had the opportunity to meet.

his thoughts on religion, his internal music, various other opinion pieces and bible passages he discussed with the rabbi were the most enjoyable for me to read about.

[navigating love & autism | nyt article]

borrowed: (view spoiler)

Homeschoolmama says

UPDATE 2/8/09

My initial impression still stands. Although I liked the way the author had the main character Marcelo speak, and how he added certain quirks that were realistic, Stork was unable to keep it consistent.. and some characteristics were not compatible w/someone w/Aspergers..such as speaking in literal terms only and then suddenly speaking/understanding metaphors, for example. The plot was sort of intriguing but I thought kind of trashy too.

Oh, I am not sure I like this book. A goodreads friend gave me a copy recently and while I do enjoy the interesting writing style (the author writes from the point of view of a 17 year old boy with Asperger's who refers to himself and his parents in the 3rd person- strange but interesting) I'm not sure I like the story line at all. It is a bit painful to read, how this boy is forced into working at his father's law firm for the summer,

where he is vulnerable and subject to manipulation and exploitation. I've seen positive reviews of this book, with comparisons to *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.. I liked that book- not sure of this one.. I'm on p 131 as of now, I will try to finish it and see if I feel the same way.

Naban says

I loved Marcelo. The struggles he faced as a not so normal guy in the real world were truly touching. I can't say the same for other characters, the only likable character we actually get to know being Marcelo's co-worker Jasmine.

There's nothing much to say about the plot of the book, given that it is what the title suggests. Marcelo in the real world, away from his comfort zone - how he struggles, makes mistakes and learns.

One of the many things I looked forward to in this book was the music aspect. Marcelo hears music. Although no one has been able to tell the exact cause, the Doctors have classified it as closest Asperger's - a condition in the autism spectrum. I was intrigued by that, but once I started reading I felt there wasn't enough of this particular facet and my interest lowered significantly.

Anyhow, it was a pretty good book. Not something that worked perfectly for me, but I'm sure some of you contemporary lovers out there will adore this a lot more.

Sherrie Petersen says

Have you ever gotten to the end of a book and wished there was more? Or better yet, wished your writing could move people the way that the story moved you? Marcelo in the Real World is that kind of book.

It's no secret that I love fantasy, but I try to read outside of the genre as well. Marcelo isn't a super hero. He's a teenage boy with an unidentified cognitive disorder who is comfortable with his routines, his special-ed school, his job at the therapeutic riding stables. His father decides that for the summer Marcelo needs to move outside of his comfort zone and so Marcelo goes to work in the real world: at his father's law firm. But neither of them is prepared for what that means.

In the hands of another author, this story could end up being a sentimental tear-jerker. Author Francisco X. Stork doesn't take that route. Instead he gives us an unflinchingly honest look at what it means to be normal. While there are some obvious fish out of water situations, there are also some unexpected consequences that make this book a real page turner. As Marcelo tries to live up to his father's expectations, he starts to learn that choices aren't always black and white in the real world. The way he approaches these discoveries is what makes this story unique.

There is so much to love about this book. I love that in spite of his differences, I never felt sorry for Marcelo. I love that while the family is Mexican, they are completely American. I love that the story made me think about how what's right in one situation might not always be the right answer.

Marcelo in the Real World is Francisco X. Stork's third novel and it has garnered a lot of awards. His newest

book, *The Last Summer of the Death Warriors*, came out in March. If it's half as good as Marcelo, it'll be well worth the money.

Tatiana says

Marcelo Sandoval is 17 and has a mild form of autism which makes him... well, different. Knowing that he is often perceived to be mentally challenged, Marcelo prefers to stay close to the circle of his friends and people who know that there is nothing wrong with him intellectually. He is planning to spend his final school year at Patterson, a specialized school where he is surrounded by the students just like him, he also has a summer job lined up working with horses in his school's stables. However Marcelo's father, Arturo, does not approve of these plans. He wants his son to challenge himself, to learn how to function in the "real world" better, to be prepared for the life outside Patterson's walls. Marcelo has no choice but to surrender to his father's wishes and learn about the "real world" he does...

Marcelo In The Real World is a part story of self-discovery, part criminal investigation, part love story and is definitely one of the strongest examples of quality YA fiction. The story is told from a unique POV of a person whose thought process is different from ours and although I personally do not know any autistic people and can't vouch for accuracy of Marcelo's portrayal, his "voice" sounds authentic.

