



## Ink Me

*Richard Scrimger*

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## **Ink Me** Richard Scrimger

Bunny (real name Bernard) doesn't understand why his late grandfather wants him to get a tattoo. Actually, Bunny doesn't understand a lot of things, so it's good that his older brother, Spencer, is happy to explain things to him. But this is a task Bunny is supposed to do on his own, and nobody is more surprised than Bunny when, after he gets tattooed, he is befriended by a kid named Jaden and adopted into Jaden's gang. The gang hangs out at a gym, where Bunny learns to fight, but when it finally dawns on him that the gang is involved in some pretty shady--and dangerous--business, Bunny is torn between his loyalty to his new friends and doing what he knows is right.

## **Ink Me Details**

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Author : Richard Scrimger

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## From Reader Review Ink Me for online ebook

### Heidi says

Bunny knows when people call him stupid that it's pretty much the truth. But he does ok in the world, and his brother, Spencer, ensures that he doesn't get into too much trouble. When the boys' grandfather dies and assigns each of them to fulfill a task, Bunny doesn't understand why he's supposed to get a tattoo. The ink he gets turns out to have gang affiliations; Bunny doesn't understand this and gets himself into a jam. Told with Bunny's language and spelling as a mentally challenged teen, this story was somewhat difficult to get into and might not hold the interest of young people struggling with reading. But descriptions of gang life will sell this book; the empathy shown to the delightful protagonist by some unlikely characters will pull at your heart.

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### Ruth Walker says

What a remarkable book. I didn't know what to think at first but soon enough fell under the spell of the frank narration of Bunny (Bernard). Part of the Seven Series (a clever approach of conjoined books designed to engage young readers) "Ink Me" follows the adventures of one of seven grandsons, each bequeathed with a 'task' set by their departed Grandpa as part of his will.

But this is Bunny's story and Bunny is a special needs young man. Bunny follows Grandpa's directions and goes for a tattoo. Mayhem, suspense, mystery and discovery follows. And because Bunny is our narrator, we can only see his world through his eyes, his straightforward and unblinking eyes. And through his simple and direct narration. Like him, we discover that the world is not as it seems -- even the world of gangs and their turf.

Bunny can't spell too well. So as he "rites" his story for the "pleece", and as we readers crack his code of language, we become privy to other codes. Codes of friendship. Codes of tacit convention. And codes of sacrifice.

Best part of the book? The brilliant surprise towards the end. Richard Scrimger, I DID NOT see that coming. Well done.

Will YA readers get this? Oh, I think so. It will be a pity if only YA readers spend time with Bunny's story. Book snobs beware -- when a writer breaks the rules of spelling and grammar, there's likely much more at work (for example, Wm. Faulkner.) And with "Ink Me" there is indeed much more.

This book was one of my favourite reads of 2012.

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### Sigmund Brouwer says

So far this year, it's one of the best I've read, any genre. Bias alert: it's in a series called Seven, and I've authored Devil's Pass, one of the books in the series. However, I should also point out that this book is not in the genres I usually read, so I didn't expect to enjoy it as much as I did, and the craft of writing in this book is

at an extremely high level -- much is said with simple words. The story is equally compelling. Get ready to bust a gut with laughter and two pages later, swallow down a lump of sadness. Just started *Jump Cut*, the companion book to this one, and am loving it too.

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### **Melanie says**

*Ink Me* was okay. I didn't like the way it was written, as it just bugged me. I liked the idea of the series and think if I would have started it with the first book, I might have liked this book more. I just didn't like the characters or the reason he got the tattoo.

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### **Anna says**

Seven grandsons were given a task to complete from their now deceased grandfather. Bunny has received his task and it was to get a tattoo. Simple, right? Well that's what Bunny thought until he ends up befriending a person named Jaden and becoming part of a gang. As he gets closer with the gang, he realizes that they're not who they appear to be. Bunny must choose between his new friends that do bad things and what he knows to be right. Bunny chooses his friends and ends up living by the motto his grandfather told him: "together we fly". Bunny believes and hopes he made the right decision.

I picked this book to read because it was new in the public library so I checked it out. I finished this book because I like how the author made the book in his perspective and how the writing of the book/wording of the book fitted Bunny's personality and learning style.

I would recommend this book to Ohm because I think it'd be an easy book to understand and since he likes action, he would have plenty of it by reading this book.

*Ink Me* was a unique book because of the way it's written. It's written in the format of a boy who can't write showing us the differences of everyone. This book talks about what happens all around the world even if it's things we don't know about. *Ink Me* is an amazing book.

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### **Megan says**

The story is told from the perspective of Bunny and uses his grammar and way of speaking throughout. This was very difficult to read and I was very thankful I was reading it on my Kindle so I could use the text-to-speech option (which helped immensely with understanding what was written!). Not a book I'd recommend, but if you don't mind reading books with lots of spelling errors (intentionally, for storytelling reasons) then maybe you'd enjoy the book more than I did.

