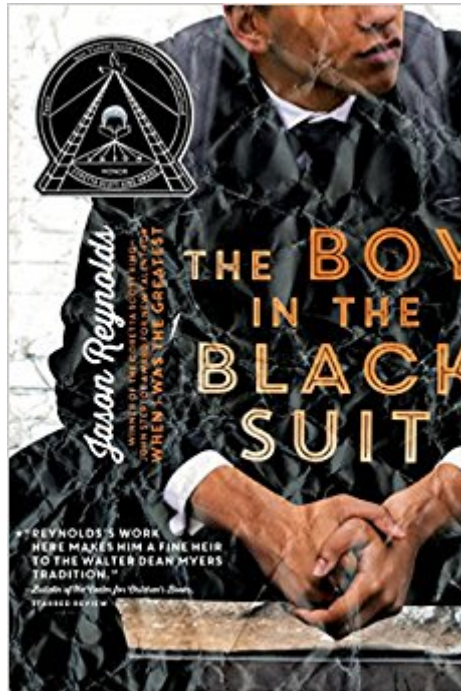




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The Boy In The Black Suit



Synopsis

A 2016 Coretta Scott King Author Honor book. Just when seventeen-year-old Matt thinks he can't handle one more piece of terrible news, he meets a girl who's dealt with a lot more—and who just might be able to clue him in on how to rise up when life keeps knocking him down—in this “vivid, satisfying, and ultimately upbeat tale of grief, redemption, and grace” (Kirkus Reviews) from the Coretta Scott King Award-winning author of *When I Was the Greatest*. Matt wears a black suit every day. No, not because his mom died—although she did, and it sucks. But he wears the suit for his gig at the local funeral home, which pays way better than the Cluck Bucket, and he needs the income since his dad can't handle the bills (or anything, really) on his own. So while Dad's snagging bottles of whiskey, Matt's snagging fifteen bucks an hour. Not bad. But everything else? Not good. Then Matt meets Lovey. Crazy name, and she's been through more crazy stuff than he can imagine. Yet Lovey never cries. She's tough. Really tough. Tough in the way Matt wishes he could be. Which is maybe why he's drawn to her, and definitely why he can't seem to shake her. Because there's nothing more hopeful than finding a person who understands your loneliness—and who can maybe even help take it away.

Book Information

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Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Death & Dying #94 in Books > Teens >

Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Friendship

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up—Matt's mother just died, and his dad isn't coping well, hanging out with the local drunk and downing whiskey, which results in his getting hit by a car and landing in the hospital. Matt is also grieving his mom's death and now he's on his own, until he lands a job at the local funeral home: \$15 an hour and Mr. Ray as his boss. Attending other people's funerals helps the teen come to grips with his own grief. Hearing mourners express their real thoughts of suffering at each funeral allows Matt to figure out his own feelings. Mr. Ray is wise and shows up at all the right times to help out the struggling young man, and when Mr. Ray's secrets come to light, he appears even cooler in Matt's eyes. Amid all this, Matt meets Lovey, the girl of his dreams, who is smart, funny, gorgeous, and tough. A mystery intersecting Lovey's life and that of Matt's best friend, Chris, deepens the plot. Written in a breezy style with complex characters who have real lives, this is another hit for Reynolds, fresh off the success of his *When I Was the Greatest* (S. & S., 2014). The author's seemingly effortless writing shines in this slice-of-life story, which covers a lot of the protagonist's emotional ground. The realistic setting and character-driven tale keeps readers turning the pages of this winner.—Amy Cheney, Alameda County Library, San Leandro, CA --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"The realistic setting and character-driven tale keeps readers turning the pages of this winner."
-School Library Journal
"A vivid, satisfying and ultimately upbeat tale of grief, redemption and grace."
-Kirkus Reviews
"Matt is a wonderfully sympathetic, multidimensional character whose voice is a perfect match for the material and whose relationships with Love and Mr. Ray—also a fascinating character—are beautifully realized. This quiet story is clearly a winner."
-Booklist
"Reynolds's work here makes him a fine heir to the Walter Dean Myers tradition of loving storytelling that captures the heart and humor of multigenerational black urban experience."
-Bulletin, STARRED REVIEW --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