Marcelo's journey through the "real world" is a compelling one, albeit frustrating and infuriating at times. It is almost unbearable to see him insulted by people who have no understanding of his condition and often treat him as if he is mentally handicapped. Yet Marcelo's experiences are not all bad. Along the way he meets people who help him to get a better understanding of what is good and evil, what is love and, most importantly, that being in the "real world" is as much satisfying as it is painful.

The only reason I knocked down 1 star from my rating was that some parts felt a little slow or too introspective, but overall *Marcelo In The Real World* is a remarkable YA adult novel.

Mike Mullin says

This book is so good I may have to take a break from reading--anything else wouldn't measure up. It's so good I'm consumed with despair that I will never write anything as beautiful or as important. It's so good I can't review it properly--any words I might choose wouldn't do it justice.

karen says

first, some blathering. it is, after all, me...

i understand why writers like carl hiaasen and james patterson and them are now writing books for younger readers, after having already established themselves as writers of adult fiction with considerable staying power. get 'em while they are young and then when they grow into the adult section, they already have the name-recognition. friends for life, paying their electricity bills...

but why do authors like this one and Suzanne Collins write exclusively for the teen audience? and this opinion may be untrue in a post-potter, post-twilight world, but fewer adults are interested in teen fiction than teens are interested in adult fiction. for teens, it is something of an intellectual triumph to cross over into the grown-up section of the library or bookstore, but many adults scoff at reading books for children.

so why choose the teen path if you are an exceptional writer? is this how writers slum?

this book is just wonderful. it is about a high-functioning autistic kid who is forced by his father to spend a summer working for him in his law firm to prove that he can function in "the real world" and doesn't need to be in his safe school surrounded by other kids who are less likely to be able to integrate successfully. during this summer, he questions loyalty and trust and sex and god and a hundred other great things, and he is such an easy character to fall in love with and be thankful that he was written into existence. just a real charmer of a book that doesn't sacrifice realism for shock value.

this would have been a five star book except for two complaints, only one of which is an actual complaint.

i don't know why the characters spoke the way they did. it seemed like this took place in a town where contractions had been banned. it made everyone sound very stiff and stylized. had it only been Marcelo, it would have made perfect sense, because of his rigid formality across the board, but the rest of the cast had no such excuse. "*****" those are free.

secondly, chinchillas look nothing like "long, skinny rats"

who you calling skinny?

but i loved this book. it is sweet and very naturally written; a real gem of a teen fiction book that i would never have read except for this class.

thanks, grad school!

oh, and another thing! i have felt mildly guilty reviewing these teen books because i have a tendency to curse like a racehorse, and i felt that that might not always be appropriate for the poor innocent teens who might be reading the reviews, and Greg has even gotten internet-scolded before for the same thing. HOWEVER, if teen fiction itself is going to drop the f-bombs, then why should i be any different?? thank you Francisco X. Stork. i mean, fuck.

Becky says

Meet Marcelo Sandoval. Read his story. Witness first-hand the transition from dream world to real world.

Marcelo has always been different. (He lives in a tree house, for example.) Lived in his own little world--not cut off from the world, by any means, but taking it in at his own pace, staying in his comfort zone, doing this much and no more. Marcelo has autism--Asperger's Syndrome to be exact. He's always chosen to attend a special school--Paterson--to be with children and teens who are different--just different in varying ways. But his father, Arturo, wants him to go to a regular high school his senior year--Oak Ridge High. His father

wants him to work at his law firm this summer. (Marcelo wanted to work at the pony stables of Paterson). A deal is reached: if Marcelo works for his father this summer--in the mail room of the law firm--and succeeds at it--follows the rules of the business world, of the so-called real world, then Marcelo can choose for himself where to complete his schooling.

So it begins. Marcelo works in the mail room under the direction of a young woman, Jasmine. She's no more pleased to see him there, to have him there than he is to be there. But their honesty is the first of many steps that lead them down the path towards being not just coworkers but friends. But this friendship isn't quick to develop. One step at a time. One day at a time. Marcelo isn't the greatest conversationalist--if and only if you're judging by the world's standards. (Personally, I could talk to him all day!) But his father and mother think it important for him to learn how to interact in the real world, make small talk, make eye contact, learn to shake hands, etc. Marcelo keeps a notebook with him in which he writes down things he needs to know or wants to remember.

Here is a scene with his father on their first day going into work together:

"I want you to participate in the day-to-day workaday world, my world, and your world too now. And to do so, you have to abide by some established customs. People in the workaday world are discreet about their religion. They pray in private. They don't quote Scripture unless it's a figure of speech like, I don't know, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' or 'the blind leading the blind.' Things like that. Phrases that have common usage."

