

JOLLE@UGA®

JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

Children and Young Adult Book Review

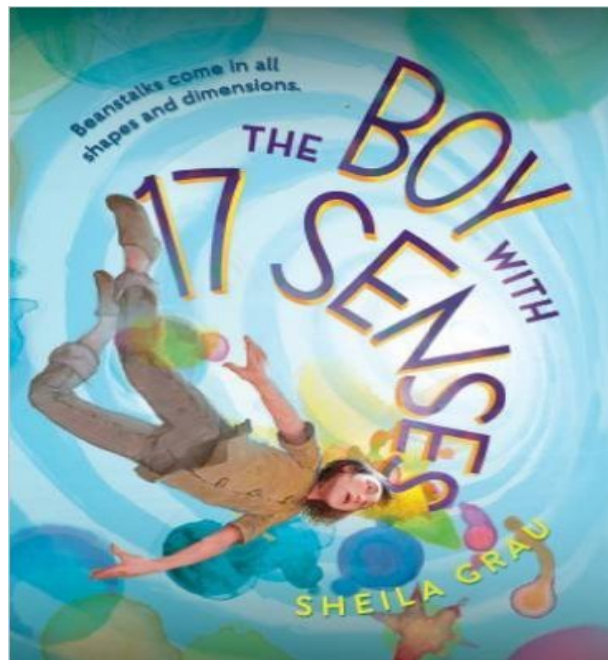
Middle School

The Boy with 17 Senses

By Sheila Grau

Student Reviewer: Madison Lavender

Educator Reviewer: Miriam Voyles



Grau, S. (2016). *The Boy with 17 Senses*. New York, NY: Amulet Books.

ISBN: 978-1419721199

Pages: 250

Student Review:

Recently, I read the book *The Boy with 17 Senses* by Sheila Grau, and let me just say, it was fantastic! It's probably one of my favorite books. The whole concept of another world where everyone has synesthesia (kind of like a "sixth sense" where you give certain songs or noises a color or emotion, or maybe whenever you see the number five you coordinate it with the color yellow) is very interesting and original. I've never read anything like it.

Once you pick this book up, you can't put it down. It's so interesting and creative!
-Madison

This book is important for a variety of reasons. It gives an in depth look at people who have synesthesia and other types of extra senses similar to it. The author also has something called misophonia, meaning "hatred of sound." This is very similar to synesthesia, but instead of making her coordinate certain sounds and/or noises with colors or emotions, it makes her extremely angry when hearing certain sounds. You can tell that the story is told by someone who knows a lot about what they're talking about. On the planet Yipsmix, *everyone* has synesthesia to an extreme. They can taste words, see and feel sounds, and to them, every number has its own personality. The author does an amazing job at describing these things, like the colors and patterns the main character sees whenever he hears noises. They're all very vivid, and it gives an interesting mental picture of what the character is going through and how it is living with synesthesia. I actually have synesthesia- every song has certain colors, and I can say that the descriptions are pretty accurate. I can't actually *see* the colors when I listen to music, but I can feel them, and the author describes the feeling extremely well.

A large variety could enjoy this book. It's not just targeted towards a younger audience although the book's main audience probably *will* end up being largely made up of kids. I think adults could definitely enjoy this book as well. It's kind of like with cartoons- you're never too old to enjoy them! People that actually have synesthesia would probably enjoy this book the most because they can relate to the characters in it to an extent. Really, anyone can enjoy this book. It's fantastic, and anyone that has a love of reading and fantasy can see that.

I have a few favorite parts of this book. One of my favorite parts of the book is the whole concept. As I said in the beginning, it's original. I'm pretty sure almost no one has written a book about tiny aliens living on a planet where everyone can see sounds, and they eventually attempt to explore earth to save their family's failing farm from their neighbors who are trying to take it (my mistake if someone else has and I didn't know about it). Once you pick this book up, you can't put it down. It's so interesting and creative! The only thing I didn't like in this book is Jaq's evil neighbors, the Vilcots. The whole book, they're trying to take all the things Jaq loves away from him, and it's all over an incident that happened years before the story takes place. They're the antagonists of the book, and it's so irritating whenever they take something that Jaq really wanted to keep. You're really rooting for Jaq and his family, so that's why it's so irritating. That's how the book was written though. You're *supposed* to dislike the bad guys, so if you really think about it, that's actually a good thing!

If I were to recommend *any* book to someone, it would probably be this one. It's fantastic, and I think everyone should read it. Anyone can really get into this book, regardless of age, gender, or what their interests are. I absolutely love this book, and I think a lot of other people would love it, as well. This book is a truly amazing one, and if I could taste the words the author used to write this book, they'd taste wonderful- but not how the word "wonderful" tastes to the people of Yipsmix because that word tastes pretty bland.

Madison Lavender
Oconee County Middle School, Watkinsville, GA
6th Grade

Educator Review:

On a planet in which all people have 17 senses, a poor boy named Jaq is swindled into selling his beloved pet for a magical key that contains a map to another world- a world filled with valuable treasure that could save his family's farm, but is filled with giants. Jaq, along with an unlikely friend, must journey to this land to rescue someone and try to save his grandfather, who has been falsely accused of a crime and thrown in jail.

This fanciful retelling of Jack and the Beanstalk is perfect for pre-teens. It's advanced enough that the retelling is not obvious, but young adolescents will enjoy making the connections to the classic tale. I thoroughly enjoyed the book, and saw nothing to concern me about recommending this book to any middle or upper-elementary school age child.

Miriam Voyles
Oconee County Middle School, Watkinsville, GA
6th Grade Language Arts Teacher