



BROWSE



What Mr. Mattero Did (review)

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Maggie Hommel

de la Peña, Matt *Ball Don't Lie*. Delacorte, 2005 [288p] Library ed. ISBN 0-385-90258-1\$18.99 Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-73232-5\$16.95 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 9-12

Seventh-grader Claire, along with her friends Suzanne and Jenna, has reported to the principal that the music teacher, Mr. Mattero, touched the girls inappropriately when he was alone with them. Mr. Mattero's daughter, Melody, is an eighth-grader at the same school, and Melody and Claire alternate narration as the school and community react to the charge, with both the accusers and Mr. Mattero's family suffering harassment and upheaval as a consequence. Melody is blandly depicted, so it's the anxious and insecure Claire, with her submission to strong-minded Jenna, who's the more memorable character; this vividness helps keep her sympathetic when the book eventually reveals that the girls did, in fact, concoct the accusation (Jenna, saying it would get them into study hall instead of music, secretly hoped the situation would garner the attention of her distant mother). The suppression of that revelation is an interesting decision, since it means readers, like the community, don't know the truth of the situation; on the other hand, the fact that we're privy to Claire's thoughts makes the omission of this key information from her narration seem like a gimmicky deception. Claire is nonetheless a compelling character and her relationship with Jenna is thoughtfully depicted; even readers who don't grasp the enormity of the girls' actions may take the point about making one's own decisions rather than merely going along with one's friends.

CUMMINGS, PRISCILLA *What Mr. Mattero Did*. Dutton, 2005 [224p]
 ISBN 0-525-47621-0 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

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DE LA PEÑA, MATT *Ball Don't Lie*. Delacorte, 2005 [288p]

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R Gr. 9-12

Sticky has been in and out of foster homes all of his life and has seen things that would break most people—basketball is just about the only thing that hasn't abandoned or betrayed him. Even though he's the only white kid at the Lincoln Rec gym in LA, where ballers play on one court and the homeless sleep on the other, it's "Sticky's home. It's his hiding place. It's his church." Sticky may be one of the lucky few who has a chance to make it big in basketball, if he can overcome crushing poverty and his painful past. His battle to survive is heartbreakingly and artistically portrayed through a dreamlike narrative, accented with rhythmic pacing and flowing street dialogue, that wanders through scenes from Sticky's past and present life. Readers may find the nonlinear narrative challenging at first, but the high-interest topic and familiar slang will allow them to quickly settle in. de la Peña doesn't shy away from the gritty harshness of urban poverty, but neither does he glorify or vilify the reality that Sticky faces. The characters live and breathe, and Sticky in particular has depth, acting just as a traumatized person might, displaying obsessive-compulsive tendencies, shying away from even his girlfriend's touch, sometimes lashing out violently. Readers aren't asked to judge Sticky but to know him and see both his flaws and beauty. The book's language, its pacing and narrative structure, and the depth of emotions explored make it uniquely well crafted in the realm of urban basketball tales. For readers who are ready to take on the darker complexities of life, or who—like Sticky—live to play ball, this is a must-read. MH



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What Mr. Mattero Did, product range reduces suggestive of household in a row.
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