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Sigg's "Mud Boy: A story about bullying" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Siggs, S. (2019). *Mud Boy: A story about bullying*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 32 pp. \$17.95. ISBN 9781785928703

Sam is every child. He is a boy of boundless energy whose world of heartfelt music, of learning and laughter is suddenly changed. At school, Sam endures teasing and bullying and is left turned around, feeling stuck and alone. His friends have covered him head to toe with mud-soaked words and sticky whispers that weigh him down. He no longer hears the music he once so loved, only silence. He hides away to a dark, familiar place for comfort, never to come out again. But this isn't the end of Sam's story. For in the gentle, listening heart of a mother, the caring, enduring thoughts of a family, and even the unlikely love of a cat, the mud begins to fall away. Sam is encouraged and even finds his own courage to see others in a new way, to see the mud they are carrying, the mud that weighs them down. Mud is being thrown again, but Sam knows it is time to say "STOP" and steps in with new words, encouraging words, to do something right and good. The music of his heart returns.

The complexity of childhood traumas such as bullying are often complex and confusing for children, let alone the parents who must delicately address them. The strength of this narrative is in its "every child" like setting, which draws on parallels to common, everyday scenarios even beyond bullying or teasing and uniquely frames in restorative spaces for healing and learning. This book, along with its accompanying "Guide for Supporting Adults," helps children and parents to appropriately navigate the muddy, weighty issues of bullying and teasing.

The storyline and illustrations of *Mud Boy* are easy for children to follow and allows for strong follow up to the unavoidable questions and feelings that arise in conversations after reading. Akin to Jayneen Sander's, "*How big are your worries Little Bear?*" and Hope Gilchrist's, "*Am I a bully?*", adults will find plenty of resources in *Mud Boy* to support the growth and learning of their child around sensitive social issues. While the narrative is wanting for strong connection to Biblical Scripture, parents should find it easy to integrate biblical truths and tenants of Christian faith, especially when engaging with the range of activities found in the parent guide. Highly recommended for parents with children just starting school or struggling with anxiety, worry or fear.

Reviewer

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