



Pure Trash: The Story

Bette A. Stevens

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The year is 1955. If you grew up in the 1950s and the 1960s, you may be among those who recall those good old "Happy Days" of television fame. Even younger generations enjoy watching TV reruns to get a peek into what life was like back then. In this short story, Shawn and Willie Daniels are off on a Saturday adventure in search of trash to turn into treasure. It is going to be a great day. Shawn is sure of it. No school and no bullies to remind him that he's not one of the crowd. "This short story is filled with images and flavor only better provided by an ice cream cone. "PURE TRASH gives the reader pause for thought, and I recommend it to the adult reader and the YA reader alike. " Kathryn Elizabeth Jones PURE TRASH, The Story is about bullies, both in the traditional and non-traditional sense. It may redefine your definition of bullying. Torment, persecution, intimidation...These are a few descriptors of what those who are considered "different" in some way may suffer. For Shawn and Willie, their "difference" is based upon the social status of the dysfunctional family, the alcoholism and the abject poverty in which they grew up.

Pure Trash: The Story Details

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From Reader Review Pure Trash: The Story for online ebook

Bette Stevens says

Two great reviews from author friends!

PURE TRASH, The Story by Bette A. Stevens

This short story is filled with images and flavor only better provided by an ice cream cone.

If you remember Orange Crush in bottles, bike rides away from home, slingshots as fine entertainment and Good 'N Plenties as a way of filling your stomach on a hot summer day, you might be able to relate to Pure Trash.

If you've ever been offended, judged, spoken to in a way that gave you serious room for doubt about the world and the people in it, then you will definitely relate to Pure Trash.

Shawn is a poor boy, with a mother who makes her clothing out of old potato sacks and a father who spends most of their hard earned money on beer. But Shawn doesn't know that he is poor. He doesn't know his father is a drunkard. This is his life.

What Shawn knows is that he has a brother and best friend named Willie and that gathering pop bottles and turning them in for cash is the next best thing to being rich.

Shawn creates adventure at every turn and enjoys the simple pleasures of life:

"Flying down the other side (of the hill on a bike) gave me the best feeling in the whole world. I guess that's how that old chicken hawk feels when he soars above the pines at the edge of the field out back of the house."

The short story is filled with images and flavor only better provided by an ice cream cone.

"Dad always said that you 'had to hold your mouth just right,' or the fish wouldn't bite."

"Willie's brown eyes looked as big as Mum's pan fried donuts..."

The interesting thing about being poor as a child is that you rarely know you are poor, unless a Christian or two points out some 'obvious' lack. But even then, life goes on, and you make the best of what you've got.

Pure Trash gives the reader pause for thought, and I recommend it to the adult reader and YA reader alike.

Review by Kathryn Elizabeth Jones, author of fiction & non-fiction

Pure Trash

Written by Bette A. Stevens; this is a book near and dear to my heart.

I give it FIVE ***** STARS.

Shawn and Willie live in the woods. Their family doesn't have indoor water or a flush toilet yet, but they do have a TV. The boys plan a great day together. Activities on the agenda are straight out of the nineteen fifties.

On the other hand, the ugliness of human nature displayed here could be from any era, as the judgmental neighbors and degrading torments that come from others could take place in present time as well as way back then.

Young adults and Middle grade children will find this book to be an enjoyable quick read. Most children and adults as well can identify with the emotion displayed here. We have all felt the sting of degrading remarks targeted at us for no other reason than another wants to shower their meanness in order to satisfy their own judgmental spirit.

Find out how a wonderful day takes a few twists and turns, how others can destroy the joy in your life, but only if you allow them, and how those who have little can still rise above those who think they are superior.

Shawn and Willie are two delightful young boys who lift your spirits and let you know life is all in the way you look at it.

Written by Bette A. Stevens; this is a book near and dear to my heart. I give it five ***** stars.

This book has been reviewed by Susan Hornbach, author of children's literature.

Boyko Ovcharov says

Pure Conscience!

Very well thought out, written and targeted at people with a conscience.

Through the daily lives of two young boys, the main characters, this short story raises crucial questions about our attitudes towards others, family culture and social environment. Despite being set in the 60s, it appeals to YA and adult readers nowadays, as it deals with universal human nature questions.