"Can a blind man lead a blind man?" I say.

"Beg your pardon?"

"Jesus's exact words were, 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?' Luke, chapter six, verse thirty-nine."

"That's exactly what I mean. It's not customary to quote Scripture to someone, much less quote him chapter and verse. I think that if you're going to benefit from this experience, it's important that you try to act as is customary."

I take out the yellow notebook that I always keep in my shirt pocket. I write: Do not pray so that others see M. pray. Do not quote Scripture. Note: Listen for religious phrases that have become figures of speech. Those are allowed even if not accurate. Do not provide correct version or cite where it appears in the Bible. (42)

Here is a snippet from his first day in the office making the rounds with Jasmine with the mail cart:

Jasmine says, "I'd stay away from the secretaries if I were you."

"How can I deliver the mail to them if I stay away from them?"

"I mean, I wouldn't let them get too friendly with you, especially the ones that are single and desperate, like Martha back there."

"Why?"

"Martha for one would not hesitate to jump your bones."

I think of the passage in the Bible where the prophet Ezekiel jumps up and down on a pile of skulls and bones. The rapidity with which I am encountering new concepts is making me dizzy.

"What's wrong with you anyway?"

"You need to speak clearly. I don't know what the phrase 'jump your bones' means. It would be very helpful if you were more literal."

"Literal?"

"If you used words in accordance with their primary literal meaning, not their metaphorical meaning."
"I was being literal. Martha would literally bounce on your bones if she could."
"Oh." (page 54)

Marcelo isn't the only son working there over the summer. Arturo's partner, Mr. Holmes, has his son, Wendell, there as well--though not in the mail room. His son is helping out with actual cases. Marcelo doesn't like Wendell--far from it--but his father insists that he should be friends with Wendell. Be friendly. Be nice. But what his father doesn't particularly seem to care about is that Wendell is well...a jerk...to put it nicely. Wendell's interest in Jasmine is infuriating. Marcelo may not know much in the ways of attraction, love, and lust...but he knows the way Wendell talks about Jasmine is just plain wrong.

Can Marcelo survive the summer? Can he succeed according to his father's standards? Can he ever be "accepted" by his coworkers--taken seriously? What will he learn about the 'real world'? Will he decide to become a part of it even if it means sacrificing elements of his dream world?

I just loved this book. Loved it. I loved Marcelo's voice. I loved his observations. I loved his interactions, his conversations. I loved that his special interest was God, religion. I loved his intelligence; his way of digesting the world and discerning for himself right from wrong. I loved his strength, his character. Here is a man with heart and soul, with substance. I loved that this is a complex novel and a beautiful one.

Corinne says

I have a lot of conflicting emotions about this book.

The good: It's a fast read and an interesting story. There's shades of gray, interesting moral dilemmas, attention to detail that makes situations and characters come brilliantly to life, and a main character whose situation is way intriguing. An autistic teenager who's gone to a school for disabled kids his whole life, and now suddenly has to adjust to working at his dad's law firm for the summer. There's a lot of inherent conflict and story in there, and for the most part, the book delivers.

I actually really loved reading about his work at the office, as I've been exactly where Marcelo was: autistic teenager brought into the office because of her personal connection with the boss who goes from simple copying to much more complex tasks. I appreciated the detail with which Stork described his work--the challenges, his strengths, the way he could do the work but needed more time for it, his enjoyment at organizing, everything.

I was really excited about this book for several reasons, primarily a) autistic protagon!! b) *Latino* autistic protagon, which is great, as the usual portrayal of autism is very, very white, c) Latino autistic protagon who ponders issues of religion and ethics, rather than making the entire conflict about his autism, and d) I've seen a lot of good things about the book's portrayal of autism and how it immerses you into Marcelo's PoV.

Unfortunately, that leads me into the bad, as d) is where the book started chafing at me. I particularly struggled with the writing style and how it conveyed Marcelo's thoughts. This is a difficult thing to criticize, because it's entirely possible that many autistic people do think this way, but to me, his point of view came across as distant, almost mechanical. It read like the book was spoon-feeding "autistic reactions" as if for a neurotypical audience to digest--explaining everything for the "abled gaze," if you will.

