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A happy young cockroach named Shoebag awakens one morning to find that he has been transformed into a little boy. A highly original story crammed with clever detail, action, insight, and humor.--Kirkus Reviews, pointed review. American Bookseller Pick of the Lists; School Library Journal Best Book of the Year.

Shoebag Details

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Author : Mary James

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From Reader Review Shoebag for online ebook

Candi Olsen says

I enjoyed this book. 4.5

My 5 yr old struggled a little with the bully and we had to put it down for a LONG time when the bully starts to beat up Shoebag. She did end up giving it 3 stars though.

Angelica says

Shoebag is one of the first books that I have read and as a child, it made me cry. It shows how important it is to allow kids to be kids and it also shows how important friendship is. It is perfect for kids who are just about to start school and also for those who somehow experienced bullying or suffering because of stereotypes.

Rebecca says

I think my brother got this book from a book order (remember those?) when he was in middle school. Shoebag is the story of a cockroach who wakes up one day to find himself a human boy. Sound familiar? There's more -- he's befriended by the coolest guy in school, the mysterious Gregor Samsa.

That's right -- this book is an inversion of Kafka's The Metamorphosis for young adult readers. It's weird but has a lot of heart.

Elaine Hoffer says

I found this book on a shelf of free books at an elementary school. It is about a cockroach who turns into a boy. It is quite comical in that the names of the cockroach family members are the names of where they were born. Shoebag, drainboard, under the toaster, etc. It was fun to read about this little boy and his adventures after he went from a cockroach to a little boy.

Alexis says

A story of a cockroach named shoebag who mysteriously becomes a little boy one day. Shoebag must learn how to deal with the new changes. Great novel to demonstrate audience and the writer's role and purpose. The story of Shoebag and those he meets kind of ends a bit abruptly as if author ran out of paper to finish the story in detail.

Rhapsody says

This was the summer reading book for when I went into the fourth grade. All the kids were talking about how lousy it was when school started, but I really liked it. Of course, then one kid had personality enough to say he liked it and everyone immediately agreed. Elementary school is the worst!

Shoebag is a cockroach who was born in a shoebag, hence his name. He is magically transformed into a boy and adopted by the human family that finds him hiding in the closet. His foster-sister is a child about his same age and a model. He starts going to school and learning about humans. The book raises questions beauty and appearance and seeing past people's surfaces. Eventually, as I recall (and this was a LONG time ago), he has to decide between returning to his cockroach family or staying as a human boy.

It was a really fun, charming read. I love stories in which people/creatures are transformed and have to experience the world in a completely new way.

Aditi says

This book messed me up as a child. I was thinking about it for weeks after I finished. I really need to reread it and see if I still respond to it the way my elementary school brain did.

Rebecca McNutt says

I loved the new perspective that this adorable little book offers; Shoebag is a loveable character (god, I never thought I'd be saying that about a *cockroach*!), and his adventures and antics are as well-written as they are hilarious.

Riley Singleton says

This book is very confusing maybe you will.

Jenn says

Shoebag follows the transformation of a young cockroach into a human boy, and the mis-adventures that ensue. Based heavily on the classic, *Metamorphosis*, by Franz Kafka, this novel seeks to apply a similar concept to a children's story. Children can relate to the boy's feelings of being out-of-place, picked on, and awkward- who hasn't gone through such a phase in adolescence? However, readers must quickly become comfortable with following a cockroach for a protagonist, and sympathizing with something we're more likely to step on in real life. While reading this did not create in me a soft-spot for insects, it did remind me of the importance of being true to oneself, looking at life from another angle, and walking a mile in someone else's shoes. We really do not know what people around us have been through, come from, or where they are going.

Kate Foran says

Shoebag was my favorite book when I was in 3rd grade. 20 years later, I'm teaching 4th grade and I find 10 copies of Shoebag collecting dust in a closet.

Shoebag is even better now. Maybe because I've read *Metamorphoses* or because I've had actual experience with cockroaches...

This book is absurd and laugh out loud funny, but realistic. The roach family relationships are complex and believable (human?).

The I have a group of 4th graders reading this and they keep snorting with laughter at the ridiculousness. They're also having some breakthroughs about characterization and character development.

Alison says

I read this book in 5th grade. I am adding it now because I wanted to designate it as THE. WORST. BOOK. EVER. For one thing, the plot is about a cockroach. Who turns into a boy. Seriously. Even though it's been a while, I remember that the plot had giant gaping holes, the morals were vague, and the characters either extremely odd or just plain sad. Also, I hate the title, but maybe that's just because I loathed the book. When I looked this up on Goodreads, I found that there is a sequel. Argh.

Bill says

Say you're a cockroach, and suddenly you day you find yourself turning into ... a little boy! That's the gist of this M.E. Kerr kickoff of what looks to be a series, starring 'Shoebag', his cockroach name, or Stuart Bagg, his human name.

And what does Showbag, turned Stuart Bagg, discover as a human? Bullying, a school with the usual pecking order, a 'sister' who has been in a couple of TV ads and sees herself as some kind of star – but he also has friends, including Gregor Samsa, yup, the very same guy turned cockroach of Kafka's memorable tale.

With all this going for her, M.E. Kerr has given us what seems to me to be a rough draft – her ending is too abrupt – she needs to have her Stuart Bagg think over his experiences as a human – and perhaps the dangers of being a cockroach.

Trin says

Found out about this when I was looking into Kockroach, a recent reverse-Metamorphosis tale. This one's a kids' book from about 15 years ago with a similar premise: a cockroach wakes up one morning to find he's turned into a person. That's what I call awesome-strange; the actual book, however, is...bizarre-confusing-strange. There's all kinds of weird stuff about the family that adopts Shoebag-turned-Stuart: the daughter is a child actress who shills toilet paper, and frankly I don't know what to make of any of it; I have *no idea* what I would have made from it when I was in the appropriate age group. But, um. Maybe I had a more flexible mind then? *wanders away, disconcerted*

SJ Loria says

This was a charming book about change and a child's moral perspective on the world. I think the book fills a rather pressing need of books that build a child's ethical understanding of the world. It is quite strong in its critique of the cult of appearance, celebrity culture, and the desire to fit what other people think. It also builds up accepting change and being comfortable with who you are, although to a lesser poignancy than its critique of appearances. It was a rather simple book, nothing mind blowing, probably best for 2-3rd graders (or teachers, who have to read this sort of thing to stay with what's current).