The messages conveyed here are so powerful, concerning our self-worth, no matter if we are well-off or not. Besides, the issue of cruelty to other fellow human beings, false sense of superiority sounds very current. The reader inevitably starts to think along the lines of the necessary proper upbringing, education and legislation in the future around the world.

Tricia Drammeh says

Pure Trash is unlike any story I've read. At first, it reads like a memoir from Reminisce Magazine, but as the story unfolds, I connected with the characters at a deep level. The author explores prejudice, class division, alcoholism, poverty, injustice, and bullying. It's a story all audiences over the age of ten can enjoy. While reading this story, the reader will experience the joy of a carefree Saturday and the blistering pain of feeling not quite good enough.

The heartbreaking innocence of the main character, Shawn, and his younger brother, Willie, will touch your heart as you realize these children are not quite as innocent as they seem. They're no strangers to intolerance, and the cruelty of others isn't lost on them. They're old enough to feel society's derision, but still young enough to harbor hopes that things can change. They're young enough to take pleasure in the simple things in life--pocket change, a sackful of candy, the freedom of reaching great heights on a swing.

Hypocrisy is another theme in this story. When Shawn seeks help from the seemingly kind, gentle pillar of the church community, the reader is exposed to the ugliness that hides behind what society considers "quality." When help is given grudgingly, it isn't charity at all, especially when that help is accompanied by a cruel declaration that the boys are nothing but trash.

Pure Trash is a worthwhile, meaningful, beautifully written story I'd recommend to readers of all ages.

Rave Reviews Book Club says

Since the book, PURE TRASH was a short story, my review will be short as well. Bette Stevens did a good job in writing this short, but a few things kept me from giving it a full 5 star rating:

1) The introduction speaks a lot to the child (Shawn) being bullied, yet there is no mention of it really happening anywhere in the story (the little hints in this respect wouldn't count). Yes, there are some negative comments and treatment by adults in the story, but I'd use the word "mistreatment" as opposed to "bullying", which would lead us to expect that particular behavior being exemplified by the child's peers, for example. The author mentions in the intro that her story "may re-define your concept of bullying...", but it didn't for me. When you're speaking of a child in relation to an adult, in no way at all can that be constituted as bullying. Abuse/mistreatment, yes ... bullying ... NO. I would suggest that the author re-word the introduction so as to not lend so much emphasis on bullying, as that is what I, as a reader, expected most out of the story based on the intro. I got very little of it, if any at all;

2) Although it was meant to be a short story, even with around 5,000 words the ending could have been stronger and a little longer. I would have liked to have seen Shawn and Willie make it home to their mom so that we could experience her reaction to what had happened during their afternoon away. The ending left me with no closure.

IN spite of the above, my 4 star rating stems from this: THE WRITING WAS STILL GOOD. I know another reviewer mentioned the "level of proofing errors," but honestly, I found very few editing issues, which is always a plus in my book. I am definitely looking forward to reading more about Shawn's journey from childhood to adulthood. I'm quite positive Mrs. Stevens will ensure that it is a solid 5 star read all around. I have every confidence that she IS that kind of writer

A.E. Curzon says

Pure Trash is a short story focused on a day in the lives of two young boys, Shawn and Willie Daniels. They are extremely poor, have a drunken father, a long-suffering mother and live in a shack in 1950's America; located near a small New England town in which bullying and prejudice is rife. They attend church every Sunday. This day (Saturday, and no school), having done their chores, is filled with gathering discarded empty bottles on their way into town, and collecting the returns money. The boys really look forward to this trip every week, as they are able to buy pop and sweets before returning home to fish with their father, who, by the time they get back, will have drunk enough beer to "catch his limit" and to, "hold your (his) mouth just right' or the fish wouldn't bite".

Despite the excitement of this weekly trip, Shawn is filled with dread at the thought of encountering the gossips, and other mean townsfolk, who call them names and laugh at them; all because of their poverty and their drunken parent.

On the way back from the trip, Willie falls off his bike and Shawn seeks help from someone he believes to be kind; someone who also attends the same church. But, he is surprised when he learns that cordially

nodding to someone every Sunday in church is not the same as turning up on their doorstep and asking for help – at least not when your Shawn and Willie Daniels.

