



The Edumacation of Jay Baker

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From Booklist:

Starred Review The magic lies in the telling. Jay, a large-hearted wiseass who's nearly impossible to dislike, has a narrative patter so deeply laced with groaner puns, pop-culture bombs, and warp-speed free associations that it's almost a new language. It's an argot he shares with vivacious Cam (whose real name, hilariously, is Cameo Appearance Parnell), but after he gets rebuffed trying to share a bit more with her, he starts seeing another cutie who's more or less the anti-Cam. While their awkward love triangle takes shape, Jay's parents get mired in their own supremely embarrassing love-life disaster. To help him out of his funk, Jay's government teacher (who can match him bon mot for bon mot) challenges him to use his considerable powers of clever to write a school blog. OK, so it's not the most thrilling goal ever, but getting there is both flippantly fun and surprisingly resistant to ironic detachment. Most of all, though, Jay's smarts, originality, and warmth make the old teen trope of the hot girl(s) falling for the doofus guy actually believable. Grades 8-11. --Ian Chipman

The Edumacation of Jay Baker Details

Date : Published January 31st 2012 by Henry Holt & Company

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Author : Jay Clark

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Genre : Humor, Realistic Fiction, Young Adult, Teen

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From Reader Review *The Edumacation of Jay Baker* for online ebook

Rob says

3.5 stars. This one eventually won me over despite trying waaaaayyyy too hard, coming off like *Juno* hopped up on blue meth. Everyone, from the titular narrator on down, is hipper than hip, speaking in a stilted, slangy patois that resembles nothing on Earth. Even the characters' names are obnoxious: Jay has a long-time crush on his best friend since childhood, Cameo "Appearance" Parnell. Never have I seen a writer working so hard; you can almost smell author Jay Clark's flop sweat.

But somehow it all pulls together. Jay's voice is an acquired taste that eventually grew on me, and his struggles – girl problems, separated parents, a contentious rivalry with a classmate – rang true despite all the stylistic affectations. And I have to admit it was kind of nice to read a Young Adult novel that didn't seem to want to be much more than a funny diversion; the heaviest this thing gets is when Jay gets assigned to write a blog by his social studies teacher. In all, it's a fast, breezy read that makes a nice break in between weightier YA books that tackle the Big Issues.

Estelle says

I think Jay Clark definitely writes the books he wants to read. I feel like I'm getting a huge glimpse into his brain. Now onto the book: I didn't love this one as much as *Finding Mr. Brightside*, but I did like that we have this main character shielding his real feelings in piles of piles of pop culture references and jokes. Most of all, his parents relationship is a huge part of the story and I don't think I've read another YA where a parent's separation plays so much into the course of the book. I thought that was excellent because beneath all the quirk, it's a serious plot line with many messy feelings. (Another part of Jay's style.) Also there's a GREAT teacher in this book who knows her crap, and does her best by her students. Loved it.

Jay Clark, I enjoy you and would like more of your books please. This story is overflowing with personality like I've NEVER read in any other YA. Certainly a unique voice in this book category.

Josh Herlands says

I give this book, *The Edumacation of Jay Baker*, 4 out of 5 stars. Jay Clark, the author, did a fabulous job with how he wrote the story. The plot was also very intriguing. I couldn't put it down. The book is about Jay Baker, an awkward teen who deals with issues most kids hope they never have to go through themselves. During the story, Clark would put in a lot of references to other books, movies and TV shows. There were some that I didn't quite understand. Even though I missed some of them, the storyline still made sense to me and I got the sense of what Jay was feeling. The plot can connect to teenagers very well. It has things that teenagers may struggle with in their life. Connecting to one of the scenarios Jay goes through really deepened my understanding and liking for the book. Even if you are not a teenager now, you would still like this book because it may remind you what your life was like back when you were in high school. A quote that is written on the cover of Clark's book is, "You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll feel awkward by association." I like this quote because you start to understand what Jay, the character, may be like before you

even open the book. The book lived up to the quote. I didn't cry but it definitely felt awkward and funny throughout the story. All in all, the book was very good. Don't you want to know what makes this Jay seem so awkward?

Mason Christopher Smith says

How would you feel if your mother was cheating on your father with your crush/bestfriend's dad. This is the predicament that Jay Baker finds himself in in *The Edumacation of Jay Baker* by Jay Clark. The book tells the story of a highschool freshman who must overcome his awkward situation all while dealing with the everyday struggles of teenage life such as the class election, his teachers, and of course... girls.

