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Review: Frindle

Rachel Schwedt

Liberty University, reschwed@liberty.edu

Janice A. DeLong

Liberty University, jadelong@liberty.edu

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Clements, Andrew, *Frindle*. Illustrated by Brian Selznick. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1996. ISBN: 0689806698 (Ages 10 to 12)

Description

When Nick Allen enters the portals of Mrs. Granger's fifth grade class, he already knows the teacher's reputation. Strangely enough, Mrs. Granger wants her students to learn, and she brooks little nonsense, with "look-it-up-in-the-dictionary" being her mantra. Nick has a reputation to uphold also, and that necessitates getting the teacher off the subject just in time to prevent homework assignments. When the volley is fired across the bow on the first day of class, Mrs. Granger seems to have won with a personal assignment just for Nick. However, challenged and determined, Nick follows his teacher's own path planning to go a bit overboard in his research. What follows is a running battle for words, creativity, and the culmination of the competition many years later.

Critique

For teachers and students who think beyond the classroom, this small novel about research, causes, intellectual freedom, and mutual respect is a memorable read. Some of the events seem a bit melodramatic, but the overall theme quickly overrides any question of the validity. Clements, with his usual insight, manages the middle student mentality with wit and tenderness while providing space for the traditional teacher to preserve her integrity. If awards won are any test of quality, the accolades garnered by this little book proclaim it to already be a classic.

Subjects: Language, School, Teachers
Ingenuity, Leadership, Humor