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5-2010

Review: Hate That Cat

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Recommended Citation
Schwedt, Rachel and DeLong, Janice A., "Review: Hate That Cat" (2010). *All Children's Book Reviews.* Paper 27.
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Creech, Sharon, *Hate That Cat*. Harper/HarperCollins Publishers, 2008. ISBN: 978006140947 (Ages 8-12)

Description

This novel in verse navigates with Jack, the narrator, the murky waters of poetic devices while revealing to the reader the heart of a sensitive, yet opinionated, middle school boy. Jack and his teacher, Miss Stretchberry first won fame in Creech's multi-award winning companion novel, *Love the Dog.* In fifth grade, under the wise and gifted direction of Miss Stretchberry, Jack learned to love and to express himself in free verse. In the cat book, the reader discovers that Miss Stretchberry has moved up with Jack's class and she now has the pleasure of teaching poetry from another perspective. Jack learns to recognize, appreciate, and write onomatopoeia, alliteration, metaphors and to use other conventions, but not without protest and his typical humorous and sometimes poignant dialogue. As Jack writes, the reader discovers more about the young poet and his family.

Critique

This powerful little novel will likely be read in one sitting by both adults and children. Hooked by Jack's straight-forward and age appropriate observations about poetic conventions and his passionate response to the "mean black cat," readers are compelled to read to the resolution. As in *Love That Dog*, the poetry Miss Stretchberry introduces to her students for their imitation is included at the conclusion of the story—as is a teaser for *Love That Dog.* Writers selected include a wide variety from Edgar Allan Poe and William Carlos Williams (again) to Valerie Worth and Christopher Myers. Walter Dean Myers also reappears as just the right stimulus to Jack's need (again). This small volume, like its predecessor is not to be missed by parents, teachers, librarians, poetry lovers, college students who aspire to teach and, of course, the child audience.