The book is fairly easy to comprehend, but the author does incorporate many pop culture references that can be confusing to the unedumacated. These references are mostly clever comebacks or metaphors from Jay which seem pretty unrealistic for anyone say or even come up with on the fly, let alone a highschool freshman. I think that the author might have reflected some of his character onto Jay's (hence the same first name), and gave Jay some quotes that he wishes he would have had the brain and guts to say when he was in high school. I did thoroughly enjoy how the chapter titles were a play on the words of song titles, and at the end of the book, I was provided with a magnificent playlist to listen to while reading each chapter. If you're a teenager looking for a relatable book with a little extra spice, and don't mind flipping through mounds of pop culture innuendos, this is the book for you.

Jenna says

If you're looking for a fun, quirky, quick read, narrated by a sarcastic teenage boy, then this book is for you.

Jay Baker, is just an ordinary 15-year old freshman, with a very sarcastic and smart humor that will make you laugh, cry, and all things in the middle. The story is actually simple, but the way he narrates and reacts to the situation is hilarious and interesting. His parents are divorcing, he's confused with his love life. It's actually understandable, he is young and still lacks the maturity older people have because of the many experiences they have in life. He is in the crossroad in his life, and reading about it is not only entertaining but it also brought light and some wisdom to me. I just love the book!

The Rusty Key says

Reviewed by Rusty Key Writer: Abigail Tyson

Recommended For: Both boys and girls aged 14 and up for moderate teenage sexuality and language.

One Word Summary: Overzealous.

In young adult literature nowadays, there are not enough books geared towards boys. Of course, many include boys and the problems boys grapple with sometimes happen peripherally to the main story, but there aren't a plethora of books written with teenage boys in mind. In *The Edumacation of Jay Baker*, Jay Clark strives to remedy this imbalance. How well he succeeds at this undertaking is up for debate, but his good

intentions might make up for his obsession with his own narrative devices that, while not unoriginal, are not anything to write home about.

Jay Baker is your every-day fifteen-year old boy. He has a huge crush on his gorgeous, cheerleader best friend, struggles to keep his cool (and dignity) when his bully emasculates him, has another crush on a different beautiful girl, and is trying not to lose his mind while his sweet-as-pie family starts falling apart. Add in somewhat uncontrollable irritable bowel syndrome and being forced to run for student council president, and Jay's life is generally unenviable. But over the course of a few months, he learns through much trial and error that although his life isn't perfect, it is certainly manageable (and can be utterly fun).

As stated before, it is clear from the very beginning that Clark wrote this book for boys who don't have many characters to relate to in current young adult literature. While his intentions are clear and are in the right place, the quality of the story suffered from an author who wanted too badly for his main character to be the most boyish he could be. From talking openly about porn (using witty euphemisms, of course), to describing how sexy the female characters' breasts are – Jay Baker is as close to an adolescent guy as it gets. However, it's not effective. Young men are just as complex and multi-dimensional as young women, and reducing Jay to a stereotype is not doing justice to male characters. Yes, men of all ages think about sex, but Jay being sex-crazy and immature does not make him easy to relate to; it makes him a caricature of adolescent boys. It is also clear by looking at Clark's biography that he based the titular character off of himself (his wife is even named Caroline, which is the name of Jay's tennis-playing crush), so one might assume the character would have a bit more depth.

On another note: every single character was unusually witty. Although there were many hilarious lines and laugh-out-loud scenes, the reader is taken out of the story when the fifteen-year-old main characters make clever references to 80's new wave. Once again, it feels as though Clark wants the story and characters to be fun and relatable, but the dialogue reads as pretentious and cocky. What is frustrating is that the devices used to tell the story (sometimes using "Character Name: Dialogue" instead of traditional quotes, quickly breaking the fourth wall, etc.) aren't entirely hackneyed and could even be seen as refreshing. Unfortunately, the execution is the downfall, in that Clark shoves how clever he finds himself down the reader's throat.

The Edumacation of Jay Baker is a story with heart and excitement, but perhaps too much of each. Jay is likable, but the painstaking effort to make him thoroughly boyish is off-putting and takes away from the experience of what could actually be a very funny and charming story. The dialogue is clever, but too clever for the characters and unnatural. Although if one can get past those blemishes on an otherwise pleasant and entertaining story, then it has the potential to be a worthwhile read – especially for boys.

