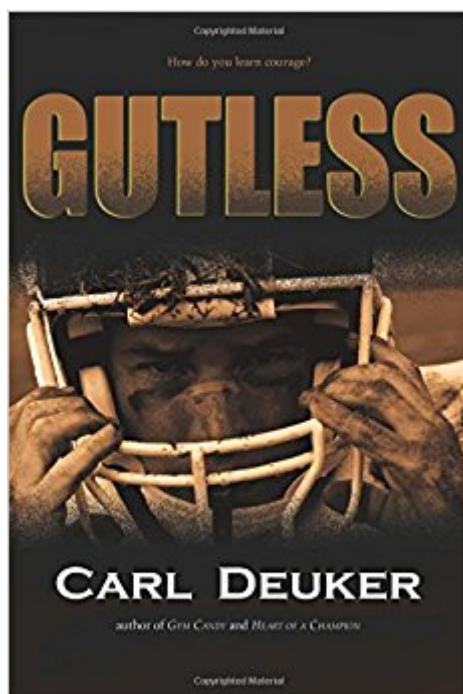


The book was found

Gutless



Synopsis

From the author of *Gym Candy* comes a novel of football and bullying, finding friends and finding courage. With both good speed and good hands, wide receiver Brock Ripley should be a natural for the varsity team, but he shies away from physical contact. When he gets cut from varsity, he also loses his friendship with star quarterback Hunter Gates who begins lashing out at not only Brock, but also Brock's friend, the quiet and smart Richie Fang. Brock wants to stand up for Fang, but he is younger, smaller, and doesn't want to cause problems. But when the bullying goes too far, will Brock be able to face his fears, stop being a bystander, and prove to himself that he is brave enough?

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 730 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers (September 6, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544649613

ISBN-13: 978-0544649613

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #16,672 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Sports > Football #16 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Bullying #53 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Boys & Men

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

[View larger](#) **A Conversation with Carl Deuker** The acclaimed author of *Gutless* talks about his approach to writing for young adults, the ongoing realities of peer bullying in the classroom, and some of his favorite sports activities.

What Inspired You to First Write YA Sports Fiction? Here's how I got started. I gave a writing assignment to my eighth-grade class. The directions were simple: Write about something you care about, and write honestly. That night I sat down to work on my then-current project—a

philosophical novel set in Czechoslovakia that was a total botch. I wrote a paragraph or two, then put my pencil down. I realized I'd given excellent advice to my students, and it was time for me to follow it myself. I lived and died with the Giants, the 49ers, the Warriors, the Cal Bears. I started On the Devil's Court that night. Talk a Little Bit about Brock, the Main Character of This Novel, and the Challenges He Faces. I taught middle school for thirty-five years. I had students like Brock come to school, blend in just fine, seem to be enjoying a Leave It to Beaver home life. Then, during the year, I'd learn that their lives were much harder than I could ever have imagined. Because of their tough home situations, Brock (and Richie) know more about life than most of their peers, but it's the kind of knowledge they can't easily share.

What Do You Hope Readers Will Take Away from How You Tackle the Issue of Bullying In Gutless?

That standing up to a bully requires courage. Hunter is physically powerful; he has a highly valued skill. He's a force at the school, a leader. Taking on the Hunters of this world is, therefore, a revolutionary act—it's turning the established order upside down. It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help; it's a necessity. Tell Us More about How Your Teaching Background Has Influenced Your Writing. Having watched boys, in particular, struggle to finish books, a few things became clear to me. First, I try to move the story and keep descriptive passages to a minimum. Second, I write short chapters. Finally, I never think, "I'm writing for a young adult." The books all revolve around some sort of moral choice/turning point facing the main character. The fact that the characters are young doesn't make problems less complex, so I avoid easy answers. Brock, for example, doesn't go to an adult, get immediate help, and "poof" the bullying ends.

In What Ways Do You Think these Expectations Affect Teenagers in Particular? Young adults are filled with doubt about themselves, their friends, their eventual place in the world. What they don't learn until they're older is that this doubt is a lifelong condition. We don't grow out of it. So I think there's a sense among middle and high school kids that they should be "squared away." I try to write books in which doubt and confusion are the norm, so that they can see their own doubts and confusion as normal. What Would You Say to any Kid Who is Currently a Victim Of Bullying but Unsure What to Do Next? Victims often blame themselves. So the first thing I'd say is "Yes, you are right. You are flawed. But so is every other person in this world. You didn't bring this on yourself and you don't deserve what's happening to you." After that, my advice is standard.

