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Manolo Olivar was the son of his father. Which may not seem like a necessary thing to say. But in Manolo's case it is. For his father had been Juan Olivar, the greatest bullfighter in all Spain. And Manolo was his son in two special ways: one, he looked just like his father; and two, everyone expected that he, Manolo Olivar, would repeat the success of his father, would be just what his father had been - a fighter of bulls and a killer of death.

Shadow of a Bull Details

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From Reader Review Shadow of a Bull for online ebook

Wendy says

Only three discs long on audio book. So very, very good. It's recommended for 10 and older. I'm not sure if it is because it describes a bull fight and that might be considered too intense for younger readers/listeners or if because some of the subtleties of the story might be lost on younger kids. In either case, it is an excellent book, well deserving of the Newbery. I highly recommend this one.

Natalie Feliciano says

I read this book when I was younger and loved it. The main point of the book was that there was a boy who was expected to follow in his father's footsteps as a bullfighter but he's afraid of bulls and doesn't want to fight them. This book is a great way to show kids that they don't have to do what others expect of them to do and that they should always do what their heart tells them to do. This book also gave a lot of Spanish culture which will introduce kids to other cultures which they may not be aware of. It had a lot of suspense throughout the book which all lead up to the events at end of the book.

Tyrice Brown says

My opinion about the story was good because it has a lot of surprises and it was also very entertaining. What I have learned in this story is that you can't live up with expectations of other people.

You have to know what you want in your life and do the best you can in order for you to fulfil your dreams and ambitions in life however knowing what you want is not easy you need to have a strong determination to be successful. In order for you to be successful you have to give it a try to do something like Manolo did however he realized that being a bullfighter, even though he tried but it wasn't his ambition in life. Overall the story tells us to be who you are.

Jill says

Learned a lot about bull fighting but it reads a little like a textbook in the first half in that you have to keep flipping to the glossary at the back for an explanation of italicized terms. Throughout the book the author glorified the artistry of bull fighting without addressing the downside.

"...when bullfighting began to develop in Spain, it was a pastime for the noblemen only. Through careful breeding, the bulls developed their extraordinary bravery which is completely lacking in all species of bulls except those raised on our peninsula. As the bravery was bred into them, cowardice and tameness were bred out. And today there is as much resemblance between a brave bull and an ordinary bull as there is between a wolf and a lap dog."

"Don't expect it to be an even contest. The bull must die. Only sometimes, very rarely, does the bull not die. If he lives after he enters the arena, it is for one of two reasons: either he has been too cowardly and, disgraced, will meet his death outside of the ring, or he has been so brave that both the bullfighter and the public wish to spare him to perpetuate that extraordinary bravery in his descendants."

"Don't waste your pity on the bull. He will fight for his life, and he will die in battle. And that's how he'd choose his death if he had a chance to choose: in hot blood and not in the miserable slaughterhouse where he can't fight back. And don't pity the horses. It's a necessary and ugly evil. The bull must hit something solid or he will not go for the lure of the muleta. And he must be weakened to lower his head. that's what the horse and the picador are for."

"The sun is hot most of the year. It scorches the people and it scorches the earth for five months, from May to September. The sun is the joy and the sorrow of the people. It destroys their crops while it warms them with the heat they could not live without. And when the rains come, they are either a curse or a blessing. Sometimes the river floods, and the people lose their animals, their crops, and even their houses."

"...the tragedy is not that some people are blood-thirsty. The tragedy is that boys like him know of nothing else they want to do. I've grown old looking at wasted lives."

"How could it be...that this boy would happily die to do something he himself would rather die than do?"

Benji Martin says

This review contains spoilers!

This book is really, really good. I usually spend a good amount of time during these reviews going back and forth on why or why not the title we're discussing is or isn't Newbery worthy. I'm not going to do that this time. There's no question that *Shadow of a Bull* is distinguished and award-worthy. I love how compact the story is. It's a novel about growing up, becoming a man, facing fears and finding identity all packed into 150 pages. There's plenty in there about fighting bulls too. I feel like I could do it now. I still don't feel like the fighting is really fair, though. I mean, the bull gets killed way more often than the bullfighter, and the odds are kind of stacked against him. Several characters in the book say that the bull really wants to die this way, but I call bull crap. (no pun intended.) That bull really would probably rather be left alone to eat and mate and just be a bull. But anyways this book isn't about the ethics of bull fighting. The narrator doesn't take a stance. The ending even surprised me a little. I thought Monolo was just going to run away and become a doctor, comfortable being who he was, but no, he actually got in the ring and confronted his fears, and then, after conquering them, left and became a doctor. Beautiful ending. Sorry if I spoiled it for anyone.

Shirley says

Shadow Of A Bull is a well-written Newbery Medal winner. The book was recommended by a teacher who had read it to her class.

I enjoyed Maia Wojciechowska's writing style.