By this, I'm referring to the way the book is chock-full of lines like, "I like strong smells" and "This is an unexpected response" and "I like this question" and "I do not know what to say to this." I want to believe Marcelo's reactions, rather than be flat-out told about them. It kept me from connecting emotionally. And--as an autistic person who reacts to some things in a very similar manner to Marcelo--I really, really wish I could have felt that connection.

This "autism voice" would probably not have bothered me as much if I hadn't already come across it so often. Again, I'm not saying autistic people don't think that way--that'd be preposterous, and I refuse to speak for autistic people as a whole--but I do take issue with how common it seems to be in fiction, as I don't feel it's representative.

Some other autism-related parts made me wince, too, like a friend's reaction to hearing about the "internal music" Marcelo has heard in his head for a long time, but has stopped hearing now that he's working at the law firm. "This ability you had before, that was out of this world. A special gift, I don't know. What if it was impossible for you to have it and **be a regular person**? You don't hear the music anymore, **but now you can be flesh and blood** like... me, for instance."

Another quote: "**Marcelo has never felt confusion before.** It is painful. There is no peace. No certainty."

In both cases, I don't think I need to explain why it bothered me.

An interesting note that I haven't seen mentioned often: Marcelo seems to be written as asexual. On one hand, I am pleased with this, as we strongly need more asexual representation, including within the autism spectrum. On the other hand, his asexuality never seemed to be explored as being a legitimate sexuality that exists separately from his autism. I ended up unwillingly reading it as being a "side effect" of his autism, rather than him simply happening to be both autistic and asexual. The fault may be with me, but I would have really appreciated a sign that the author was aware of the pitfalls and stereotypes with regards to linking those two together.

As usual, the bad takes far more explanation than the good. I do think this book does a lot of things right, including about the autism: it never portrays Marcelo as ill or wrong; it respects his point of view and reactions; it doesn't demonize or infantilize his experiences at his school; he makes genuine friends and connections; he has hobbies and interests; he is very aware of his privilege as being able to function in a way that's somewhat acceptable to society at large, unlike many of his classmates; et cetera.

So I would cautiously recommend this book--it's an interesting, quick read--but with reservations.

For a more positive look at the portrayal of autism in this book, check out s.e. smith's review at Disability in Kidlit.

Claudia says

"Her belief is in her deeds." I'm paraphrasing, but one of the characters says this about Marcelo's mother when he worries about her possible loss of faith. The more I thought about this line, the more I realized it applies to each character in this exquisite YA novel. Marcelo's father, the high-powered, self-made lawyer, wants to force Marcelo into the 'real world,' a place Marcelo, with his Aspergers, has been sheltered from...His father believes the 'real world' will toughen Marcelo, make him more competitive. Well, the real

world does change Marcelo forever...he learns so much over the summer working in the mail room of his father's law firm. He learns about betrayal, courage, rules, love, sex; he learns he's stronger than he ever dreamed he was. This is a character who will live in my heart...Marcelo joins the real world, but he learns our belief is in our deeds; he sees through their deeds into the hearts of the people he comes in contact with.

Morgan F says

It's not really a three, but wasn't quite a four.

Seventeen year old Marcelo Sandoval is different. He hears music no one else can hear, his social development is stumped, and his special interests include religion, classical music, and therapy ponies. Marcelo is looking forward to a summer of working as a stable boy at Paterson, a school for kids with special needs, when his father tells him that he must get out of his comfort zone and join the "real world" or else he won't be able to go to Paterson for his senior year. The real world in this case is his father's law firm's mailroom where Marcelo will have to learn how to get along with Jasmine, his beautiful and quirky boss, complete tasks on time, and wade the truth out of all the corporate muck.

I was a tad disappointed in this book. It wasn't Marcelo. I loved him. I could read books in his voice all the time and never get sick of it. It's blunt, but honest and insightful. Marcelo was a great character, and the topic of autism didn't deter me either. I was quite excited to see how he would survive in an average person's reality. I also liked Jasmine and Arturo, as well as Marcelo's fluctuating relationships with them. I didn't like Wendell, but I wasn't supposed to. He was the designated douche.

What I really didn't like was practically the entire middle part which consisted of the "legal thriller". There was nothing thrilling about it. It was dull, and I found the discussions, both internal and external, to be dull too. I just felt that out of all the paths that this book could have taken, why this one? I would have rather liked to see it spent more on Jasmine and Marcelo's stay in Vermont, or with the Rabbi or something. I just didn't like that part.

Marcelo was a great character though, and overall the book was a worth-while experience. I recommend it to anyone looking to get into the head of an autistic kid.

