



Beware the Fish!

Gordon Korman

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Macdonald High is having some serious cash flow problems. Everything is being cut back - evening snack is gone, the lab equipment is decrepit and the dorms are freezing at night. Worst of all, Bruno Walton and Boots O'Neal are being moved in with Elmer Drimdsdale - the science geek. There's even talk of Macdonald Hall being put up for sale! Could this be the end of Canada's finest boarding school or do Bruno and Boots have a plan?

Beware the Fish! Details

Date : Published February 1st 1991 by Scholastic (first published January 1st 1980)

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Author : Gordon Korman

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From Reader Review Beware the Fish! for online ebook

Kerri (Book Hoarder) says

I don't know whether I want to reread this series or not, if only because I'm worried that rereading them as an adult will tarnish my memory of them.

I read these when I was still in elementary school and loved them. Highly recommend, they are stories of friendship and fun and are completely hilarious.

Wealththeow says

MacDonald Hall is in financial difficulties and might be sold. Bruno and Boots attempt various mad ways to get their school famous (inventing a cure for the common cold just gets their gym teacher drunk; spending all night collecting cans to create a pyramid for a world record) and to discourage potential buyers (including but not limited to creating the worst and noisiest school band ever). The real star of this book is Elmer, their weirdo scientific genius of a roommate.

Susan says

Another great Bruno & Boots book! Not my very favourite, but the boys and I always love these books! Looking forward to continuing the series.

Katie Fitzgerald says

Canadian children's author Gordon Korman has had a long career as the prolific writer of humorous, exciting, and easy-to-read novels geared toward grades 4 to 9. He started writing at age 12, when he wrote *This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall!* for a seventh grade English class. Over the course of nearly 20 years after the publication of this first MacDonald Hall book, Korman published a total of 7 titles about the boarding school exploits of best friends Bruno and Boots. This month, I read them all:

This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall! (1977)

Go Jump in the Pool! (1979)

Beware the Fish! (1980)

The War with Mr. Wizzle (1982)

The Zucchini Warriors (1988)

MacDonald Hall Goes Hollywood (1991)

Something Fishy at Macdonald Hall (1995)

The series stars best friends and roommates Bruno Walton and Melvin "Boots" O'Neal, who are known pranksters on the MacDonald Hall campus. Though the two boys often butt heads with their headmaster, the long-suffering yet fair-minded Mr. Sturgeon, whom they call "The Fish," they also have a fond affection for their school. The boys and their classmates also have many associations with students at Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School for Young Ladies, which is located across the road from MacDonald Hall, and whose high-

strung Headmistress frequently overreacts to late-night visits from MacDonald Hall students by wildly wielding a shotgun.

Each book of the series focuses on a different major scheme involving Bruno and Boots. Sometimes, they seek to make a particular improvement to their school, such as a pool or a recreation center. Other times, they go to war with a particular teacher who is making their lives difficult, or with an outside force that threatens to close the school. In the final two books, they even befriend a Hollywood celebrity and uncover a phantom prankster.

What I love about these books is their sense of humor. Last spring, I attended a talk by two children's illustrators who insisted that the key to humor in children's books is underwear and toilet jokes. I found this to be a disappointing underestimation of what kids are capable of finding funny, but I was also hard-pressed to think of many examples of funny books, especially funny books targeted at boys, that could make kids laugh without resorting to crude humor. Thankfully, I have been reminded that this series fits that bill exactly. Perhaps because Korman started writing these when he was himself an adolescent, he completely understands what middle school boys find funny, and he delivers it in every single book. Pranks, schemes, disasters, explosions, science experiments, sporting events - these are the backdrops for Korman's jokes, and most of the time, they are clever, respectful and well-executed. Even when the characters disobey their teachers, they often do so in the name of a noble cause that helps their school or their friends.

Also refreshing is the complete lack of serious dating in these books. There are some storylines involving long-distance and unrequited crushes, but none of the preoccupation with having exclusive girlfriends and boyfriends that seems prevalent in more contemporary books. The girls of Miss Scrimmage's (particularly Cathy and Diane) are not presented as potential romantic partners for Bruno, Boots, and their friends, but as partners in crime, good friends, and pranksters in their own right. All the female characters are actually very well-done, including Mrs. Sturgeon, the headmaster's wife, whose affection for Bruno and Boots often keeps her husband from acting rashly in his punishment of them.

