



Diary of a Witness

Catherine Ryan Hyde

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One day, something's going to snap. . . .

Ernie doesn't have a lot of friends at school. Just Will. They have stuff in common—like fishing. But more important, they have common enemies: the school jocks, who seem to find bullying just another sport.

For the most part, Ernie and Will take life at high school in stride. Until Will has one very bad day. Now nothing is remotely funny. Ernie finds himself a witness—to loss, to humiliation, and to Will's anger—an anger that's building each and every moment.

Ernie doesn't want to believe his best friend is changing, but he can't deny the truth. Soon he has a choice: join or die. Or can he find another way?

Praise for *The Day I Killed James*:

"Teens who have experienced crushing rejection or who have laughed at the ardent feelings of a classmate will devour this original, gripping story."—*Kirkus Reviews*

From the Hardcover edition.

Diary of a Witness Details

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Author : Catherine Ryan Hyde

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From Reader Review Diary of a Witness for online ebook

F.T. Bradley says

After hearing about it at FiveAwesomeYAFans, I read Catherine Ryan Hyde's *Diary of a Witness*. The cover is really nice (you can see it here), simple and foreboding, which made me hope that maybe this was a mystery.

It was not. It was a real page-turner all the same though, so I thought I would tell you what this book is all about. Our main character is Ernie, who is an outcast in high school. His only friend is Will, and together, they manage to survive the bullying in their high school.

Until a fishing trip, where Will's little brother dies in a freak accident. At first, his schoolmates avoid Will, but then the taunting starts, playing on Will's guilt about his role in his brother's death. And for the duration of the story, we watch Will tick like a time bomb, until the inevitable ending (which I won't give away).

Meanwhile, Ernie struggles to lose weight (while his Mom orders pizza and cooks mac and cheese), but finds refuge in visiting his uncle's cabin. Uncle Max also gives Will advice when figuring out what to do to help Will.

This book was nicely paced, with impressive detailing when it came to the fishing chapters. The characters were vivid, from the bullies, to Will as the broken kid nobody could fix, and especially Ernie. Ernie's struggle with his weight felt very honest and real, particularly in his struggle to tell his mother about his wish to lose weight.

There are two things I wish had been different in this story. First, I wish Ernie had been a little less of a hero from the beginning. At the end of the book, Ernie sees his best friend Will as he is—but that wasn't all that much of a change from the beginning. Ernie saves his friend twice. I think Ernie's inner journey would have been more compelling had he decided to not save his friend the first time around. Second, I wish the adults wouldn't have been so great throughout the story. With the exception of Will's parents (who were almost over-the-top lousy), all adults are sympathetic to Will and Ernie's plight, to the point that I wish this was a little less so. The reality is that a lot of us rather look away, since it's so difficult to stop bullying.

Aside from these objections, I thought *Diary of a Witness* was a great read, and one I recommend. Final wish: there should be more books that shine a bright light on the effects of bullying like this one did.

Amrazametica says

Catherine Ryan Hyde. *Diary of a Witness*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf. 2009. ISBN: 978-0-357-85684-6

There are two teenagers Will and Ernie. They are each other's only friends. They are best friends in high school that get bullied all the time because of how they "look". Ernie goes fishing with Will, his brother Sam and Will's dad. They all have a good time until something happens. Something that could change their lives forever, especially Will's. They come back to school, and the jocks are always bullying them all over again. They get made fun of all the time because they fish or how they act or look. Ernie is a little over weight and Will is really skinny and has acne. But since Will is going through a hard time, Ernie just wants him to be safe and not do anything he shouldn't do. As the book goes on, Will gets worse and worse. He gets depressed, will Ernie do anything or what will happen to Will?

I really recommend this book for young teens because bullying is never the answer to anything. Nobody should ever be judged because of you look because you never know what they are going through.

Kari says

This book is absolutely gripping, gut wrenching, and horrific. I've read bully stories, but this one is heartrending. It's different in the way it's written, in that it isn't just Ernie, the character telling the story, who is being bullied and it isn't just him having to deal with it. Ernie is watching his best friend- his only friend and ally- slowly waste away with every torment thrown on them. Coupled with a horrible home life, Will deteriorates. Not only does Ernie have to deal with everything thrown at him, he has Will's issues as well.

There have been worse cases of bullying in books, but this one got to me because even when things in Will's home life became public knowledge, it didn't stop. If anything, those events seemed to spark his tormentors and neither boy could really stand up for themselves or the other without bigger consequences. That particular aspect is one I found a little unique to the bully story- their decisions to stand up for the other, knowing it would be worse for them but because it meant the friend didn't have to suffer, it was better, right?

Ernie was caught between a rock and a hard place more than once in this book and it was rough to watch him go through this. His home life wasn't great but compared to Will's it was kind of like paradise- and he recognized that. This was another aspect I really enjoyed because despite everything, in the right circumstances, Ernie could see the good things. But that means Will still didn't have it and that was even harder to read.

As the book progressed, I had the same growing sense of trepidation Ernie did but because I got to know Will so well also, I didn't want to see what was clear. Hyde did a magnificent job showing that- showing how Ernie could not see what was right there, and vouch for his friend. It happens- and as an outsider, it is so easy to point fingers and place blame but Hyde shows the impossibility of it when it's your best friend.

