



## Cheesie Mack Is Not a Genius or Anything

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**Cheesie Mack Is Not a Genius or Anything** Steve Cotler , Adam McCauley (Illustrator)

**Ronald "Cheesie" Mack** is not a genius or anything, but he remembers *everything* that happened before, during, and after fifth-grade graduation, and he's written it all down in his own unique and hilarious way—with lots of lists, drawings, and splendorful (that's *splendid* plus *wonderful!*) made-up words.

Cheesie's story is about more than just his boring graduation ceremony and the not-so-boring party afterward; it's also about his ongoing battle with his evil older sister, a mouse plot gone wrong, and his best friends Georgie's discovery of a mysterious old coin that just might change the summer completely.

Cheesie—with a little help from Steve Cotler—writes about family, friendship, and tough choices in an unforgettable voice that will have readers laughing out loud and making their own BLART sandwiches!

## Cheesie Mack Is Not a Genius or Anything Details

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Author : Steve Cotler , Adam McCauley (Illustrator)

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## From Reader Review Cheesie Mack Is Not a Genius or Anything for online ebook

### LJ says

Cheesie and his best friend Georgie Sinkoff begin the summer by finding a rare penny in Georgie's basement. It's accompanied by a letter and a heart necklace. The mystery of who the penny belongs to and what Cheesie and Georgie will do with it form the ongoing story in a series of summer-time misadventures. From attempting to release a bag of live mice during their 5th grade graduation to almost being cheated during the class raffle, every day presents the two friends with new adventures. Mixed into the hijinks are short stories direct from Cheesie's very active imagination. Cheesie's short stories transform the ordinary surroundings of his Gloucester Massachusetts hometown into extraordinary experiences involving aliens, vampires, and zombies (who are really Cheesie, his sister, and Georgie re-invented). When it's time for Cheesie to come back to reality, he faces a tough moral dilemma about what to do with the very valuable and very rare penny.

This looks so good (cartoon illustrations are scattered throughout the book) and has everything that you might think a reader that's moved on from Captain Underpants to want that it's a shame to say that I found it lacking.

The main character, Ronald (Cheesie) Mack is written as though an adult was trying too hard to write what a kid this age would sound like. Or maybe it's just that Cheesie really does sound like a 10 year (almost 11 year) old kid, cracking silly jokes and calling his older sister June "Goon" that it's cringe-worthy. But I've read books that have similarly aged children that are more appealing and would come off better in the minds of the intended young reading audience. So I don't think it's just me. The whole book reminds me in tone of another book--Homer Price, a book published in 1943 by Robert McCloskey. Even though there are references to the internet and Cheesie has a website, "cheesiemack.com" it still has that Mayberry R.F.D. feel to it.

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### Jennifer says

Overall this book is quite enjoyable with a nice, easily wrapped up story featuring the shenanigans of eleven-year-old boys.

Cheesie's voice is honest and does feel kid-like, but it also comes across as a little know-it-allish. Though this can be an accurate depiction of eleven-year-old boys, the inclusion of vocabulary words immediately followed by their definitions just felt condescending (perhaps this is just me knowing all the big words already), but it was not my favorite approach.

My major pet peeve was the constant mention of the website. It seemed that every few pages the words "visit my website" appeared together. I understand the importance (and need) to promote the book and the character (especially in the instance of a series), but I made audible annoyed sounds every time I read those words. My suggestion might be to include a symbol or some other easily-scanned-over-if-I'm-not-interested-in-sharing-something-related-to-this at the end of appropriate sentences and keep the "Visit cheesiemack.com" section at the end as a final reminder.

Even with my dislikes, I did enjoy the book and I'm happy to see that it's being ordered for my library. The next time someone asks for Diary of a Wimpy Kid, and it is inevitably checked out, I have another back-up to suggest.

I have to add that I keep thinking about this title. The story seems like it could turn into something unbelievable, but it doesn't. I really like that aspect of it; it's book of 11-year-old boys experiencing 11-year-old boy things.