Oh, and the author's name is epic. Francisco X. Stork? Sounds like a James Bond character. I really hope it isn't a pseudonym.

mary says

Εξ αρχής δεν έχω υψηλής προσδοκίες απ' το συγκεκριμένο βιβλίο αφού ο λόγος που το πήρα για να το διαβάσω ήταν για να το ξεφορτωθώ απ' το ράφι των αδιβαστών στο οποίο βρίσκταν εδ' και τρ'α χρ'νια.Δεν έχω ιδέα τι θα διβάζα να υπ'ροχο συγκινητικό και τρυφερό μυθιστόρημα που θα με επηράζει τόσο βαθιά.

Ο Μαρσ'λο είναι να δεκαεφτάχρονο αγόρι που π'σχει απ' το σ'νδρομο σπेγκερ σε πια μορφή.Συν'θως μιλάει στο τρ'το ενικό πρ'σωπο, δυσκολε'εται να κατανο'σει την μεταφορική χρ'ση της γλ'σσας, προσφώνε' τους γονε'ς του με το μικρ' τους 'νομα, αγαπ' την μουσική και τα 'λογα και το «ειδικ' ενδιαφ'ρον» 'πως ο 'διος το αποκάλε' και είναι να στοιχε'ο που

χαρακτηρ?ζει τα αυτιστικ? παιδι?, ε?ναι ?τι αφορ? τη θρησκε?α.Ο πατ?ρας του Μαρσ?λο θ?λοντας να το φ?ρει πιο ?ντονα σε επαφ? με τον αληθιν? κ?σμο αποφασ?σει την τελευτα?α χρονι?, να τον στε?λει σε ?να κανονικ? σχολε?ο και ?χι στο ειδικ? που π?ει μ?χρι στιγμ?ς.Για να καταφ?ρει να τον προετοιμ?σει γι αυτ?, τον β?ζει να δουλ?ψει στο δικηγορικ? του γραφε?ο για ?λο το καλοκα?ρι.Εκε? ο Μαρσ?λο θα κ?νει φ?λους, ?πως την ?μορφη και δυνανικ? Τζ?σμιν, αλλ? και εχθρο?ς ?πως τον Γου?ντελ τον κακομαθημ?νο γι? του συν?ταιρου του πατ?ρα του.Αυτ? ?μως που θα δρ?σει καταλυτικ? στον Μαρσ?λο ε?ναι η ανακ?λυψη στα κουτι? του γραφε?ου, μιας φωτογραφ?ας εν?ς παραμορφωμ?νου κοριτσιου? που θα τον οδηγ?σει στο να ανακαλ?ψει ποιος πραγματικ? ε?ναι ο ?διος και για το τι ε?ναι ικανο? να κ?νουν οι ?νθρωποι γ?ρω του. Αυτ? το βιβλ?ο με ?κανε πραγματικ? να αναρωτηθ? π?σο κακο? μπορε? να γ?νουμε οι ?νθρωποι απ?ναντι στο δικ? μας συμφ?ρον, και π?σο καλο? μπορο?ν να αποδειχθo?ν κ?ποια ?τομα που δεν μπορο?με καν να φανταστο?με.Ο Μαρσ?λο παρ?λο που φαντ?ζει ψυχρ?ς στα μ?τια μας καθ?ς δεν εκδηλ?νει κανεν?ς ε?δους συνα?σθημα, ο?τε χαρ? ο?τε λ?πη, αποδεικν?εται πιο αγν?ς πιο καλoσυν?τος και πιο αθ?ος απ? ?λα τα ?τομα που τον περιτριγυρ?ζουν.Επιλ?γει το σωστ? και το δ?καιο ανεξ?ρτητα αν αυτ? πληγ?σει ανθρ?πους για τους οπο?ους νοι?ζεται και αυτ? η παρ?ξενη λογικ? του και η ειλικρ?νεια του ε?ναι που τον κ?νουν τ?σο ξεχωριστ? και τ?σο αξιαγ?πητο. Ο αυτισμ?ς δεν ε?ναι μια ασθ?νεια που κ?νει τους ανθρ?πους να υστερο?ν σωματικ?, γνωστικ? ? ψυχικ? απ? τους υπ?λοιπους.Τους κ?νει απλ? να ακολουθο?ν ?ναν πολ? διαφορετικ? τρ?πο σκ?ψης χωρ?ς αυτ? να σημα?νει πως ε?ναι πως ε?ναι χαζο? ? ?νθρωποι χωρ?ς συναισθ?ματα.Ο Μαρσ?λο δεν κλα?ει,δεν γελ?, δεν φα?νεται να στεναχωρι?ται σε δυσ?ρεστες καταστ?σεις, μ?σα του ?μως αισθ?νεται πολλ?.Ε?ναι πρ?θυμος να βοηθ?σει τους γ?ρω του, να κ?νει κ?τι καλ? γι αυτο?ς και δεν εκμεταλλε?εται ο?τε επιλ?γει να πληγ?σει κ?ποιον επ?τηδες.Παρ?λο που ?λοι τον θεωρο?ν καθυστερημ?νο ο Μαρσ?λο αποδεικν?ει πως ?χει ?να μοναδικ? μυαλ? και μια υπ?ροχη προσωπικ?τητα που αξ?ζει πολλ?.