"The town, suddenly, like a spring gushing from under a rock, flowed into song. The guitars began a race; the tambourines of the gypsies joined in; and the castanets, like a million clattering hoofs, lent their beat." (p. 60)

"They listened to the quarrels that erupted like brush fires and died as suddenly as they started." (p. 61)

I had to force myself to complete the book. What I learned from the book is that I have an intense dislike for bullfighting. It tortured me to read of the bulls being taunted, attacked by picadores and killed by the bullfighter after showcasing his skills. Bull heads were sometimes preserved and hung on walls in commemoration of animals' courage. The goring of the matadores seemed senseless. I resented the six men in black who prepared Manolo Olivar for his bullfight that was to be his coming-of-age ritual.

Shadow of a Bull is a dark story. The events that take place lead to a satisfying conclusion but this was a novel that I personally did not enjoy.

Kaia says

There was a nice little story in here about bravery and learning to live the one's own life versus the one others expect, but the truth is, I'm never going to enjoy a book about bullfighting.

Sohum P. says

Shadow Of A bull was a very interesting book. In the book it shows examples of honesty and other life principles. I recommend it to everyone

Phil Jensen says

BULLFIGHTING! is the setting of this book, but not the topic. The topic is a rich, nuanced look at patrimony, heritage, honor, courage, and your duty to community expectations. Wojciechowska is not concerned with debating ethics and animal cruelty; she is only interested in bullfighting as a backdrop to her story about a boy's decision on how to be brave and how to spend his life.

That being said, this book is a wealth of information about the art and culture of bullfighting. If you are disgusted by descriptions of killing and goring, then you will not enjoy this book. Wojciechowska unsqueamishly shows both the beautiful and ugly parts of bullfighting, but she makes no effort to debate them. This book could just as easily have been written about skiing.

The plot- a boy is told he should be a bullfighter, but he's not sure he wants to be- is hardly unique. However, it is presented in this novel with a rare honesty and complexity. I was in steadily mounting suspense to see how the dilemma would resolve, and I read the book quickly.

Alexa SOF2014 says

Shadow of a Bull by Maia Wojciechowska takes place in the province of Andalusia, southern Spain, which is characterized by "majestic mountains, lacey olive groves, the round symmetry of the bullrings, and the pointed church steeples. Manolo Oliver is the son of the greatest matador in Spain, Juan Oliver, who was killed by a bull and is expected to someday follow in his fathers footsteps but there is one problem. Manolo does not want to be a bullfighter and is afraid of bulls. Unfortunately for Manolo at the age of 12 he has to fight his first bull. The story leads up to the climax of the final bullfight and the courage and bravery it takes for him to get there.

In this book Manolo is expected to be just like his father and follow in his footsteps. In my life I am expected to do a lot of things my parents have done but I am still working on them. Manolo also faced his fear of fighting a bull at the age of 12 and I faced my fear of heights when I was 12 too.

I really liked reading Shadow of a Bull because the reader got to see how Manolo built up his courage and fear to fight the bull. By the end of the book Manolo became a man and it was amazing to see the transition from the beginning to end. I realized that anything is possible and when someone tells you they can't do something it really means they don't want to. This was an eye-opening book and I really took pleasure reading it.

Brooke Scott says

I would recommend this book to someone that was interested in heritage of spanish bullfighting. It was very moving about a boy and his fathers death and the love they had. A male audience young and old would like this book. The title is appropriate but can be misleading in a way that you may think that the main character may be a bull. I felt sorrow for the main character to find strength because he had to struggle between what he felt in his heart and what his family felt was right for him. I felt it was a book I might have read before except a different sport took place. A bond between a father and son that has happiness and tradgedy early in the story.

Andrew Z says

Andrew Zerby

Form I (Orange)

Core Reading

3-25-15

In Shadow of a Bull by Maia Wojciechowska, the author's main message is that a person does not have to be what everyone else expects them to be. The reader comes to understand about human nature is that it is hard for a person to resist being what everybody expects them to be. This book take place in the small town of Arcangel(I dont know if it exists even though i looked on the internet) in Andalucia, Spain. The main

character is Manolo Olivar, a boy who grows from 8 to eleven years old throughout the book, and the story is told in the perspective of third person limited focused on Manolo. Manolo is the son of the town's best bullfighter, Juan Olivar, who was gored by a bull and died when Manolo was only three years-old. The special thing about his father was that when he was born, a very old gypsy prophesied that he would be the best bullfighter ever seen, and when he was twelve he took on his first bull which he killed with grace and skill. Juan Olivar fulfilled that prophecy and became Arcangel's most famous and best bullfighter. But the difference between Manolo and his father is that he did not have a prophecy from a gypsy. He is expected to resurrect his father's glory by doing the same thing his father did, fight his first bull when he was twelve. Manolo hangs out with kids who do Parkoure and ride bikes. But the problem is that Manolo's biggest secret is that deep down he is afraid of the bull, and he is a coward(He doesn't even have the courage to ride a bike!). Being a coward is something that his father could not afford to do, so will Manolo be able to relive his father's glory, or will he fail and disappoint everybody?