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### **Ms.Patterson says**

I know there will be kids who like this book, but it annoyed me to no end. I cannot stand books filled with boring exposition, "and then he walked to the bed. Then he jumped on the bed. The the dog ..." ugggh. And the constant mentions of, visit my website, visit my website. Often, when I'm reading a book I don't like, it takes me weeks because I avoid it. But I read this one over two days because it is that simple and it was so annoying I wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible.

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### **Heather says**

The characters are very good, as is the storyline, but I got **really** sick of Cheesie saying "visit my website." It seemed like there was an invitation to visit [www.cheesiemack.com](http://www.cheesiemack.com) on every other page! Okay, I'll admit I *did* go to the website to find out the 4 coins that add up to 83 cents, and the website is just fine, but the frequent mentions irritated me and didn't really add to the story.

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### **The Library Lady says**

Okay, but:

1)I can't believe a kid in Gloucester, MA barely seems to know what Plymouth Rock is, and hasn't been there on a school field trip!

2)Predictable, predictable,predictable.

3)Endless "visit my website" is one step from putting advertisements throughout the book.

This is being compared to "Wimpy Kid", but I think it's like all those books being pitched as "just like Harry Potter" for years--there are some minor similarities, but that's about it. And a lot fewer pictures.

Adequate boy stuff, but nothing to rock the world.

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## **Natalie says**

Okay, first of all, I have to disagree...I think Cheesie Mack IS a genius! I say this with humor, because Cheesie Mack sounds like no other almost-eleven-year-old I've ever come across. But then again, I haven't been around kids this young since I was that age, so what do I know. \*lol\*

With that being said, the format the author took with the book to me, as an adult, was aggravating. I wanted to get to the story. I simply wanted to read about this mysterious envelope, heart necklace and old, old Lincoln one cent that Cheesie's best friend, Georgie, finds in his basement. Unfortunately for my adult brain, many things are going on that prevent Cheesie and Georgie from their quest. And I don't just refer to their antics. This book is very educational in some sense. I explain how in the follow paragraphs.

Throughout the book, Cheesie will come across something, for example, a particular kind of bug. Then in his first-person narrative, he will explain a bit about the bug and give a few facts. Once that is done, he tells the reader to please refer to his website, [cheesiemack.com](http://cheesiemack.com).

Imagine this happening every few pages or so. I must've been told "go to [cheesiemack.com](http://cheesiemack.com)" so many times I wanted to stuff cotton in my ears. I want it noted though, that I say this humorously. Because as I mentioned, I'm an adult, and this book was not geared for me. So naturally I would find this kind of book format quite, quite annoying.

However, for a young person reading this book, they might find this exciting. I think the author was aiming to have an interactive novel. More than once Cheesie tells his reader to head for his site and tell him what their opinion is about something. What is your birthday? Have you got a story to tell about a particular topic? Do you have a stamp with an interesting, funny or unusual picture? And so on.

I will end by saying that I liked this book a great deal. I think Cheesie Mack is a typical almost-eleven-year-old. He gets into trouble and plays pranks like any kid, but he's smart. He's inquisitive. And most importantly...he's got a good amount of common sense, fair play and he knows what's right and what's wrong!

Overall, this book is a great one. If you have a child around the age of ten or eleven, buy this book for them. It's a good, wholesome story that educates as much as it entertains.

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## **Shazzer says**

As posted on Outside of a Dog:

Cheesie Mack is Not a Genius or Anything, but Steve Cotler just might be. I picked up the aforementioned Cheesie Mack based on a glowing review for its sequel Cheesie Mack is Cool in a Duel. I thought, "Hey, that sounds kind of nifty. And I do need to read more 'boy' books anyway." So I tracked down the book (it had been mistakenly shelved in adult fiction), took it home and read it, nearly in one sitting. I don't do that for many books. Even short books get put down occasionally so I can pet the cat, make dinner or watch a movie. But Cheesie Mack is so darn endearing, I had a hard time putting him away.

Fifth grade is almost over for Ronald "Cheesie" Mack and his best friend Georgie. Normally, this would be cause for celebration, but this summer the boys will not be spending their typically idyllic vacation at camp in Maine. Georgie's father has been let go, and they can no longer afford the tuition, and in an act of sympathy, Cheesie declares he won't go without his friend. So the two are facing a summer of possible boredom and probable teasing/fighting with Cheesie's big sister, June ("Goon") when Georgie makes a surprising discovery. Now the boys have a mystery to solve, a graduation to prank, a sister to survive and a dream of a summer saved.

