

One Fat Summer

Harper Trophy, 1977, 232 pp., \$3.95

Robert Lipsyte

ISBN 0-06-447073-3

Who doesn't like summer? I thought. *Everyone enjoys it when it's warm.* Not true, especially for Bobby Marks, who's so overweight he can't button his pants or touch his toes. Fourteen-year-old Bobby spends his summers with his family on Rumson Lake, which for him is torture, and this summer promises to be the worst yet. Knowing that his father wants him to work at Happy Valley Camp, where he would be in agony for the next three months, Bobby and his best friend Joanie set out to find him another job. And the adventure begins.

I loved this book and didn't want to put it down. When I did finish it, I was sad; I felt like I had lost a friend. But then my spirits lifted when I found *Summer Rules* and *Summer Boy*, the two other books in the trilogy about Bobby Marks. Lipsyte does a great job of creating a wonderful guy main character who, as a girl, I had no trouble relating to, as well as a believable situation. Lipsyte is also a very funny writer.

I highly recommend *One Fat Summer* to anyone. Everyone will enjoy its strong theme of the importance of learning who you are and standing up for yourself.

—Marcia Conley Carter

Stuck in Neutral

HarperCollins, 2000, 114 pp., \$14.95

Terry Trueman

ISBN 0-06-028519-2

"My name is Shawn McDaniels. I'm fourteen years old. I think my father is trying to kill me." Shawn McDaniels is not paranoid; he has cerebral palsy, a genetic condition that leaves him without control of his muscles, including the ability to communicate. Everyone assumes he's in terrible pain and anguish, especially his dad, who can't stand to see him "suffer." But Shawn has learned to live within his useless body and, defiantly, he doesn't want to die.

Imagine being trapped, not able to move, talk, or even look where you want to. This is Shawn's life. But the focus of this novel is his inner life, which is richly imagined by Terry Trueman, who is the father of a child with cerebral palsy.

I loved this book. Once I started reading it, I couldn't put it down. *Stuck in Neutral* is Trueman's powerful first novel. It leaves readers with a story and a character that are impossible to forget and an ending that is haunting.

—Tyler Reny