2.5 stars

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## **Francis says**

This is by far my favourite of the first 4 books that I've read in this series. The author, Richard Scrimger, takes a huge risk by placing readers inside the mind of a 15 year old boy with huge cognitive issues. Alas we have the character of Bunny. Everything that Bunny writes is spelled out phonetically. This forced me to slow down my reading to fully understand the story. Bunny gets caught up in a gang (not unheard of for young kids). They accept him for who he is, and he repays them by staying loyal to them.

The biggest flaw of this book is the fact that a 15 year old is able to get a tattoo without any parent present.

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## **Jenn says**

I struggled to rate this book. As an adult with good literacy skills, I appreciated the bold choice to write this book phonetically as a character-building tool. I really did feel Bunny's struggle to understand his world and his simple outlook on everything. My struggle to read this absolutely make me feel his struggle to write. I was completely engaged in Bunny's journey from beginning to end, and at the end I felt as I'm sure his parents and brother did about how everything turned out. For myself, I'd rate this around 3.5 stars.

As the parent of a hi-lo reader, this book was an unmitigated disaster that undid some of the huge strides and positive progress we have been working so very hard towards for the last several years. If I had known ahead of time that this book was written phonetically, I would have never given this book to my eldest. He loved the book, opted to read instead of taking advantage of what little video game time he gets, and asked to stay up past bedtime because he was so fully engaged. All of that is wonderful and amazing.

However, he took from this book that spelling and grammar are not important. He took from it that 'text speak' should be good enough for me and his teachers because it's good enough for a publisher. This book has resulted in a huge backslide in his reading because correctly written books are "too hard because they use real words" and "not easy like Ink Me." In addition to the shift in his attitude, he has gone back to misspelling words that he worked so hard to learn because reading them over and over in this book has confused him. I have always held the philosophy that any reading a reluctant reader does is good reading, and I have typically always given him pretty loose reins when it comes to books because he's so hard to engage, but this is a rare and probably isolated case of a book that has done demonstrable harm and very little good.

I am a fan of the Seven series and I do think this book is a good one, but I would recommend it only for readers with literacy skills that are strong enough to make the connection that the writing is a character building device to help us understand Bunny. I would not recommend it for readers who are reluctant because of difficulties with reading and writing.

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## **Nicola Mansfield says**

This series has no particular reading order and I picked this one next because two of the books take place within Canada so I thought I'd get to one of those next and this author was totally new to me; I'd never even heard of him before. I've highly enjoyed every book in this series so far but have to say this one did not do much for me. The significance of the Grandfather is quickly forgotten in this entry after Bernard (everyone

calls him Bunny) gets the tattoo as instructed in the will. Every now and then he is mentioned but we have no idea what purpose this quest had for Bunny. His tattoo quickly gets him (a white boy) accepted into an all black street gang and involved in gang activities, mostly reckless but harmless, until a deal goes down involving drugs, guns and money. The book starts with Bunny being asked to write his account of what happened in a police station and this is how the book proceeds; Bunny's written narrative. The book is hard to read as Bunny is somewhat illiterate and the writing is full of spelling mistakes and words are written in his own vernacular. Bunny is also not quite ... right. Nothing is ever said what is wrong with him. But he continually refers to himself as "stupid" and not smart enough; he also has a fixation with counting mundane things. My impression was that he may have been autistic. I didn't find the story very believable as Bunny obviously needs to be watched over to some degree and his parents leave him to his own devices to the extent that it is neglectful, his acceptance into the gang is questionable and how he gets away with giving the impression he's someone he's not is also. On top of all that the question of why this all happens in the first place is too pat of an explanation, quickly accepted by all. I enjoyed parts of it, especially the race relations when the black gang accepts Bunny as a member and Bunny's colourless (raceless) viewpoint of people, which is often a symptom of autism, and his naive yet profound race questions.

From this point my next book in the series is quite obvious as Bunny has a brother who has his own quest and he is mentioned often in this book with his texts to Bunny playing a major role in what transpires in this story. So next up will be Ted Staunton's Jump Cut.

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### **Shonna Froebel says**

This book is the fourth in Seven: the Series, following Between Heaven and Earth, Lost Cause, and Jump Cut). Seven cousins are each given a task to do by their grandfather as part of his will. Along with the task, they are given the funds necessary to carry it out. Here, the cousin whose story it is is Bernard, nicknamed Bunny. Bunny is fifteen, big for his age, and developmentally delayed. His brother's story was told in Jump Cut and the books stories integrate with each other. Bunny's task is to get a tattoo of his grandfather's service insignia. Arrangements have already been made with the tattoo shop in question, and Bunny's chooses to go on his own. When he gets off the streetcar near the shop he finds a large boy beating up a smaller one and comes to the smaller boy's assistance. In the tattoo shop, communication goes awry and Bunny comes out with a different tattoo than the one intended, and it is this, along with the assistance he gave the boy that will chance his life's direction in a radical way. Bunny is used to being underestimated and pushed to the sidelines, so when his new friends seem to genuinely value some of his skills and accept him into their group, they earn his loyalty. This book has some interesting twists, and Bunny is a very interesting character. Really enjoyed this one.