Are the MacDonald Hall books great literature? Probably not. But neither are they to be completely dismissed as "fluff" or 'twaddle." For boys who like funny books, but whose parents would prefer not to promote toilet humor (or worse, crude jokes with a sexual basis), they are the perfect escapist read. Interestingly, these books have also recently been turned into a series of films, which are all available to stream on Netflix. I watched half of the first one, *Go Jump in the Pool!*, and noted some differences, mainly in the age of the characters (MacDonald Hall seems to be a high school in the movie world) and in the character of Miss Scrimmage (who is now a peace-loving hippie and not an unhinged woman with a shotgun), but overall, I didn't think it was terrible. I would definitely recommend reading the books first, but fans of the series will probably enjoy the film adaptations.

This review also appears on my blog, *Read-at-Home Mom*.

Lana Brown says

Okay, listen carefully. Gordon Korman started writing when he was a wee tyke -- 12 or 13, but don't hate him because he's talented. What you need to know is, the books he's writing now are NOT what to read. Back when, he wrote a whole series of boarding school books referred to as the "Bruno and Boots" books, of which *Beware the Fish* is one. He also wrote several stand-alone novels such as *Son of Interflux* and *Don't Care High*, which are slyly humorous and inventive and charming to read. These older books are the ones to seek out.

Enik? says

Dec. 2014 - A very good book to read (especially just before going to bed, after having read another book, about the beheading of Lady Jane Grey). This story had me smiling and laughing. Even as an adult, I can appreciate the humour of Gordon Korman.

2008 - Giggles galore! I'm glad I reread this. Every bit as funny as when I first read it in grade school; I had forgotten some of the parts, so there were still plenty of surprises.

J. Boo says

Read in either elementary school or junior high. I'd been trying to figure out the name of this for years before someone's passing reference clued me in.

Nick Fagerlund says

Another of those Korman books I was on about. This one is from 1980, and it is riotously funny. A boarding school is running out of money, and its most infamous pair of students start scheming to save it. They also start accidentally terrorizing the countryside with televised warnings about "Operation Popcan" and "Operation Flying Fish." Hijinks ensue, as do the Mounties. Props to a book that both 9-year-old Nick and 26-year-old Nick can laugh at.

Oh, but someone really should have fumigated this one for saidbookisms. What is it about kids' books that makes these acceptable? Editors in every other category stomp 'em like roaches, but I remember them being just part of the fabric of kid-lit.

Eavan says

This was the first MacDonald Hall book I ever read. I was... I dunno, 7? And it gave me *so much joy*. And *even more joy* when I learned it was only one of an entire series. It still makes me laugh, 20 years later.

Gina says

This is what the last week at work has reduced me to. Hopefully my brain power will return soon, but until then, I really do love Boots and Bruno. Spending my lunch hour in the car reading YA is such a stress reliever. In college I used to sneak to the children's floor while studying in the library during finals week to read Junie B. Jones.

This isn't the best MacDonald Hall book, but really, who cares?

Jane says

I was telling a friend about the *MacDonald Hall* series and specifically, how uproariously hilarious I found *Beware the Fish!*. She commented that it seems that the series is the perfect summer read and that's it, the *MacDonald Hall* is the perfect summer read, light-hearted, hassle-free fun.

I felt like the plot was better executed and the characters more developed. They didn't felt flat like sometimes they did in *This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall* and so I was more invested in the characters.

Manybooks says

Of the three Gordon Korman *MacDonald Hall* boarding school stories that I read as a teenager, *Beware the Fish!* (the third novel) is the one I think have always enjoyed the most (and I actually still own my 1980 paperback copy that I bought from Scholastic at school, with this here very book cover, showing the explosion of the MacDonald Hall high jump pit in the background, after Miss Scrimmage's shotgun blast sets off Elmer's buried science experiments, his research equipment, chemicals and such).

Now I really do enjoy and massively appreciate that in *Beware the Fish!* Bruno, Boots, Elmer (that in fact almost the entire student body of MacDonald Hall) will basically do almost ANYTHING to try to keep their beloved boarding school from going broke, from closing down (and furthermore, it is certainly also much more cheering and pleasant to read about students wanting to help save their school than about students despising school and constantly denigrating both it and their teachers). But while the projects Bruno and Boots consider all and sundry fail to work (with generally hilariously disastrous consequences) and might appear even rather foolish and silly to today's more technologically savvy and jaded children, I can from personal and cultural background experience truthfully claim that during the late 1970s and early 1980s (and indeed *Beware the Fish!* was originally penned in 1980), getting oneself noticed by breaking a world record was often discussed and also seen as a way of possibly obtaining both fame and fortune, and indeed, someone taking over a television station from afar (like Elmer manages to inadvertently achieve with his video machine) was a common theme (especially in superhero cartoons) and actually something that I know I personally did consider as a possibility for terrorism and thus more than a bit worrisome. And while of course, knowing the background of why "The Fish" keeps appearing on people's television screens and laughing myself silly because of this, and totally enjoying the ridiculous, slapstick funny cat-and-mouse game of RCMP officer Featherstone and OPP officer Hamilton, the entire scenario of Elmer's video experiment actually hijacking and consistently overpowering the CHUT TV transmitter definitely was a very common enough 1970s and 1980s literary and media trope and as such quite realistic at that (which in my opinion equally goes for Elmer's common cold cure that ends up majorly intoxicating Hamilton Hall's athletic coach, as yes, the idea of ingesting something that inadvertently makes one drunk was and in fact still is commonly used in especially children's literature, I mean one just has to look at the infamous raspberry cordial episode of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*).