Cheesie Mack is your average dude. He's short (second shortest in his class), but he makes up for it in sheer pluck. He's also a nice guy. He detests cheating, loves his dog, and is steadfastly loyal to his best friend, even to the point of giving up a summer of fun. This is part of what makes this book tick so well. Cheesie is an every-dude, not someone possessed of superior powers or wisdom. He and Georgie are ultimately relatable (who hasn't had an obnoxious sibling, or had to give up something they loved because of financial struggles?).

Another facet of Cotler's narrative that works is the book's online interactivity. Unlike other web-connected books such as Patrick Carmen's Skeleton Creek series (which, for the record, scare me to death), you don't have to have internet access to continue or enjoy the story. Instead, Cheesie often mentions his website (CheesieMack.com) as a place to send in suggestions or questions for Cheesie, or indeed, just a place to chat with him. One such use of this feature occurs when Cheesie answers his grandfather's coin riddle (the answer is not revealed to the reader), and Cheesie invites readers to go online and guess how he figured it out. This nifty device gives readers a chance to stretch their brain power and share their success with an outside source.

Now that I've read Cheesie's first installment, I'm looking forward to further adventures. I hope they live up to my expectations, but I have faith in Cotler that it will. I'm hoping the series continues, as well, because this is a great book to put in the hands of Wimpy Kid fans, and reluctant readers. I think Cheesie's humor and humility will pull them in.

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### **Eric. says**

thx for making this book!?

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### **Charlyn says**

Ronald "Cheesie" Mack and his friend Georgie are finishing up the final days of the school year and looking forward to graduation and the party afterward. After that comes their time together at camp, a tradition for the two friends...which comes to a halt when Georgie's father announces that there is no money for him to attend. As a loyal friend, Cheesie announces that, if his friend won't go, neither will he. So, bummer summer....

And perhaps it would have ended there had Georgie not located an old envelope in his basement--a letter

addressed to a stranger and containing a penny and a necklace with a locket. Or, as two fifth graders would call it, a mystery to be solved.

Within a very few days, Cheesie and Mack pack a number of activities into their lives including trying to stay out of trouble so they can attend the party, attempting to solve the mystery of the letter, and making life miserable for Cheesie's sister, June (or, Goon, as they prefer to call her). Along the way, the narrative (in Cheesie's voice) includes lists, illustrations, some attempts at writing science fiction, and a number of words explained by the author. And many references to his website--which really does exist with all the information he says will be there and the opportunity for readers to add more.

I enjoyed the story more than I thought I would and I now look forward to reading the next book.

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### **Mrs. Wynn says**

This book is on the Illinois Blue Stem nominee list for 2014. I admit, I am not a 5th grade boy, but I've read books for students this age before and they've not been this annoying--at least to me. I kept thinking, "Please! Can we just have a story without all this TEACHING?" I felt that the asides really interrupted the flow of the story, and they felt a little too purposeful. As a teacher, I'm not going to recommend a book because it is "so educational."

Examples of "teaching" within the story:

- \* Look how many words we can use instead of "said!"
- \* Why cheating is bad (per Granpa)
- \* Math problems not related in anyway to the story
- \* A variety of word origins
- \* A variety of word definitions, sometimes with direct quotes from a website
- \* Asking the reader to figure out who said what. Don't worry the answers can be found in the back of the book if you can't do it.
- \* Writing illogically, then explaining to the reader why the previous illogical writing is illogical.

Now, kids may actually enjoy this, but I found that it annoyed me more than I cared to find the solution to the mystery, and I gave up. I felt frustrated reading this book. I nearly made it halfway, but this is a definite DNF on my record. Sorry.

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### **Matthew Scanni says**

I did not like the book. The book was about a kids 5th grade graduation but it went wrong. One thing I liked about the book is how whenever theres a new character sometimes it would show a picture of them so you can picture them better. One thing I disliked is that the book tried to be funny but it really wasn't.

