



Canned and Crushed

Bibi Belford

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When Sandro Zapote finds out his little sister needs heart surgery, he is determined to help his parents raise the money they'll need to help her get better. Sandro's dad is in the states illegally and must work two jobs to support the family. For one, he picks up roadkill for the department of streets and sanitation and gets paid by the carcass. For the other, he collects scrap metal to recycle for cash. Sandro helps his dad with some of the scrap metal heavy lifting, and one headboard, a weight bench, some gutters, and a few car parts later, Sandro has a brilliant idea: can collecting. Save the environment. Save his family. Maybe even save some spending money for the fabulous, fast new bike he's been coveting.

Well-meaning and with funny inner monologue, Sandro is the kind of person you can't help but cheer for. He's a boy who loves drawing, soccer, and his little sister. And whether he's fishing a fuzzy, dust-coated turtle out from under his sister's bed or organizing a school-wide can drive all by himself, Sandro is a smart, self-aware hero, who makes just a few mistakes along the way.

Canned and Crushed, by first-time author Bibi Belford, gives Sandro a funny, relatable, readable voice, while being fresh and original. It's a story that will open its readers' eyes, dealing with issues of illegal immigration, unemployment, racism and religious persecution, bullying, and more—carefully and with a light and often humorous touch. This is a cross between *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and it's a book no kid will want to miss.

Canned and Crushed Details

Date : Published March 3rd 2015 by Sky Pony

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Author : Bibi Belford

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From Reader Review Canned and Crushed for online ebook

Eva Bresser says

Great read aloud to use for a 4th or 5th grade class. Students really enjoying listening to the story. They can relate to Sandro and the struggles he goes through as a kid in school. Using this book as a read aloud also generates a good classroom discussion to be had following the reading. As a teacher, I like the way that the book is written. There is never a dull moment, and very funny from an adults perspective. I would highly recommend this book for teachers to either use as a read aloud, or at least have copies in their classroom library!

Gaele says

A book that feels like a walk through a middle-grade school hallway, Bibi Belford has managed to capture the language of middle-schoolers while presenting a character that is often difficult to like, even as you are exposed to more of his life away from school.

Sandro Zapote is a kid in a difficult situation: his father is in the US without papers, and his little sister has a heart condition that requires treatment that is far more expensive than his family can afford. The family's living situation gets worse when his mother and sister head to Mexico so Girasol can get treatment, leaving Sandro and his father back in the states. Worry about his sister, a solid and often single-minded determination to help his family, and Sandro's own sense of 'justice' in dealing with those who wrong him give this book an all too plausible feel, while introducing issues that are difficult and controversial for adults, let alone children.

Belford uses Sandro's desires to do good with his often and frequent moments of bad behavior, tying it back to his desires to 'do for' his family when not everything works out quite as he would plan. Simple childish reactions of jealousy, mischief and small vandalisms will be easy for children to understand, and they will most probably 'side with' Sandro in some of his actions gone horribly wrong. Underneath the mischief and mistakes is a child desperate to help his family but wholly without the real skills or options to do so.

With a few twists and unexpected help from surprise places, wonderfully rich characters and prose that feels honest and real while still presenting issues that are far more adult than one would expect in a story for children, Belford presents readers with an opportunity for discussion, learning and enjoyment.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via Edelweiss for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Pop Bop says

A Rewarding, But Challenging and Thought Provoking, Story

The voice of our hero/narrator Sandro is interesting and hard to pin down or categorize. He is much too

perceptive, worldly wise and articulate to be a ten year old. His repeated disclaimer that he is trying to build up a sophisticated vocabulary is a charming but ineffective dodge. Despite this, though, the author has created him with enough childish innocence, energy, interests and preoccupations that there is a feeling of an authentic voice. It might be best, (and the best way to describe the effect), to think of this as a memoir written by an adult, but from the point of view of his younger self. I don't have a problem with this. I don't really want to read a book actually written by a ten year old, and I am happy to have the version of a ten year old that has been created by this author. That's probably true for a young reader of this book as well.

