

Novel Reviews

Carol Gorman "Dork in Disguise" 1999. Harper Collins Publishers: NY, NY.

Sixth-grader Jerry Flack just moved to a new school, and desperately wants to shed his dorky reputation. Hoping to become part of the "cool" crowd, as well as pursue the beautiful Cinnamon, Jerry learns the finer points of being cool. With the help of a few desperate lies and his new friend Brenda, a fellow science geek, Jerry works his way into the cool crowd. Slowly his tangled web of lies begins to fall down around him, and he can no longer hide his inner dork. Torn between hanging out with the cool kids and his love of science, Jerry soon realizes that he would rather spend time being himself with Brenda and the science team than the air-headed delinquents that make up the popular crowd. While the plot lacks originality, the dialogue is humorous enough to make this a worthwhile read. Jerry's self-acceptance and popularity is inevitable, but there are a few surprises revealed within the personalities of other characters. No consequences are presented for the lies, which take away from the otherwise realistic storyline. Highlights of the book include the science lessons presented throughout, which could help hold the interest of those less interested in the politics of popularity. Great for both boys and girls, this book is recommended for middle school and elementary school libraries, as well as public libraries serving children ages 8-12.

Coleen Murtagh Paratore "The Wedding Planner's Daughter" Simon & Schuster

Books for Young Readers: NY, NY.

Stella Havisham, the renowned Cape Cod wedding planner, has been safeguarding her heart ever since the loss of her husband. Unfortunately for twelve year-old Willa, this means that the two of them are always on the move as Stella tries to run from her sorrow, making it impossible for Stella to find the father Willa wishes for. Finally returning to her hometown, Stella sets up business and Willa settles herself into her new home. With a new best friend and her Nana nearby, Willa tries to get her mother to date the handsome and poetic Sam. Just as Stella is coming out of her shell and falling for Sam, Willa ruins Stella's celebrity event, putting Stella back on guard and on the run. It is up to Willa to take drastic steps to get everything back together. This story draws the reader in with Willa's humorous and upbeat narrative of a frustrating life. However, like many stories told by twelve year-old girls, it can be a bit scattered at times, which may confuse some readers. Readers can grow with Willa in their understanding of Stella, despite the stereotypical portrayal of an absent, distant mother. Pre-teen girls will be able to relate to many of the emotions and events in Willa's life.