



The Humiliations of Welton Blake

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Editor's Choice:

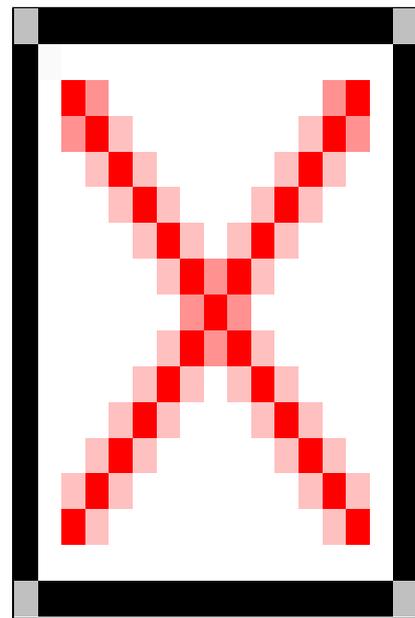
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5



This feisty and entertaining book is a witty joy. **Barrington Stoke** have never compromised on quality and Wheatle, former winner of the **Guardian Children's Fiction Prize** and awarded an MBE for his services to literature brings his skills to bear on a book which is as thought-provoking as it is hilarious.

Welton is completely infatuated with Carmella McKenzie, the prettiest girl in school. He plucks up the courage to ask her out, exchanges phone numbers with her and then his phone dies, the first of a series of misteps which punctuate the high-speed narrative. Wheatle heaps humiliations on Welton but never reduces him to a cipher. There is a finely crafted character here, trying to come to terms with the upheaval of his parents' fractured marriage and his Mum's new boyfriend and his spoilt son moving in. Welton's weapon of choice is his humour and his trade in crafting insults for his peers to inflict on their enemies gives him credibility-and sometimes unexpected trouble.

Welton's inner dialogue is a delight: a mix of patois and teenage preoccupations woven through with references to his beloved Star Wars. His observations of his peers will be instantly recognisable to young adult readers and there is a fine

crop of striking similes to enrich the mix. Coral Chipglider, an entirely terrifying Goth who has decided that Welton is to be her boyfriend, is a particularly masterly creation.

Poignancy comes in the shape of Welton's father, living in a seedy flat, alone and desperate to be reunited with his estranged wife. Wheatle gives Welton the adult role in this relationship and it is impossible to ignore the fact that this puts him under even more strain: having to grow up too quickly is both a sorrow and an embarrassment as his father is such a hopeless figure.

Welton needs to regain his cool and counteract the indignities of his life and he finds a saviour in basketball. His early attempts at the game end in a disastrous encounter with a wall but in a key match he saves the day. There will not be a reader who isn't cheering him on. He wins the match for the team, he wins his girl and he defeats the school bully who has persecuted him for so long.

Barrington Stoke have made this book user-friendly for reluctant readers and for those with dyslexia: the type face is crisp, clear and large enough to read easily without looking childish and the book is printed on an off-white background.

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