The off balance feeling you get from the narrator's voice is compounded by the way he behaves and reacts to circumstances. Sandro can be generous, patient, loving and responsible. He can also be dense, vindictive and mean. The result is that you get a character who is an odd combination of Scout, Dennis the Menace, Mother Theresa, and that sneaky kid from "The Great Brain". So, sometimes you want to hug this character and sometimes you want to spank him, (metaphorically speaking, of course). I didn't mind that and actually appreciated the vigor and originality that went into creating Sandro, but it's probably something to keep in mind when recommending this book to any particular young reader. It helps that Sandro recognizes when he is behaving badly and strives to improve himself. So at least the "teaching moments" are actually an important part of the overall story.

And the more I think about it, the more it makes sense to have a complex kid to narrate a book that has the ambition, optimism and nerve to address complex questions like illegal immigration, a disabled parent, a seriously ill sister, bullying, family money problems, and the like. Everything isn't warm and cuddly and you probably need a hero with a few warts in order to tell the story properly.

The upshot is that this book is undoubtedly well written. There are loads of very sharp and deftly crafted comments and observations. There is an underlying generosity to the author's view of her characters, and bits of unexpected humor and almost slapstick humor are sprinkled throughout. Sandro at his best has great heart and charm. But, there are serious and uncomfortable themes here too. The blurbs draw comparisons to "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" and "Diary of a Wimpy Kid". That may be fair, but there is more of Junior on the rez than of Greg Heffley here. That's bracing and unusual for a book aimed at this reading demo, but that's what makes this such an interesting and tempting choice for a confident reader.

Please note that I received a free advance ecopy of this book in exchange for a candid review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.

Betsy says

I had the pleasure of sitting with Bibi at a Children's author's conference yesterday. The story behind her book is wonderfully true. There are not many Hispanic boy main characters in children's literature and while it seems that everything goes wrong for Sandro, as a teacher, you know there ARE kids who are dealing with way more than we can ever imagine. I found the book realistic in how Sandro behaves. He doesn't always do the right thing. He knows what his parents expect and what he SHOULD do, but he's a kid and it doesn't always work out the right way. That's what I really liked about the book.

Kim says

As a mother of an almost ten year old, I do tend to forget that all kids this age often think they can save the world. Sandro isn't trying to save the world, just his family and most importantly his little sister. His voice is clear and full of determination and if he learns anything, its that it is okay to ask for and get help. This the second book by Sky Pony Press that I have had the pleasure of reading an ARC of and I can't wait to recommend at the bookstore where I work. I love that there are stories with characters that are full of heart and qualities that make them unique in society being published.

Michelle says

Fourth grader Sandro has two goals: help his soccer team win and take home the top prize for the school district's art contest. But when his sister gets sick, everyone must step up. His dad is working two jobs and often needs Sandro's help, even if that means he must miss a soccer game. Sandro does his best, but sometimes his schemes get messy and his choices are off target.

This title addresses themes of racism, illegal immigration, and disability, while using humor and an authentic voice. Readers will identify with Sandro's poor decision making skills and relate to his father's advice to "be the better man."

Hoover Public Library Kids and Teens says

Holy guacamole! Sandro is dealing with A LOT. You'll love rooting for him as he deals with school and family drama. Great new voice in youth fiction.

Salsabarian says

Sandro comes across as appealingly resilient and cheerful in the face of all that's going on in his life: his little sister's illness, starting a recycling project to raise funds for her hospitalization, living with Papi while Mama and Girasol are gone. He reminds himself to be "a better man" when things don't go his way. Big quibble: Abiola's family is from Pakistan but their last name is consistently spelled "Kahn," with the exception of page 155 when it is (presumably) correctly spelled "Khan." I knew something wasn't right!

BarbJ says

Sandro is determined to find a way to earn money so that his sister can get the heart surgery that she needs. He finds out that recycling cans can bring in cash, so he arranges to have a disposal unit installed in his school. Sadly, he doesn't realize that all the money earned will be going to the school instead of to him, but there is a happy ending. Nice characterization of a boy who acts before he thinks, but has a good heart.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss.

