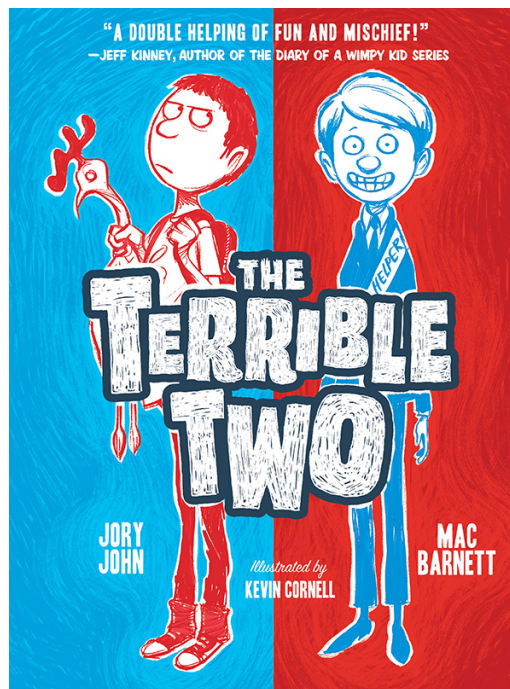


Children and Young Adult Book Review
Elementary to Middle School
The Terrible Two

Educator Reviewer: Marianne Snow
Student Reviewer: Noah Kilpatrick



John, J. & Barnett, M. (2015). *The terrible two*. New York, NY: Abrams Publishing.

ISBN: 978-1419714917

Pages: 224

Educator Review:

I can't remember the last time a book made me guffaw—that loud burst of laughter that only dry, smart, almost absurdist humor can bring out of me. Well, *The Terrible Two* (John & Barnett, 2015) certainly made me laugh. This book puts a fresh spin on the new-kid-in-town trope with a wry, subtly wacky humor reminiscent of Louis Sachar's Wayside School series. Our story's hero, Miles Murphy, has just moved to boring cow town Yawnee Valley, leaving behind his friends, his carefree life, and his status as his school's best prankster. As he adjusts to his new school, Miles must contend with several interesting characters, such as the tyrannical Principal Barkin; Niles, the goody-goody "school-helper"; Josh, class president/dictator and Mr. Barkin's bully of a son; and Holly, who's trying to bring Josh's reign to an end. To make things even more complicated, the school already has a mysterious master prankster who gives Miles a run for his money. But who is it?

While *The Terrible Two* might not be the ideal choice to incorporate into a formal late elementary/ early middle school English Language Arts curriculum, its humor, mystery, suspense, and rich vocabulary make it a useful book to keep in the classroom. Many students will enjoy reading about Miles's hijinks during sustained reading times and teachers might consider recommending it to "reluctant" readers over summer break. Moreover, Kevin Cornell's cheeky black-and-white illustrations are a great visual aid to the written text.

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However, I do have a concern with the ending of the book stirred by my interest in social justice (spoiler alert!). Mile's goal is to bring down Principal Barkin and Josh, who reigns as class president due to nepotism and corruption, the best way he knows how: pranks. Meanwhile, his classmate Holly has consistently been running against Josh in presidential elections as a "protest candidate" whose "very presence in the race exposes the injustice of the system" (p. 40). In the end, Miles's pranks succeed, and Holly and her quest for justice are never mentioned again. While I understand that this book revolves around the humor of pranking, I have to wonder why John and Barnett include Holly's character and her statements about political protest, only to ultimately dismiss her. This concern doesn't make me want to toss *The Terrible Two* into the trash, however. Asking young readers to question Holly's role in the book can help them develop their critical thinking and analysis skills, making it an even more worthwhile, valuable text.

Marianne Snow
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Ph.D. Student

Student Review:

I would recommend this book. I liked this book because the characters were funny in some parts. I also liked that in the middle of a chapter there would be random facts about cows. For example, the fact where it said, "cows do not rob banks" made me laugh. Another thing I liked was the pranking war. For these reasons I would recommend this book. I think this book is good for super advanced 2nd graders and also 3rd and 4th graders.

Noah Kilpatrick
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2nd Grade