Ο Μαρσ?λο στον πραγματικ? κ?σμο ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο που περν? πολλ? και διαφορετικ? μην?ματα για την φιλ?α,τον κ?σμο, τον Θε?, την ειλικρ?νεια και το π?σο σημαντικ? ε?ναι κ?ποιος να πιστε?ει στον εαυτ? του.Κλε?νοντας το βιβλ?ο ?να τερ?στιο χαμ?γελο σχηματ?στηκε στα χε?λη μου και με κατ?κλυσε μια απρ?σμενη αισιοδοξ?α για τη ζω? και το μ?λλον, κ?τι που μου συμβα?νει πολ? σπ?νια.

Maggie Stiefvater says

I actually finished this book a few days ago, and aside from a general glow of well-being and happiness, I wasn't sure what I thought of it. Was it really a five star book to go on my goodreads page? But then, after recommending it once every single day since then, I've realized . . . yep, it is. It's a quiet book, thanks to the subdued narration style on Marcelo's part, but it's a good one.

Marcelo is a very high-functioning autistic -- so high-functioning that even the label Asperger's doesn't quite fit him. He has been "coddled", to a certain extent, all his life, by being allowed to go to a school for autistic children. His father, a high-powered lawyer, thinks it's well past time for Marcelo to join the real world, as he could've years before. In preparation, he has Marcelo get a summer job at his law office -- a crash course in the real world.

As someone who knows a handful of people very like Marcelo -- people with autistic tendencies more than anything else -- I found this book very true and earnest and sweet. Some reviewers have complained that the narration is inconsistent for an autistic narrator, and yes, it would be if Marcelo was truly autistic. But as is

mentioned several times in the novel, he really could be out in the world functioning if he hadn't gone to his specialized school. I found the inconsistencies to be intentional, showing how Marcelo is making strides towards becoming normal and then sliding back, and then stepping out again.

I found Marcelo a perfectly wonderful narrator -- kind, principled, and very, very honest with both the reader and with others. Watching him "grow up" in the cutthroat atmosphere of the law office was at once heart breaking and satisfying.

I definitely have been recommending this quiet book to all the introverts in my life.

wondering why all my reviews are five stars? Because I'm only reviewing my favorite books -- not every book I read. Consider a novel's presence on my Goodreads bookshelf as a hearty endorsement. I can't believe I just said "hearty." It sounds like a stew.

Christine Jensen says

Approximate Interest Level/Reading Level: High School

Format: Chapter Book

Awards: ALA Best Book for Young Adults (2010), ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults (2010)

At the insistence of his father, Marcelo, a male adolescent with a condition resembling Asperger's Syndrome, is forced to participate in the "real world" by working at his father's law firm over the summer. The typical behaviors of autism, accompanied by atypical introspection and insight, leads Marcelo into the position of contemplating a moral judgement that could ruin his father's law firm.

It may be my special education background, but I did not really like this book. The author never really fully commits to Marcelo's diagnosis, but leads to reader into thinking it is AS by giving the character some of the more stereotypical behaviors associated with the disorder and ignoring the rest in order to create what seems to me to be a false tension and climax. Marcelo's characteristics felt inconsistent and in conflict, similar to an oxymoron.

Disability: Protagonist-Asperger's Syndrome

Lucy Lillianne says

<http://lucy-lillianne.blogspot.cz/201...>

T.V and Book Addict says

Marcelo is a 17 year old guy who has an autistic-like condition, not necessarily Asperger's but similar. He can hear music in his mind, Internal Music (IM). It's like experiencing the feelings one gets when listening to music, except without the music. Marcelo's "special interest" is religion. He often sees his mother's best

friend, a female rabbi even though he's Catholic, to talk about religion and life. Marcelo lives in a tree house, has a dog called Namu, short for Namu Amida Butsu, a Buddhist prayer, so basically everytime you read his name you are praying. Nifty huh?