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### **chrissy says**

Somewhere between a *3.5 and 4 star* rating.

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### **Ashley says**

Soon to be a classic tale of a fifth, soon to be sixth, graders start of the summer. Though the story itself takes place in a three day span it reads like a complete dramatic adventure. Right up there with the Hardy Boys (at least I'm thinking it is since I've honestly never read a Hardy Boy book). Also it ties in with a web-site, Cheesie's of course, that anyone can tell their own experiences, knowledge and treasures to connect with the story. A nice way to make the book and characters seem more real. Can't wait to read Cotler's next book!

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### **Tami says**

Cheesie Mack is Not a Genius or Anything is the first book in a new series by author/performer Steve Cotler. (The second book is due out in June, 2012). The story is “written” by Ronald Mack, a fifth grader whose friends call him Cheesie.

The story happens in the last few days of fifth grade. Cheesie’s best friend, Georgie, has a gazillion wonderful ideas about how they could make their fifth grade graduation ceremony less boring. Cheesie doesn’t think they will actually commit to any of Georgie’s ideas—until Georgie gets a free bag of mice from the pet store. (Yes, I said “a free bag of mice.”)

In true fifth grade style, the prank goes horribly wrong, causing Cheesie & George to suffer through the boredom of graduation AND get in a lot of trouble. When their summer plans to have a blast at their traditional camp are derailed by Georgie’s not being able to go, Cheesie decides to forego camp as well and spend the summer at home with his best friend. These plans are also destined to go awry later in the story.

In the meantime Cheesie and Georgie find, have a misunderstanding and experience a moral dilemma over a valuable old coin and a mysterious elderly neighbor who lives in a creepy old house they call “The Toad.” Throw in an encounter with the police and a bossy older sister and you have a hometown adventure worth the read.

A unique element to the story which is first intriguing, then increasingly irritating to the reader is Cheesie Mack’s website. Cheesie Mack has his own website ([CheesieMack.com](http://CheesieMack.com)—it’s a REAL website). He refers to his website a LOT in the book, telling readers to visit the site and comment on different aspects of Cheesie’s story and—because Cheesie loves lists—to contribute to the various lists on the website (including grandparent nicknames and goofy made-up words).

The references to the website within the story become annoying, as they happen every couple of pages. I have to preface my opinion on this by saying it could be because I read the book as an adult, but I started to become suspicious of the number of times the author told readers (mostly kids) to go to his website. Additionally, I felt it interrupted—instead of enhanced—the story of Cheesie Mack the way it could have if it was mentioned less.

Having said all that, I did visit the website to get an accurate and well-informed perspective. The website is a great one for kids. It does give them a place to talk about the story. And Steve Cotler responds frequently to the comments and questions posed by young readers. This, just by itself, is a wonderful opportunity! The website also has a lot of fun facts and can easily be used as a springboard for kids' curiosity—which is what I believe the author intends.

Not simple in its plotting, Cheesie Mack is G-rated in language and content which makes it a fun read-aloud at home or in the classroom for 2nd-6th graders. This book is a great opportunity for the reader to become engaged in or celebrate curiosity and fun!

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### **Ms. Yingling says**

Being a fifth grade boy means being thwarted at every turn. Cheesie and his friend Georgie have the BEST ideas for summer, but keep getting shot down. They can't pull their awesome pranks at fifth grade graduation. Then, Georgie can't go to summer camp because his father loses his job. When the boys find an envelope from the 1950s in the basement, they try to locate the owner to return the penny and necklace within it, but are stopped by a policeman who thinks they are just fooling around. The boys persevere, and things end well, but not after a lot of high jinks.

**Strengths:** Funny, with enough action to satisfy the target audience. Interesting bits of information thrown in for the die-hard nonfiction readers who are being forced to read a chapter book. I believe Mr. Cotler that he still can think like an eleven-year-old. This will be popular.

**Weaknesses:** Just a tiny bit too young for my students. I'm getting nose wrinkles from the Time Warp Trio books, which I still think are great, and the same illustrator provided the fine illustrations for this book, which elementary students will adore.

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