I thoroughly enjoyed this story. Told with great sensitivity, Ms. Stevens weaves a tale of intolerance and impassive bullying, the backlash of another's alcoholism and the knock-on effects of abject poverty. The atmospheric descriptions set the scenes beautifully – I felt I was actually riding my own bike with the boys on their excursion. The whole timbre of the book, from the very first word, is that of compassion and understanding. I felt tinges of sadness, though. To the boys, this is all they know. They completely accept their father's excessive drinking, and their mother's frugality as she makes her house dresses out of “flowered chicken feed sacks”. There is no money to repair the house, but the boys' father buys a brand new television set for himself, which sounds like an echo of so many households today. The boys do not envy others, instead they are grateful for what little they have. They find great joy in their natural surrounding; blue skies, hills and fields, and the simple things available to them. Such small treats as ice-cream and some pop are a thing pure delight.

This book is not just about poverty and making do, and being happy with what you have been given - albeit, through lack of knowledge. It is also about intimidation and small-mindedness, and the terrible indictment of the society that has risen from such behaviour, not just in the fifty's, but of today as well. Such families do still exist and the intolerance continues as one generation begets the next and the tradition continues on both sides. Perhaps it is all unavoidable, but it is sad how innocent children are made to suffer for the mistakes of their parents.

A sensitive and touching tale which is well-written, absorbing and entertaining.

This review is also published at <http://ameliacurzonblogger.wordpress....>

Edison says

Stilted, redundant and lacks conflict.

This is a very short story about two boys out on a Saturday morning, doing what boys supposedly did in the mid-1950's. It's a very quick read. The premise of the story isn't bad, though not exactly original. The problem is in the execution.

The writing is redundant, so much so a little bit of editing could have knocked at least 20-25% of it off without changing the sense of it one iota. For example, the repeated allusions to what a great day it was grew tiresome and were unnecessary. Similarly, the many dialogue attributes. Much of the dialogue, which seemed quite stilted to me, is between the boys, ages six and nine. It's therefore easy to know who is talking--this is one case in which the dialogue attributes get in the way. Also, the narrator (the older boy) keeps referring to his younger brother by his name, which is entirely unnecessary and unnatural.

My biggest issue with the story is the almost complete lack of conflict. It's hard to have a great story without conflict, IMHO. The author actually seems to be avoiding it. For example, at one point the younger boy spends more than his share of the few pennies they've earned. The older brother has no problem with this, which seems a completely unnatural--a stilted--behavior.

There are a few nice descriptions of the time, but not enough to make up for what is an otherwise uninspired telling of a quaint time. More and telling detail would have been nice, without the redundancy, to propel the

story forward in a more natural way.

Not worth the \$2.99 I paid. Sorry. I can't recommend it.

Bill Ward says

This is a short story about two young brothers in the fifties and is a well written and evocative example of how those of us of a certain age used to spend our days outdoors on bicycles, not staring at screens! It would probably all be a bit foreign for the majority of today's kids!

I think the author has teased us by writing this short story as it suggests she could write a great novel about their adventures, which I would like to read!

John W. Howell says

Having read Dog Bone Soup from which this short story was drawn, I figured it would be a review of what I already read. I must say it was, but to a greater degree, this short story caused me to focus on the message. Two boys, Shawn and Willie, were children of dirt-poor parents. The story covers the day that the boys are going to take their bikes to town, trade in some bottles, and enjoy some candy. In short, a day free of worry and care. Unfortunately, this was not meant to be. A small accident causes the boys to have to face the reality of prejudice that will no doubt haunt them their entire lives.

The author tells this story with the realism that causes the reader believe they are witnessing the action personally. One's heart goes out to the boys and their mother for having to endure ridicule and shame only because they were born into poverty.

I recommend this short story to anyone who wants to preview Dog Bone Soup. It is well worth the time.

Joe Cortez says

Most of us will be judged by our actions. The people we meet will have a clean impression of us when we start a relationship, and their opinion of us will be formed and confirmed little by little by the things we do or by the things we don't do. They will notice if we honour our word ?whether or not we do the right thing. Shawn Daniels does not have that luxury.

He has been judged, perhaps even before he was born.

You see, he is one of Eddy Daniels's kids. And it just so happens that Eddy is the town's drunk.

So no matter what Shawn and his kid brother Willie do, they are already labeled as the trash of the town.