So far he's been used to attending a school called Paterson for special needs students, but now his lawyer father, Arturo, wants him to get out and experience the "real world" and if he can follow the "rules" he will go to Oak Ridge High School after the summer, which of course Marcelo does NOT want to do because he believes he will not fit in with the other students, but his father insist he work during the summer.

This is how he ends up working at his father's law firm in the mail room, alongside Jasmine and her beautiful azure eyes.

Unfortunately Marcelo has to deal with quite a few problems:

- the a-holes he has to work with (so rude and cruel they can be!)
- the difficult decisions he keeps coming across
- the new discoveries he makes
- how to help the girl in a picture he found in a box marked "trash"
- what to do about one of the a-holes, Wedell who has "things" in mind about Jasmine
- figure out why he can't hear the IM anymore

Reading in Marcelo's POV was incredible. I loved how Stork chose to write this book in that format it makes the reader really connect with Marcelo.

I loved that I could relate to Marcelo, not just because he is Hispanic like me, but because of what he goes through. Okay I'm not autistic, but everyone goes through life and it's many complicated problems. It is different for all of us though of course, but hey what can we do? :D

I think that we, those considered normal, are all abnormal and that Marcelo is the normal one. He is one of the most amazing protagonists I have ever read about and I know I will be reading this book again. It warmed my heart, it really did. This book is one of those books that changes your life and your way of perceiving it.

Here are some of my favorite passages from the book, well the ones that don't spoil anything:

"'Help you for what?' Aurora asked. I missed an opportunity to tell her that it would help me to be like her. That the way she is strong and gentle on behalf of the children will be my way as well. The road seems long. Another year of high school, then college, then a degree in nursing and then work- doing what I can to lessen the hurt in the world. But where? There has to be a place where I belong."

Warning-Warning-Warning -this next passage contains pg-13 material so beware!

"He was still terrified when he rode The Big Woodie [a roller coaster:], but he did it. When he got out, I asked if he was okay. You know what he said?" -Aurora, Marcelo's mom

"No"-Marcelo

"He said, 'I'll tell you when my bolas drop back in their sack.' Then he smiled this huge smile and said, 'Now I can die happy.'" Aurora laughs to herself. I laugh also. I like it when Aurora occasionally uses bad words. Bolas, I know, is a Spanish slang word for testicles. (They also teach us these kind of things at Paterson.) But as soon as I finish laughing, I try to figure out why Aurora chose to tell me this memory of hers at this particular point. I can tell that she is hoping that I will get to the moral of the story on my own. But the story has various messages and I don't know which one to pick. Is Aurora trying to tell me that the law firm is like a scary roller coaster ride where my own testicles will travel up to my throat, figuratively speaking? I have no idea what this feels like, but I sincerely hope this is not the case.

YOU WILL ENJOY THIS BOOK IF YOU LIKE:

- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
 - reading about autism
 - POV of a semi-autistic person
 - life changing novels
 - a protagonist you'll want to have in your life
 - unforgettable novels
 - humor
 - sadness
 - reading about the cruelty of the world
 - coming of age novels
 - love
 - music
 - reading about religion
 - unpredictable novels (gotta love surprises)
 - heart warming novels
 - must reads :D
 - Bless Me Ultima by Adolfo Anaya (I was reminded of this novel)
-

Thomas says

Absolutely stunning. I haven't read a book worthy of five stars in a while, and I am so grateful to my friend for recommending this to me.

Marcelo hears music that no one else can. He has been diagnosed with an impairment similar to autism, but higher-functioning - he can process things but it takes him time, and he is able to adapt to social situations through learning and experience. However, this is not enough to satisfy his father, a powerful and persuasive lawyer. His father decides to have Marcelo work in the mail room of his law firm for the summer, giving him a taste of the real world. He meets Jasmine, his beautiful and no-nonsense coworker, and learns of the greed, jealousy, and beauty of mankind.

This book touched me. There are many words to describe what Stork has achieved created with *Marcelo in the Real World*: poignant, profound, glorious... but when it comes down to it, this is a book that reveals the truth of human nature in its darkest and most illuminated form.