Now truth be told with *Beware the Fish!*, I actually most appreciate that while ALL of Bruno's and Boots' projects and ploys to make money, to raise funds for their financially strapped school seemingly fail most miserably, MacDonald Hall is still saved because the publicity created by Elmer's video machine fiasco, the albeit silly and prone to a multitude of accidents investigation of why and how "The Fish" was appearing on local television sets, all of this very obviously and publicly demonstrates how much MacDonald Hall as a school is loved by both its students and Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School For Girls across the road (so

that, a bit unbelievably, albeit appreciatively), many parents immediately flock to enrol their boys at Macdonald Hall and the financial crisis has therefore been deus ex machina like averted (oh and Miss Scrimmage with her shotgun, while I do sometimes cringe a bit with regard to this, she is ALWAYS shown by Gordon Korman as at best ridiculously foolish and her owning a gun is never ever portrayed as in any fashion positive, but always as totally negative, so negative and silly, so dangerously unhinged is Miss Scrimmage with her shotgun depicted in fact that the NRA would probably be frothing at the mouth at her gun waving and toting portrayal in the MacDonald Hall novels).

Highly recommended (but again, I would absolutely NOT in any manner of speaking suggest reading the recently updated versions of the *MadDonald Hall* series, as it is the lack of technology and how both readers and characters approach new technology such as Elmer's video machine that makes Beware the Fish! both so entertaining and such a wonderful document of time and place, which is kind of destroyed in the recent updates, for if Bruno, Boots, Elmer etc. all use computers, emails, cell phones and such, why would Elmer's new video machine creation be all that spectacular and novel, why would it be such an exciting and "new" gadget).

Andrew Georgy-Embree says

NAME: Keagan

TITLE OF MY BOOK: MACDONALD HALL beware the Fish

AUTHOR: Gordon Korman

PUBLISHER: Scholastic Canada Ltd.

DATE: 2003

Total Number of pages: 176

SETTING

Beware the Fish takes place in Canada at a private school for boys

CHARACTERS

The main characters are Bruno and Boots. The characters are believable. I liked Bruno the most because he is like me. I relate to this book because I get in trouble too.

PLOT

The problem in Macdonald Hall is that the school cannot afford to keep Macdonald Hall up as a school so they have to take out all of the junk food out of the cafeteria. The resolution is for Macdonald hall to enroll new kids.

Miss Scrimmage got arrested.

Bruno and Boot and some of their friends are going to the dump to go get all of the pop cans for a science project to make a pyramid to set a world record.

Bruno made a broadcast on the Fish (principal) but Bruno is making jokes about the Fish.

Bruno and Boots got sent to the principal' office.

I did not like the book's ending because the author only talked about the end of the summer and it wasn't that interesting.

PERSONAL OPINION

I like the part about the beware the Fish when Boots and Bruno and their friends were going to the dump. I would make the end longer. I learned to not steal. I think Dane should read it because he would like it. This could have been better but I still enjoyed it.

"

Julia says

This review covers all the books in this hilarious Bruno and Boots series.

I would rate this 10 stars if I could! These were my favorite books when I was growing up. I don't remember many details about them, but I remember absolutely loving reading them. My favorite kind of book to read when I was out of super kiddy books was biographies, but this was my almost-tween favorite book series. I really remember this series as the one that solidified my love of reading.

I think that would be so cool if my sons end up enjoying them, too. I've heard that they're out of print now, but I'm sure they could be found somehow.

Punk says

YA. Financial woes may force Macdonald Hall to shut down for good! Bruno and Boots to the rescue, of course. This is my favorite B&B book so far. I love The Fish broadcasts and Elmer being a science hero/rock star. And the stuff with the RCMP had me looking around for Turnbull from *Due South*, even though this book was written a solid decade before DS's time.