For more reviews, author interviews, reading lists and articles from The Rusty Key, visit us at www.rustykey.com

Lisa says

Jay Baker's got trouble, right here in River City. Trouble with a capital T, and that rhymes with B, and that stands for—better luck next time? You got that pop culture reference, right Mr. Baker? After all, the ones you fling at your readers span decades beyond the referential zingers any typical high schooler would have in his arsenal of snark. They also, alas, get in the way of the story you're trying to tell, making readers take time out of the narrative to figure out just exactly what you're trying to say.

Having said that, *The Edumacation of Jay Baker* isn't all bad. Amidst the overwhelming tide of female voices in teen literature today, it's always refreshing to have a male protagonist—even if he is angsty over the women in his life in a voice that misses the mark of feeling authentic. His surprisingly strong bond with his older sister is a positive spot too. They snark at each other as most siblings are wont to do, but there's still a deep love present, and it helps both of them deal with the situation of their parents' marriage imploding.

The plot itself is nothing new, but nothing bad either. In more capable hands, the family drama and a shifting of affections from one girl to another while not groundbreaking, is not an unwelcome addition to the shelves. This particular book, however, is done in by a mismanagement of words.

Shaleh says

I went through this highschool comedy pretty fast. I wasn't particularly blown away. The humor is often pun based, not that I mind puns, but there are few other types of jokes. Situational humor was almost non-existent -- and that's my favorite kind.

I read this book for the tagline. *You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll feel awkward by association.* That tagline sold me. It's a good thing it did, because the cover is lackluster and the name is very stupid.

It sort of lacks plot and rambles. But that being said, Jay is a fun character. I didn't mind following him through his freshman year. His attempts to woo Margo Roth Spiegelman (*Paper Towns*) were cute but not overly original (as the Booklist review suggests). Caroline, the other girl, is flat. You don't really care about her two wits... so that was disappointing.

Welp. Yeah.

Sasha says

Jay Baker is the quintessential teenage boy. He's snarky, he's hilarious, he's sarcastic - and I liked him. His family life seems to be pretty normal; however, that's just what it looks like on the outside. He's in love with his best friend and she may or may not return his feelings and then there's a potential new love interest in the new girl at school.

I really, really liked the Jay Baker. He is exactly what I think a teenage boy should sound like. Male main characters in YA are scarce and sometimes they seem too feminine or not quite boy-ish enough for me. Jay Baker was EXACTLY how I thought a teenage boy should and would act. Did I agree with some of the stuff he did or said? No, but that's probably what makes my case that he's a believable character.

I also really liked the way the story unfolded. And it totally did not end the way that I expected, which was really refreshing. These days it seems like I can see things coming from a mile away, but not here. And these twist and turns are realistic.

I know 3 stars makes it seem like I didn't like it, but I did! The only thing that I think the younger folks would have a problem with are the pop culture references. I, personally, thought they were hilarious and understood most of them; however, since the target audience of YA is 12-18 years old, I don't know that the

pop culture jokes would resonant with them the way it did with me. Oh and, it didn't end exactly how I would have liked. But that's just my opinion.

Definitely pick up this 2012 Debut book when you're in the mood for lots of laughs, a good contemporary story, and/or a boy POV! I enjoyed it!

Susan says

ugh. can I punch Jay, please? Hard? I can't stand him or his sense of humor or his infatuationn with his best friend and if Cameo had fallen for him by the end of the book I was going to scream. Best just stop.

Jaila says

This book is... cute. It's not worth raiding shelves for, but it's somewhat amusing. The main problem is that the book liked itself way too much. It was funny, but not exactly laugh-out-loud funny. It had a few moments. The plot was insanely predictable, but this is the kind of story carried by the humor and pop-culture references (which are way too in-your-face. Seriously, one reference was "Viva La Chicken!" in reference to Viva La Vida. It's *supposed* to be ridiculous, I know, but that just screamed "trying too hard"). The falling-apart family aspect was somewhat interesting, but not very engaging.

A good way to put it is this: Jay Clarke writes like Jordan Sonnenblick, but, to put it frankly, worse.

Okay, to be honest, despite my gripes, this book isn't bad at all. It's just a little obnoxious and, like I said before, it loves itself *way too much*. But if you want to read a clever, funny book, go read Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie. It's remarkably similar and aimed at a younger audience, but it's cleverer and funnier than Edumacation. Trust me on this one.