While some people are nice to them, many folks are just terrible to the kids, and the children don't even know why. They just sense a huge conflict, but they are too young to know the word prejudice.

PURE TRASH, The Story is the new short story written by Bette A. Stevens, the author of the award-winning children's picture book AMAZING MATILDA: A Monarch's Tale. Stevens's short story PURE TRASH is a prequel to the novel she is currently working on. In her upcoming novel, we will get to see

Shawn Daniels grow up, be labeled as Pure Trash, and finally see him leave the town where he was born to join the U.S. Army in 1963.

With her latest writing, Bette proves that she feels as comfortable writing for the Young Adult and Adult arena as she does writing for children. She has been able to show us a terrible conflict through the eyes of a young child who is not able to understand it completely. And, I have a hunch that there is more to it than just Eddy's drinking problem.

By all means, pick up this short story today at Amazon and get yourself ready for the upcoming novel: I have a feeling that Bette is going to make us cry... again.

?

D.G. Kaye says

Stevens takes us back into the 1950s, depicting the Daniels family – a poor and dysfunctional family. This very short story introduces us into the life of two brothers, Shawn and Willie, indicating a snippet of what their lives entail living in not the most idyllic of situations.

We get descriptive bits of background sprinkled through this story, indicating the poverty these boys live in and small insights into their parents' lives. The father is an alcoholic and doesn't leave an impression that family needs come first when we learn he has bought himself a television, while the home sounds like it could use some financial investment to bring it up to modern day living. I don't think I had enough to read to get emotionally invested in the story, but I did feel for the boys who seemed so far, not to complain about their meager lives and looked forward to weekends where they could get away from chores and out bike riding and fishing.

In this particular story, the boys are riding when little Willie get's into a biking accident and is hurt. Big brother Shawn runs to a close by home to seek help for his injured brother as he remembered a woman from his church lived nearby. Despite the woman showing some compassion and helping out Willie with his wounds, she didn't hesitate to show her prejudice for poverty by letting us know with words she felt these children and their family were beneath her.

I haven't read the full book version yet of Dog Bone Soup, so I really didn't grasp the whole essence of the story, merely a short glimpse into the theme of the story – family dysfunction, poverty and prejudice, based on description of the boys' home, their passions and the reaction of one towns woman when confronted with having to help the boys out. Based on the theme of the story, I'm sure I'd enjoy learning more about these boys and how they manage to get on with their lives despite their upbringing and the stigma of poverty that surrounds them.

Janice Spina says

This is a sensitive and moving story of how those who have more treat those who have less unfairly. There is a segregation amongst the social classes. Two young boys go out to play on a warm summer day just to have some fun together. They experience prejudice due to their poverty and social status of their parents.

Bette writes in a caring and articulate way to get her story across to young adults. This reader was moved to

tears by Bette's simple but eloquent tale and her ability to weave an interesting story.

Lucy Nix says

A good read for young adults to learn about life in the 1950's or adults reliving a time gone by. Leaves one wanting to read more about the adventures of Shawn and his brother and their family life. Interesting look at past history of rural America and of a time gone by. Keep up the good writing, enjoy reading your books.

Christoph Fischer says

“Pure Trash: The Story” by Bette A. Stevens is short story about bullying, introducing a 9 year old poor boy and his life in the 1950s. Looked down upon by society for his apparent lack of funds and modest background this short book allows us a glimpse into the joys and the bad life experiences of his. Under this premise the narrative is episodic and feels like a teaser for the upcoming full length novel about Shawn Daniels, his family and his life. I personally found the ending the most powerful part of the story, I felt quite affected by that section which stayed with me for long after I had finished reading. This is a promising effort that makes me look forward to the full length novel where the issues and all the potential will be fully explored.

Maureen Twomey says

A charming short story about two boys adventures. :)
(I think the rich woman is trash, not the boys!)
;-)

D.L. Finn says

“Pure Trash” is a charming and insightful glance into rural 1955 as we are taken through a day with two boys: Shawn and Willie. They are poor and judged on the merit of their drunken father. Heading into town it is apparent they are considered, “pure trash”. They’re able to earn enough change to get some treats and play freely on the playground. An unforeseen accident confirms what Shawn already knows, they aren’t treated the same as everyone else. I can’t wait to read “Dog Bone Soup” to see what happens to the boys. I recommend this short story for children-- as well as adults.