Anyone who has ever been bullied will relate to this book- and should read it. Because everyone has a breaking point- and consequences they might not be able to see because they are too blinded by hurt and hate. This book doesn't shy away from that- Hyde went in with tormented characters and she carried it all the way through until the spark hit the powder. And anyone who is doing the bullying also needs to read this because it doesn't hold back on just how much even the smallest things can tear a person apart.

High school, in many ways, can make or break a person for their future. You either gain interpersonal skills and confidence or you don't- and more often than not, what pushes it one way or another, ultimately, is genetics and family status. What makes a person popular? It isn't who they are, it's how they look, how well they can play sports or jump up and down with pom poms, and how well off their parents are. The rest of the students? Ignored, pushed away, and sometimes even ridiculed. And everyone knows it happens- even saying kids are cruel and that's high school for you- but it never stops. As parents and educators, it isn't seen- the tormented ones don't want to admit it and the parents of the tormentors never want to recognize their child is making the life of someone else hell. Books like this one really thrust that into light because there always will be students like Ernie- overweight, no matter what the reason and already embarrassed and unsure of them, only to have it preyed on and spotlighted. There will still be kids like Will with severe acne problems and ears that stick out with parents who aren't the greatest. And they are an easy and constant target- and it is a scenario that plays out over and over, happening in our high schools everywhere right now. I applaud Hyde for broaching this subject and not holding back on it because I firmly believe it needs far more attention.

This book easily deserves 5 stars. It is a very real, very rough subject from all sides, tackled strategically. This book left me with plenty of things to think about and I know it will stick with me for a long time. The characters are in depth and their growth and decisions are very realistic, even if hard to read. I most definitely recommend this book to everyone because it is eye opening, maybe even more so than some other bully books I have read because of the way it is presented and the way the plot plays out. In some ways, the ending was satisfying and perfect and beautiful- the kind that I love. Read it, because even though it is a fiction, it mirrors real events entirely too well and could easily become a biography or the next breaking news story.

Julie A says

Another title in the emerging "school violence" genre... I liked Will and Ernie; they were real, funny, endearing. Witness illustrates the slow, painful process to the desperation caused by the berating of bullies, family dysfunction, and the disintegration of hope; it also shows the courage to do what's right, even when doing so means the possibility of losing everything that makes you feel safe.

Diane says

"Would I be dead?"
"No, but your boyfriend would be."

Molly says

I was surprised when this book came in for me- I usually avoid ya books about school violence and bullying- they just make me sad and they're always so predictable. But I guess I read a review of this and thought it sounded promising.

And it wasn't too bad- it was not as predictable as I thought, and the part that I thought the whole book was about was really only the last couple of chapters. It was mainly about being an outsider, being ridiculed, being in high school, and not knowing how to handle the things that accompany that. It was sad- how could it not be? But the ending was good.

Cindi says

Well-written but not enjoyable to read about two boys being bullied.

Debby says

A very thought-provoking book about bullying in high school and its consequences, to the bullies, the bullied and the one seeking to stop it....the dominoes fall effect it has on all sides.

Reading this book brought back a lot of memories and the accompanying emotions from school years and the cruelty suffered by some kids just for being different. I, for one, am glad to see this subject being addressed head on in books and discussed in classrooms and hopefully in homes with kids as young as possible. No name calling permitted @ hoe should be a rule in homes from a very early age. It starts there.

carol says

Should read

Every bully, every parent of a bully, every principal, every teacher, every student who sees bullying going on should be required to read this book. Bullying is under controlled in the schools? Far from it. Thank you, Catherine,

Lydia Chelsea says

Chilling

Another great book by Hyde. It is a disturbing look at the merciless bullying of two high school boys. Narrator Ernie is overweight, but he's got the benefit of a support system at home. And he's got his best friend, Will, a fellow victim. But Will Manson doesn't have anyone but Ernie to lean on when his already difficult home life bottoms out. Will's steadily burning anger turns to rage as the bullying escalates, and Ernie becomes increasingly alarmed for both his friend and the five boys bullying them. Hyde's conclusion is matter-of-fact, almost numb. But that's fitting given the circumstances. I only wish Hyde's books were in never-ending supply. I haven't met one yet that wasn't irresistibly, you-need-to-get-to-sleep good.

Mary Kay says

The book was a predictable. Will and Earnie are the kids that the popular kids pick on. Each one handles this in a very different way. It's a good book to teach about bullies.

Aaron California says

Reader Comments

This book is recommended to all of those who are afraid to stand up for themselves. This novel will inspire you to stand up for yourself in the face of bad people.

Pegodwyer says

Intense

Hard to believe the author didn't live this story. Harder to believe some kids do. So well written but so haunting, too.

Elle says

Ernie and Will are friends as they have the bond of both being outcasts at their school. This is a light easy read that tackles so many difficult topics.

Hyde is such a gifted writer and I have enjoyed so many of her books and she didn't disappoint with this one. I didn't see the twist at the end but absolutely loved it. Highly recommend as I do all of Ms Hyde's books.

Jeanette says

2.9