Sandro has difficult family circumstances-- even though his mother is a US citizen, his father came to the US for an engineering job that fell through, and is living and working illegally. When he is injured on the job and unable to get workers' compensation, he is unemployed and doing odd jobs like picking up dead animals for the city. Things get even tighter for the family financially when Girasol, Sandro's sister, is diagnosed with Kawasaki syndrome and must eventually go back to Mexico for treatment, leaving Sandro and his father in the US. Sandro is usually in trouble-- he thinks it is a good idea to put a dead cat on his teacher's car window when he thinks she has been mean to him. He hopes to help his father financially by winning an art contest, and also by organizing can recycling at his school. He feels that Abiola, a girl in his class, is mean to him because she tattles on him, and he starts to bully her. He eventually damages her bicycle because he is jealous, and is accused of race bullying. He deletes all of the correspondence that the school sends his father and gets himself deeper and deeper in trouble. Eventually, he finds out that the school is getting the money for the recycling, and they are using it for the school playground, but help comes from an unexpected place and does make things easier for the family.

Strengths: I was really hoping for a book that featured cultural diversity in a positive way, and this has many good things-- Abiola's mother is understanding and helpful, and even Abiola herself isn't as bad as Sandro thinks. It addresses the fact that some families have one parent who is a citizen, but the rest of the family can have a precarious status. It's also good that Sandro wants to help his family out.

Weaknesses: However, Sandro is an unpleasant character. Even though he has serious issues facing his family, he ignores all of the support out there and makes things worse. His repeated use of the phrase "Cheese Whiz" didn't help. I really have to debate this one, because while I liked the community around Sandro, I really wanted to slap Sandro himself.

Carol says

Wonderful story with many lessons learned! My Great-Grand daughter is now reading it...so it is obviously meant for all ages....buy this and enjoy! Easy reading and fun....

Carrie says

Another wonderful read by Bibi Belford. As a reader, I can tell that Belford has worked with children because she seems to be able to put down in words what they are thinking- realistically.

Holland says

A charming tale, Canned and Crushed can sit at the top of the recommended reading lists of teachers who value multi-cultural tales, humorous storytelling, and richly developed voices. Simply put, Bibi Belford's debut novel is a hoot!

Sandro Zapote needs money. His dad is an undocumented immigrant who collects scrap metal and dead animals for a living, he needs a new bike (yes, needs), and his sister has a rare heart condition. To top all that, Sandro's soccer team can't seem to make it without him even though he needs to work, his teachers definitely don't get him, and if Abiola Khan doesn't leave him alone, he might be forced to do something desperate.

Even when Sandro's escapades get him into trouble, readers will find themselves rooting for him to find a way out. Since we're inside Sandro's head, we know what lies beneath his actions. And we can forgive him.

This book doesn't tip into a morality tale, but it does explore issues of ethics, social justice, economics, and even education. It looks at the cultures of central Mexico, immigrants to the US, and mainstream American culture. The book handles tough issues with a deft, light touch that leave readers laughing while thinking.

I want to include the story's weaknesses, but I'm having a hard time thinking of them. Dialogue? It's snappy. Story? Well told. Characters? Believable. Voice? Oh, this author's got that in spades. So read the book yourself, and if you find some weaknesses, let me know.

This book should appeal to readers 8-12, teachers, parents of readers 8-12, and readers old enough to read children's books again and enjoy them.

Julie Holmes says

This is a great book about siblings and the lengths one would go for another. Not only is the main character struggling to balance school with his love of soccer, his sister needs major surgery, and he takes it upon himself to raise the money to save her. This book explores best friends, frenemies, a wayward turtle, entrepreneurship, and the struggles undocumented families can have despite high education and skill.

Middle-grade boys especially, and girls, will enjoy this book. Adults too--there's plenty of laugh-out-loud moments to make your family look at you funny and wonder if they're supposed to be in on the joke. Seriously, it's a great read!

Abigail says

Bibi is attuned to grade school humor and speech! The book is written using common everyday speech that you hear in the schools while also introducing young readers to more advanced vocabulary. The topics in the novel are presented in fresh ways that will start good conversations about controversial issues. Loving it so far!