Sarah Nessler says

Well again I was looking forward to reading this book since I know the author! I still need to ask him if he will sign my copy. It was a fantastic book all about issues in high school things that a lot of kids can understand on multiple levels. It is refreshing to see that this is not just a typically YA book that it is geared toward another audience other than the middle school age that most books tend to lean towards. Middle school holds many different issues but high school also holds its own different beasts. I have noticed watching my nieces grow how much pressures in life have truly changed since I have been in school which is scary and shocking. I am hoping more people read this to get more ideas on some issues in school and home life that can and do occur. Thank you Jay Clark I loved it!

Jake says

“Here was my chance. Rather than wait for Mike to strike, I could preempt him with a gutterball of my own-serve notice I wasn't going to let his muffin top me without a fight.” I read the realistic fiction book the

Edumacation of Jay Baker by Jay Clark. It is pretty good, very surprising and funny. This book is placed in modern time and in a small town of Ohio. It's about a fifteen-year-old boy named Jay Baker and his new blog is helping him get through high school, as he faces his enemy in a school debate, meets the girl of his dreams, and finally he watches his parents relationship crumble.

I enjoyed the plot because it was very surprising. When reading this book you will never know what's going to happen next, and what's better than a book where you never know what's going to happen? For instance, when Jay and Caroline were playing a friendly match of tennis, and then Mike came up to Jay. Mike was talking crap about Jay and he was trying to fight him. How would you ever think that would happen?

Next, the book has some strange dialogue. In this book the characters say some mean stuff. An example of strange dialogue is when Jay says this to Mike: "Yeah but I'll always have your mom to comfort me."

Third, the characters words and actions are very aggressive. In this book, they call each other mean names, and Mike and Jay push each other around a lot. An example of this is when Mike and Jay saw each other at lunch. They started talking and Jay ended up getting slammed in a register.

Finally, there are different and unique characters in the book. The characters are unique because in other books the characters are usually standard, but these characters were not. Jay Baker, the main character uses sarcasm a lot and Caroline, Jay's dream girl is very good at tennis, but she doesn't even enjoy it that much.

These types of people are usually not found in books.

In conclusion, the Edumacation of Jay Baker is an all around pretty good book. Jay Clark, the author was inspired to write the book because he had awkward high school experience and he's a funny guy just like the characters in the book. It has a surprising plot and you never know what's going to happen. It has strange dialogue, the characters are aggressive in their actions and words. Lastly, the characters are different and unique. So overall, I suggest reading the book if you are eleven or older.

Heidi says

"Three and a half Stars: A witty tale of a teenage boy coping with teenage and adult drama.

Jay is a freshman dealing with the typical angst that plagues teenage boys. Raging hormones, unrequited feelings for his best friend, bully problems, and all the awkwardness that comes with being a teenager. His burdens become heavier when his parents announce they are separating on a trial basis. His dad is a workaholic and not home much. Consequently, his mother started up an affair with a low life, who just happens to be the father of one of his friends. Things go from bad to worse as Jay grapples with his family being torn apart, his arch nemesis, Mike, continues his ruthless taunts, Cameo, his best friend and love interest starts dating another dirt bag and he fails miserably in the debate for class president. There is a sliver of light at the end of the tunnel. A new girl, Caroline, comes to town and he forms a fast relationship with her. Will Jay somehow survive his unpleasant and geeky teenage years?

Three and a half stars: A witty tale of a teenage boy coping with teenage and adult drama.

What I Liked:

*This is one of those books you grab when you are in the mood for a mindless, funny read. It is a novel full of everything you expect when following a somewhat nerdy teenage boy: bathroom humor, loads of sexual references, awkwardness and plenty of hilarious antics. This is a book you can pick up and put down because the plot is simplistic and perfect for days when your mind is tired.

*I loved being in Jay's head. There are so many funny and witty comments in this book that will have you snorting and laughing out loud (seriously the type where you really do laugh, none of that fake LOL crap when you don't mean it). For whatever reason I enjoy following the ridiculous thought process of a teenage

boy. Be prepared for loads of crude bathroom references (Jay suffers from Irritable Bowel Syndrome) and non stop thoughts on sex as well as self deprecating type remarks. This book will introduce you to many new sexual euphemisms and innuendos. If you are not the type that appreciates teenage boy humor, this book is not for you.