Bullying results from an unequal power situation. A bullied student needs to get help from adults, be they parents, coaches, or teachers. And if the student doesn't get that help the first time they ask, they need to go to somebody and ask again until they do.

How Do You Tap into the Teen Voice When Writing Your Novels? For many young people, male and female, sports play a major role in their teen years. So in my books, sports aren't just something in the background. How the characters perform on the playing field profoundly influences how they feel about themselves the next day at school or at home. That, I think, rings true to the reluctant reader who is deeply involved in sports. It's not just a game to them, not even close. I think my books acknowledge that truth. Were You Interested in Sports As a Kid? If so, Which Ones Were Particular Favorites? If a ball bounced, I wanted to play and still do. I was generally good enough to make sports teams, but not good enough to crack the starting lineup. (Perhaps all that time on the bench observing games paid dividends in my writing.) Basketball was my favorite sport in high school, volleyball in college, and golf today. But if someone wants to play Ping-Pong, croquet, or go bowling, I'll be in.

I'm a big fan of Carl Deuker's sports fiction and feel that he has a unique voice and an uncanny ability to combine the excitement and suspense inherent in sports with some truly piercing real life situations. Gutless is a fast paced, searing look at bullying and will hook readers from the start with a cast of complex characters and some of Deuker's finest sports writing. Brock is a young athlete dealing with an ailing father and searching for his place in a new high school, a new team and new friends. He worries about his own courage when he hesitates on the playing field and in the high school hallways. He's a boy afraid of contact and confrontation trying to succeed in a world where both are required. His relationship with his nerdy friend Richie is the highlight of the novel, and their dialogues are authentic and keep the pages turning. Brock foreshadows the ending pretty early on, so the reader knows something bad is going to happen, just not what it is. This creates so much suspense that it makes it hard to put this book down. Soccer fans and football fans will find plenty to admire here. I love a good football story and nobody writes football quite like Carl Deuker. Reluctant readers will appreciate the fast pace and the short chapters. All sports fans will recognize the genuine emotions brought about by victory and painful loss. Teens dealing with their own drive to succeed and searching for their own path will also find much to relate to in Brock's struggles to prove that he's not gutless. It's a story of triumph over fear and learning how to do the right thing

even when it doesn't seem to be the right thing at all. Most of Deuker's books are laser focused, but this one wanders around a bit too much for my taste. The author took a few too many narrative side trips, especially in developing the Hunter character. So despite losing a star due to lack of focus, there's no denying this is a great read and an enthusiastic recommend.

Carl Deuker is usually on his game, but *Gutless* is subpar in comparison to his best. The usual tackling of real life issues is present in this latest outing, but there is an extreme lack of focus at times. Deuker ends up with too many dropped passes. Brock Ripley is our narrator and he knows more or less what he's talking about when it comes to sports like football and soccer, but life is a different issue. His new best friend happens to be the object of the star quarterback's ire and Brock has every opportunity to stick up for his friend but doesn't when it matters most. Much of the narrative builds toward a much hinted at episode that even an inattentive reader can sort of figure out long before it arrives. In the middle of the book Brock is trying to sort out bullying, his father's illness, his best friend being picked on, his best friend's ill mother, and trying to figure out his own place in the scheme of things, mainly his role on the football team. It is a true reflection of what happens in real life, but in a novel all those things become difficult to navigate. Still, Deuker's name being on a novel is enough to make it worth picking up, especially when trying to connect to readers who will more likely be drawn in by the sports action. It's an ambitious novel, just one that doesn't quite connect in the end.

My middle son will only read sports books, unfortunately by now he has finished all of the teen & kids books that Mike Lupica and Tim Green have written. This is the second book he has tried by Carl Deuker. He said it was an okay read but it didn't keep his attention like some of the other books. He said it was pretty predictable. Regarding the subject matter, I would recommend it more for upper middle school or high school as there is some content that is best rated as PG-13+

The author has 35-years of middle-school teaching experience, and it shows in the writing of this book. Because this book revolves around guys. . . and sports. . . and football. . . it's obviously, and hopefully, going to be a book that boys will read. It's an important read. I think Deuker does better than most dealing with bullying. There's no easy out here. In the end, I think the book works well. I look forward to reading more from him.

This was Carl Deuker's best book yet! The writing was vivid and kept the story moving along at a

fast clip. The characters had real depth and believability, with adolescent uncertainties and anguish. Without a doubt, a definite read for anyone who wants to understand issues of teenage bullying! Hannah Austin-Turgout

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