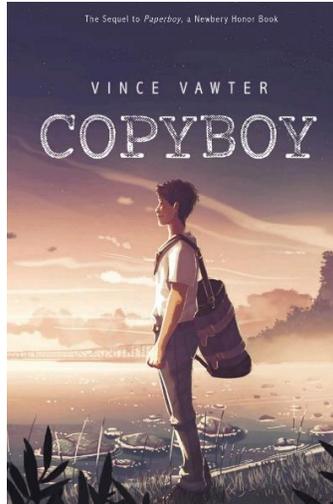


Second Reaction: Transcending Stereotypes Through the Growth of a Copyboy

Vawter, Vince. *Copyboy*. Illustrated by Alessia Trunfio. Mankato, MN: Capstone, 2018. Print.

Samantha Harding



Copyboy, by Vince Vawter, is a novel that transcends the stereotypes of young adult literature and presents a reality that many people experience but do not share. In this sequel to Vawter's *Paperboy*, Victor embarks on a journey that challenges him in his thinking, adeptness, and ability to depend on others. In *Paperboy*, Victor meets Mr. Spiro. Mr. Spiro's compassion and generosity allows Victor to believe that there is good in the world. Throughout this friendship/mentorship, Mr. Spiro gives Victor four corners of a dollar bill. These corners contain the words: student, servant, seller, and seeker. These four words drive Victor to make decisions about his future in ways he never thought possible. When *Copyboy* begins, the reader is told that Mr. Spiro has died, and Victor has been tasked with the important role of spreading Mr. Spiro's ashes. This task leads Victor to the bayous of New Orleans, where his expectations are to spread the ashes and leave. When Victor reaches New Orleans, he begins to truly see why Mr. Spiro sent him there: the heart of people, the vision of Victor's future, and the resiliency Victor possesses.

This novel dives into the world of children with disabilities. When we first meet Victor, he is afraid to speak to people. He does not want people to know that he struggles with his speech. At first, Victor allows his speech impediment to hold him back from the life he desires. Vawter addresses Victor's fears in a beautiful depiction of the mentorship between Victor and Mr. Spiro as well as the relationships formed in New Orleans.

I work with a few fifth and sixth graders who struggle with reading. These students present reading difficulties that vary from reading fluency or comprehension to lack of reading interest. When I first read this novel, I knew that I had to share this with them. As a high school English teacher, I am immersed daily in their struggles. I teach students who struggle to read on grade level, students who can read fluently, yet have no idea what they are reading, and many others who have a minimal desire to read so only read when directed. After sharing this novel with the upper elementary/middle school students with whom I work, I mentioned *Copyboy* to some of my high school students and teachers at my school. Many of these students and teachers were amazed by author Vince Vawter's ability to create a character who everyone roots for. As the readers, we want to see Victor find what he is searching for on this journey. We cheer for him when he meets people who accept him for who he is, and we yearn to see where he goes next when there are no more pages left to read.

This novel does not take much persuasion to read. As I sat down to read it, I was constantly wanting to know what happens next. The students who read it were enamored with the idea that a high schooler just left his family and job to travel hundreds of miles to spread the ashes of a man who he had just met. However, as students began to see the growth of Victor making his journey, they saw his desire to know more and to yearn for confidence in himself that he so desperately needed.

I believe this novel, regardless of the age of the reader, has the ability to engage people on a journey of self-discovery, confidence and love. I would recommend *Copyboy* to everyone I know; in fact, I have shared it with a lot of people already.

About the Author

Samantha Harding is a high school English teacher at Maryville High School in Maryville, Tennessee. She sponsors Student Council and coaches Cheerleading. Samantha is working on her Master's Degree in Literacy and Reading Specialist Degree through Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee. One of Samantha's passions is to look for ways to engage high school students with reading. In her spare time, she likes to travel, read, watch sports, and spend time with family and friends.