There is so much to say about this book — the writing, the setting, the characters — but first and foremost, I must say that from beginning to end, Jason Reynolds and *The Boy in the Black Suit* kept me, held me, wouldn't let me go, had me living in THE FEELS. I bought this book for my son's library and underlined and left my notes everywhere because I couldn't help myself — I want him to

see where I was touched, stilled, literally brought to tears, where I laughed and fell in love with a character, where I simply smiled because the writing is just that. freaking. good. For me, *THE BOY IN THE BLACK SUIT* is a love letter to Brooklyn whose streets and characters and bodegas are so vivid and real and perfectly captured by Mr. Reynolds that I often felt like I was back on my old block in Bed Stuy told through the eyes of Matt Miller, a high school kid coming to grips with the death of his mom and the downslide of his dad, just trying to hang on and make sense of life and death and loss and love. Helping him along the way are Chris, Mr. Ray, and Lovey, well-crafted, poignant characters, each playing their own, very unique roles in moving Matt forward one step at a time. The interactions between these folks are touching and funny and so damn life-affirming that you just know, somehow, with this crew in his life, Matt will make it. There might be some tears and struggling, but he's going to come out on the other end okay and that's a great way to close the covers on a book. With a hopeful, possibly watery-eyed, smile on your face. Towards the end of the story, Matt is gifted with a *Sempervivum*, a plant whose name originates from the latin roots *semper* and *vivus* and means "live forever." That's exactly what Jason's characters will do with me. If you haven't yet read this book, if it's not on your TBR, or already on your bookshelf, do yourself a favor and go to the bookstore or the library and snag a copy. Now. This is a must-read, a classic, a story everyone should experience because it's just that darn good. So thank you, Jason, for being fierce and amazing and for not writing boring books and for giving us Matt and Chris and Mr. Ray and Lovey. **SEMPERVIVUS!!**

I guess that I really connected with this book because of my grief. No one knows what it's like to lose a parent, or in my case both, until it happens to them. It's been 2 years and I still cry when I'm alone because I don't like to do so in front of others. Until you feel that pain, you can't possibly say that you understand it. Matt is a character that I truly love and respect. Despite his grief, he manages to take care of himself and his dad. He still has moments when he can't shake the pain of his mother's death but he deals the best way that he can. Meeting Lovey was the best thing that could happen to him. When you find that person who has been through worse hell than you have, and they seem to be doing just fine, you want to get to that point. Though, making yourself tough to hide the pain is just like a walking straight through the doors of depression. It's a process, you

can't bottle that up and keep it inside. Lovey shows Matt that it's all smoke and mirrors when dealing with hard stuff in life. You can grieve, but just don't let it take over your life. She was so good for him and I found their connection beautiful. This is a wonderfully written book. I think that young adults everywhere should read this book, and just grasp the realness flowing through the pages. It shows you that, no matter what you go through in life, you can rise up and be a great person. Don't take that dark path into nothingness when there's more to life than you can possibly imagine. I highly recommend this book!

I didn't find this book as engaging as my book club counterparts. Probably good for a teenager, which makes sense since it is a YA novel. The themes of loss, love and community are important and should be explored. I expected more from the writing; it's dry and predictable. But might work for its intended audience.

This was our YA book club selection for May. We actually gave it a 4 1/2 star rating. We all liked how Matt and the others dealt with their losses in their own way and how the people around them let them do that, especially Mr. Ray with Matt. It also showed how not to deal with a loss (Matt's dad) but then he had to after he hurt himself. The characters were wonderful, good and bad, Matt's life in New York was described so we could see it ourselves (the neighborhood and the local bodega), and his relationship with Lovey unfolded in a nice way. We did feel there should have been recipes though :)

Beautiful story for young and old who have experienced sadness and loss. Jason creates a protagonist that we can all feel empathy for and want to get to know.

Overall a good story. It's pretty imaginative and unique compared to other YA literature that deals with this topic. The narrative is fantastic and I really enjoyed getting to know the main character, Matt. That being said, the middle of this book seemed to sag and I wasn't a huge fan of how Lovey came off as a character who seems to have no flaws. The stakes were also rather low at the story's climax which made for, what I thought, to be a lackluster ending. But I would still recommend reading if the story has interested you.

I bought this book because my son is going to read it at school. It came very fast and it is new jst as

advertised.

I am definitely going to be reading anything Jason Reynolds writes!!! His diverse books speak to readers about life, love, and circumstances of teens in Bed-Stuy but Reynolds' words, characters, setting, and plot are all very special. Matt Miller is grieving the death of his mother and while he does not really have many friends; he has a very real sense of who he is. Working for Mr. Ray's funeral parlor helps him deal with the loss of his mother with each funeral he attend/works. I loved seeing the character of Matt Miller evolve with each turn of the page, a must read! We need more diverse books from Jason Reynolds!

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