*While on the surface this book is billed as a humorous book I appreciate that it dealt with some very real issues. There are three characters, Jay, Cameo and Caroline, who have parents with some major problems. Jay and his sister Abby are dealing with the break up of their family due to their mother's infidelity. I liked watching how each of the siblings grappled with the situation differently and how they experienced a gamut of emotions. Especially for Jay the feelings he has regarding the issue are interesting. At the end I applauded his mature decision when new allegations come to light. The way he confronts his mother and deals with the problem show a marked growth and new found maturity.

*I loved the relationship between Jay and his sister Abby. Abby as a senior, of course, is obsessed with her boyfriend, popularity and cell phone, and her brother is the least of her concerns. As the events unfurl, the two bond and rediscover the importance of sibling relationships. The way Abby nonchalantly looks out for her little brother is adorable. I loved the late night floor sleep overs and the phone texts that Jay uses to get his sister's attention and most of all the way she fiercely protects him, but don't tell her friends that. This was my favorite aspect of the story.

*I liked how on the chapters are a play on real song titles which the author lists at the end of the book. You get such gems as: "Dad Likes Her Butt And He Cannot Lie", "I Just Called To Say I'm Pooping", "Give Me One Reason Not To Shoot Myself In The Face." These are: "Baby Got Back", Sir Mix A Lot, "I Just Called To Say I Love You", Stevie Wonder and "Give Me One Reason", Tracy Chapman.

*Finally, I mentioned in some of my previous reviews that coming of age books where characters deal with some major issues and at the end exhibit marked growth are some of my favorite reads. I thoroughly enjoyed the steps toward maturity that Jay takes and the way he comes to terms with the issues surrounding his family. Also I admired how he reconciles his feelings regarding Caroline and Cameo, and the resolution of his ongoing feud with Mike where he discovers they might have more in common than they realized. At the end you can chart his progress and see he is on his way to becoming a more mature adult... well he is trying, I doubt he will give up his bathroom/sex jokes.

And The Not So Much:

*One of my big issues in this book was that it is kind of all over. There is no clear plot line. You get a bunch of random scenes that flicker all over the map. It does not follow a neat, cohesive story line. The humor spices it up and keeps you entertained but more than a few times the jokes went over my head because they felt more like inside jokes and they were often lost on me.

*I wish Jay's father was more involved. In the beginning he has a main role but as the story progresses he is absent, a background character. Jay's mother is a strong presence and you get to see her viewpoint which I liked, I wish his father's perspective was shown. I would have liked to know his father's reaction to his mother's final revelation.

*I wanted a bit more resolution of the parental issues that Caroline and Cameo faced. Both girls dealt with difficult situations and I would like to see how they settled out; especially for Cameo, her home life was a mess.

The Educumacation of Jay Baker is an entertaining read that explores the angst and drama in an average teenage boy's life. It is ridiculous and full of crude humor and sexual references. It is not all fun and games, though. This book depicts a young man learning that his parents aren't the models of perfection he always believed them to be. They are human and fallible just like everyone else. If you are not the type (a deviant like me) that appreciates this type of humor then this is not a book for you. If you want something light, funny but also a book with mature changes pick this one up.

Favorite Quotations:

“Eyebrows raised, Dad was looking might surprised by my sudden rebellious streak. Normally such a square peg, I’d gone and dug myself a round grave.”

“Even a confident, accomplished career man like Jim Baker could be shattered by his wife checking out a copy of another guy’s Moby Dick.”

“Ah, fart jokes. A common denominator bringing everyone closer together since Adam let forth the first one in front of Eve.”

“I’m a parent, Jay,” she replied. “I have guilt that goes on for miles. The pollution of my life.”

“The least Keith could have done was driven a different vehicle. His rust-bucket van wasn’t fit to take a dump in, and the last thing our family needed was for it to be parked outside Mom’s---flashing a sign to the world that he was Magna-Doodling her on a regular basis.”

A big thanks to Jay Clark and also to his publisher, Henry Holt and Co. (BYR) for kindly providing me a copy for review purposes.

Stop by <http://rainydayramblings.typepad.com/> for a chance to win a copy.

April says

The Edumacation Of Jay Baker by Jay Clark is a young adult contemporary novel about a boy whose parents are divorcing and the effects of the divorce on him. Jay is an average freshman boy for the most part, he’s got a huge crush on his best friend Cameo Parnell, is running for student government and has an enemy, Mike Hibbert, who likes to rhyme Jay with other words.

Read the rest of my review here