Protagonists like Marcelo only come once in a blue moon - so perfectly toned in voice and dialogue, yet flawed enough to make the reader empathize with him. He has a mental illness similar to Asperger's, but it provides him with an even more secular view of the world. Thought-provoking, inspiring, and even humorous at times, readers will cheer for Marcelo throughout this book and beyond it.

Want to read more of my reviews? Follow me [here](#).

Mike says

This is the best YA book I've read in a long, long time. It's the kind of book that makes me sad that the majority of the genre is filled with gimmicks and pandering, because it's always had the potential to be *so much more*. This book hit a bit close to home for me, but even if you're not compelled by the same moral issues that Marcelo is, I still think this is just a wonderful book that you'll probably enjoy.

Ivy Bookqueen says

This book is good but not for me
Okay here I go
His father is plain mean like he did understand him
When Marcelo wanted to go with Jasmine to visit her dad Marcelo 's dad made a lot excuses like Jasmine didn't she was not there for three whole days
I like Jasmine
She was just nice to Marcelo and care about him
Than there was a Wendell
Wendell was trying to make friends with Marcelo but he was just using him to Jasmine to club
Marcelo was the best character
The thing about him is he had to learn to accept the changes in life
Even though it was hard for him to understand the real world he didn't give up he just went for it
What I learned:.
Change can be hard but sometimes we have to move on and fight

C.G. Drews says

Gosh. ANOTHER book I had a super hard time rating. **I really loved the characters/writing, but the plot?**
Ugh. It was *not* my thing at all. I have a lot of problems with this book. I love it a lot, but I'm giving it a 3. Am I confusing you? Okay, okay. Let's talk about this.

The characters were simultaneously brilliant and frustrating. The narrator is Marcelo. He's about 16 (I'm not sure, exactly, but he'll be entering his last year of high school after the summer). He's on the Apserger's Spectrum and hears music in his head. I like how he's portrayed. Compared to other AS books, it feels just as real and compelling. I loved how Marcelo though...his problem solving, the way he interacted with people. (I kind of related to him a lot, too. But. Whatever.) So what bugged me? Mostly his parents.

His mum was fantastic! She was so sweet and kind. She never got riled, even though Marcelo would be a very hard person to relate to and live with. She just loved him through everything. I. LOVE. HER. I think there should be more parents like this in literature. Because a lot of kids DO have super awesome parents who work hard to relate to their kids and care for them. These parents shouldn't be a minority! So, the problem? Well, first off, Marcello's parents were "Arturo" and "Aurora" and I don't know about you, but I got them confused a LOT. And then **Marcelo's dad was a real straight-down-the-line dude who drove me CRAZY.** He was just so...argh! Everything was as-he-saw it. He wanted Marcelo to "enter the real world". Which was the world HE lived in. None of this Marcelo-is-different-and-that's-okay. I felt the dad was so *ashamed* of his son. It hurt me so bad. PLUS, get this, he wanted to pull Marcelo out of Paterson (which is the school Marcelo's gone to for all his life) and send him to a public school for his last year of high school. There is SO MUCH wrong with this, it drives me crazy! First of all, you don't up-end any kid.

Changing schools can be a really traumatic experience. And if Marcelo has AS, then routine is everything. (And he says this all throughout the book.) But the dad doesn't want him in a "special school". He wants Marcelo to be "in the real world". I think he's narrow minded and I spent a lot of the book being very angry at him. Aurora makes up for the dad though.

Okay! Sorry. Little rant there. On to other things?

The writing was fantastic! I loved the crispness of it. There's next to no detail, except for the super important stuff. And Marcelo has a real unique angle, so it's very interesting to read. I love it.

The plot? To be honest, it was all over the place. Maybe it reflected real life fine, but for a book, I felt like the author was never sure what he wanted to accomplish. At first it was about Marcelo's mental music. Then it was about Marcelo's obsession with religion (which was very interesting, but didn't go into ludicrous detail, so if you're not into religion, you probably will still be okay). THEN it was about being a lawyer and complicated lawyer-politics. THEN it was about relationships with people and...you see what I mean? I think all of these could be melded together better. As it was, it seemed ragged. And we got everything in blocks. It didn't all weave through. Like there's next-to-no mention of the mental music after the beginning. I was sad about that, because I really love musical books.

All in all, it's an excellent book and totally worth reading. If you loved "The Curious Case of The Dog in the Night-Time" you will probably like this. Although I don't think they're on the same level (this one lacks a bit). I loved the unique perspective and the end almost made me cry. Marcelo is the best.