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### **Neill Smith says**

When Bunny attends the reading of his grandfather's will he is surprised that his grandfather has asked him to get a tattoo that his grandfather did not get the opportunity to get during his own lifetime. Bunny is a nice, well-meaning boy but he doesn't always understand all the events that happen around him. However he decides to get the tattoo. Unfortunately the tattoo shop picked by his grandfather has changed hands and there is a slight mixup – unknown to Bunny his tattoo identifies him as a member of a black gang with one murder to his credit. Bunny relies on the advice his grandfather has given him during their experiences together to deal with this situation with novel and comical reasoning.

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## Peg says

Ink Me is an interesting take on someone with low IQ. There aren't many novels where the main character is intellectually challenged; usually they are a side character, used to show the main character's empathy. Because it's Bunny writing the story, everything is phonetically spelled. That makes it a tad difficult to read and may put off a lot of readers. The gang brings Bunny the friendship and loyalty he craves, but he is not able to comprehend what they are setting up. He has no filter, just likes the elation he feels from being part of the group.

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## Tudor Robins says

OK, so, Ink Me ... Well, if you've read the other reviews you'll know it's written phonetically. Here's how that went for me when I opened it:

Out loud - "Oh no! There's no way I can read this!"

In my head - 'You are so narrow-minded. You are an author. You should celebrate other author's efforts,' etc.

Then my boys intervened - you see we're reading Seven: The Series out loud, and we had just finished Jump Cut, which is the closest companion to this story (it's about Bunny's brother, and refers to Bunny fairly often). Anyway, of course the boys wanted me to read this to them and, of course, they didn't have to tackle the phonetic spelling since I was the one doing the reading.

So, first important point, the phonetic spelling would probably have stopped me from reading this book if it wasn't part of a series we were already committed to. Which is something to keep in mind, because as an author, you don't want somebody closing your book on the first page.

Second point. I get why the author used phonetic spelling. I understand it. But I still didn't like it, and I don't think it was necessary. Bunny was an engaging character, with a great voice. I understood his struggles with the world. I loved his unique viewpoint. This came through in his observations and thinking process. I don't think the misspelling was necessary.

Third point. The spelling did pull me out of the story many times. A good example was "one". The author never spelled the word "one" - he always used the numeral "1" - which, in the typeface of the book, was very close to "I". At first, I kept thinking "1" was "I" and, later, when I figured it out, there were places it still didn't work. "No one" for example, was always written No 1 - and I would always get confused and think it was the abbreviation for "Number 1" and then I'd be reading out loud, "Number one says ..." and would have to stop, and go back and try to figure out where I went wrong.

Last point. When you do something so different, and so noticeable, as a reader, I start analysing the way it's been done. There are a few words that just don't work phonetically. "Bourgeois" was one of them - the way it was written phonetically was off. Also, part of the story takes place at Sherway Gardens mall in Toronto. Bunny says something like "The bus sed sure way ..." But would he? I mean the correct spelling would have been right in front of him, on the bus. It would have said "Sherway" - right? So, in that case, wouldn't he have spelled it correctly? Do you see how picky this made me? Then, there was the occasional word that was

spelled correctly - those started to stick out like sore thumbs.

I liked this book. My kids liked this book (they got to listen to it). This was skilfully written and the character was well-developed. There were complex and subtle emotions and contradictions exposed through the viewpoint of a developmentally delayed character. Excellent.

I just wish the phonetic spelling had been an idea the author and editor had discussed, and then decided against. I wish the flow of the book had been less interrupted for me.

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### **Elvina Barclay says**

I was very excited when I first heard about this series and was happy to receive this book from Orca for review.

The story is told in the voice of the main character, Bunny, and as such we have to try and read through his spelling and grammar mistakes. At first I found this very difficult but after a couple of chapters I got to like this, it added to my understanding of Bunny and his character.

The story is set in my neighbourhood of Mimico (southern Etobicoke) so I had a good grasp on the geography of the story which helped me with the atmosphere of the novel. I likely see kids like Bunny and his friends every day at my work in our local high school.

It's frightening to see how one person's mistake can alter the lives of so many people in such huge way. There were hints of what Bunny's cousins and brother are tasked with and look forward to reading the other six books in this set.

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### **Jeffrey says**

Ted Staunton's *Jump Cut* set a new standard for the *Seven* series and Richard Scrimger in *Ink Me ain't letting us down* with this marvellously inventive novel that truly gives voice to Bunny O'Toole, younger brother of Spencer, and a kid who is marginalized by being different because as he tells us, "he's a dummy". Perhaps to the outside world but Scrimger's absolutely fantastic first-person narrative brilliantly empowers Bunny by letting him tell his very wild story in his own very distinct fashion - you have to read it to believe but this is one fabulous novel!

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