Personally, I think that this book was a waste of time. The author did get across her message, which is an important one, but i think that there are better books out there to spend your time reading to get the same message. What bugs me the most is that they gave this book a newbery medal, and Manolo's mom is one of the most misogynistic characters I have ever seen. First of all, manolo's mom is the one taking care of him, and is just mentioned throughout the book, as if the person taking care of the main character is not that important. Also, the worst part is that the author doesn't even develop the mom's character when there should be some diversity in main and secondary characters. All of the characters I see are men, men, men, and the only time his mom talks a lot or even gets a chance to speak for more than a paragraph is to praise the father,"Your father was a noble man. A man of honor. A man of pride"(126). This suggests that women are in this world only to praise the men who are brave in the world, which is DEFINITELY not the case. Also, this book glorifies the inhumane treatment of animals. It repeatedly declares that bullfighting is an art, but if you break it down, its basically just breeding animals specifically for the moment when they torture it and kill it slowly in front of people for their entertainment. The book glorifies the torturing of animals, and they say in the book, that this town is very poor. So, I bet you if they took all the time and money that they put into bullfighting, they would be able to feed all of the poor people in that town for maybe years on end. This shows that the book glorifies the extravagant and useless wastes of money and time on inhumane treatment of animals, which are not things that I necessarily agree with. The only thing i have come to learn from this book is that, you should follow your dreams and do not have to be what everyone else expects of you(However, this is hypocritical because of the author's misogynistic portrayal of characters). It shows an important aspect of human behavior, which is that it takes a lot of strength and courage to show people who you really are when you are expected to be something else. For example, I watched a CNN film about the world of atheists. they interviewed a pastor, whom CNN had to protect his identity, because he hadn't come out as an atheist yet to his congregation. He said that it will be really hard and take a lot of emotional strenght to come out as an atheist when he does. This is because he wants to be a person that he is not expected to be. Since this is human nature, and also applies with Manolo. Besides that aspect of human nature, i learned almost nothing else important because the description of the technique of bullfighting is not very in depth. I have to keep in mind though, that this book was published in the 1960s, so the views and perspectives on certain issues like gender equality and animal rights could be a bit outdated, and not fit for the modern day reader a half-century later. One of the strengths of this book was the the format of the dialogue, which made the reader feel as if you were a famous person walking through the busy street, and kind of puts you in the perspective of Manolo. This allows the reader to connect with the main character on a deeper level. Other than that, this book, in my opinion, was a waste of time, so you should go read a different book that has the same message, but is told in a better story. I would never recommend this book to a friend, because I would not want to take away their reading time that could be used reading an infinitesimally better book.

K. says

Fantastic! This is another book about a boy who fears he is a great coward and rises above his fears. I think I loved this book even more than others in this genre because he didn't do what I expected and I think what he did do showed even more courage.

"You cannot confuse bravery and courage with lack of fear. Real courage, true bravery, is doing things in spite of fear, knowing fear."

Jennifer Mangler says

I really loathe bullfighting and only chose to read this book because it won the Newbery. I liked Manolo, but I didn't find great parts of the book very engaging. So much of the book was like a textbook on bullfighting. The parts that didn't deal directly with that were the only parts I liked.

R K says

Upon reflection, I decided to bump this up to 4 stars.

Overall it was an interesting book because it showed the life of a bullfighter.

You can tell that Wojciechowska knows all there is to know on bullfighting and she incorporates it into the story very well. With the added glossary I never felt lost or confused and ended up learning a lot of how the practice of bullfighting works.

The story focuses on a young boy whose father was an incredibly famous bullfighter in his town. He was so popular that the town is basically dedicated to him even after his death. When Manolo was just 3, his father ended up dying leaving behind an incredible legacy that the town reminisced. They reminisced so much that everywhere Manolo went people would look at him and think, "Juan's son", "Juan's shadow". Since he was young Manolo was told that he was going to be a bullfighter just like his father. However, Manolo is terrified of this prospect.

It's a really good book that shows the pros and cons of putting expectations on children. The pros being and child pushes him/her-self but the con is that the child does so out of fear of disappointment. Manolo really struggles with accepting his role as shadow to a father he never knew. He desperately wants to hold some connection to his father and bullfighting is the only way possible. What's sad is how clearly this book illustrates the thoughts that go through a child's head when his society starts having expectations from him. Manolo isn't happy but he doesn't know what else to do.

I really liked Manolo and was surprisingly able to connect a little with him. Although all ends well, he is a simple example of the devastating mental hell kids will put themselves through without telling anyone. You may be surprised at how much your kid takes your expectations to heart which I think is what this book is trying to teach both parents and kids.

Its purpose was to encourage kids to stand up for what you want and to show parents what goes on in a kid's mind when you begin to expect too much from him/her.

The only criticisms I had was that:

1. The time period. It didn't seem at all to be based in 2015-17 as I'm pretty sure no one would allow a 10/11 year old to play the sport, even a safer version may not be allowed. Yet there were cars in this book so...???

2. Manolo's mother. At times she would be worried for him only to suddenly change and be proud that her son is a bullfighter. I don't really think any mom would be proud of that, but what do I know. However, during a scene when she talks about Juan, she becomes very melancholy and upset with the whole sport so I didn't know if she truly supported the town making her son into her husband's shadow or if she forced herself to be proud because she thought this was what her son wanted.

Overall a good quick read. Would recommend to anyone really, especially parents.
