



The Jacket

Andrew Clements

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Thief!

When Phil sees another kid wearing his brother's jacket, he assumes the jacket was stolen. It turns out he was wrong, and Phil has to ask himself the question: Would he have made the same assumption if the boy wearing the jacket hadn't been African American? And that question leads to others that reveal some unsettling truths about Phil's neighborhood, his family, and even himself.

The Jacket Details

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From Reader Review The Jacket for online ebook

Justice says

The book that i will be writing a review about is The jacket.If you are the type of person that likes books that have mystery and a little confusion then you should read this book.The authors name is Andrew Clements and the genre of this is a realistic fiction.The characters of this book is Daniel and Phil.I personally think that this book is very cool and interesting.Since this book has mystery ,which i like, i would recommend this book to many people who enjoy mystery.

One example from this book is that when the boy Phil tried to figure out if the jacket was his brother but later finds out that his mom gave the jacket to her cleaning lady.Then her cleaning lady gave it to her grandson. I am now done telling you about this book.So if you are still interested you should get the book and start reading.I hope that you guys will enjoy this book, because i really did because of the mystery and a lot of interesting things.

Lisa Lawrence says

I love Clements' other books, and I wanted this to be good. However lofty in his aspirations to try to discuss an awareness of prejudice in a white boy toward black people - particularly a younger boy at his school - and his efforts to dispel those prejudices, the story falls short. I read Five Smooth Stones not long ago, and it took several hundred pages of an adult novel for me to fully realize the gap between the experience of white people and black people in America.

Brent says

The book The Jacket was a alright book. The book didn't have great detail, and was repetitive. A boy named Phil, saw another kid(Daniel) with his jacket that only his little brother owned. He put the puzzle together to understand and figure out how he got hold of the jacket.

The Jacket was a decent book, it was a great quick book you could pick up and read, but it didn't have great detail and was more repetitive and boring. For the size of the book it is alright.

Yoel Arias says

I like this book because I like how the author explains how people are today in the book.What I don't like is that how the grandmother is the cleaning lady.

But over all its a pretty good book . I like the detail the other gives when people get mad .

Denay S. says

I gave it a three star because it was boring in some parts but fun on the other it really got me thinking by a question " If it wasn't an African American would Phil cared?" The man Characters were Phil Daniel Daniel was a boy that got a jacket that was once Phil's that then went down the line to his brother

Catharine says

This would be a good book to have upper elementary students read as part of a book group discussion. The topic of prejudice and awareness of the reality of the world for different races is seen from a fifth graders eyes. It brings up the topic without being didactic, but in a way that I think would get young students thinking about race in their own world.

Carissa says

Not one of Clements' best. I read it because Clements is one of my favorite middle school/elementary age authors and I hadn't read this one yet. Basic, easy, extremely quick read that I guess might get some younger kids to think about racism and how other races are perceived and treated, but I don't think it truly addresses the issue very well and I still think, in spite of trying to make kids think about it more, there were still some of those natural racial undertones in the book just in the way it was written—such as how Daniel responded to Phil about the jacket incident with the assumption all black kids would react that way, and how he treated Phil in the lunchroom. He does try to show racism in a way which is historically true, but even though Daniel lives in a nice home with his grandmother, it still has that feeling that his family can't afford much (his grandmother seems to live "in the projects" close to an unsafe neighborhood...you have to go through an "unsafe" area to get to his house). Isn't that very much how other races are perceived already? Clements does a much better job with other school related/growing up issues in his other books. Perhaps it's an area he needed to research a bit more or have avoided completely. It feels pretty incomplete, like there should be a lot more to it. It's not very convincing for one to change his or her opinion on race, although I guess it could be an ok starter into further books and conversation. Not a good standalone book for racism conversations though. Merely a supplement.

Meredith Pocius says

What i thought about the book the Jacket is that it was a really good book that took the majority culture of a white kid and a black kid growing up in America and that sooner or later there will be a realization about children living in different races may have a really different experience in the way their culture is on living. I also liked the fact that it took the two kids different culture and showed Daniels grandma helping a white woman clean her house. I also liked the fact that when Phil went and left his house to go over to Daniels side of town that he was able to see what the whole entire different culture showed over the way the black side of town looked towards what the white side of town looked like.

Calista says

The setup is simple - the mistaken identity of a jacket. This is a well done book about taking a look at race and society. Andrew does a wonderful job telling this story and it seems important right now to think about. It's 90 pages. The story is simple about Phil opening his eyes to his world and seeing how things are different for him and Daniel. The jacket starts all this going on. I enjoyed this little story. I have found anything Andrew does is worth reading.

Geraldine says

From the book of Frindle to The Report Card, I honestly expected more from Clements than what he brought to the table beforehand. Well, we all have to start somewhere, I guess.

When I learned that the book was about to be racial issues, I thought how that would be nice to explain simply to children and how the world is not all sunshine and rainbows, but boy, Clements unfortunately didn't nail it like I expected him to. Instead, we get a book about some twelve years old kid having a middle age crisis about whether he's racist or not.

I understand children having fears of things around themselves, 'cause I sure know I did before I started actually getting real scary things, like growing up into adulthood and trying to figure out how I am going to buy back my student loans. Yeah, real scary stuff.

But Clements when he made the character Phil (our young main character), he instead made the poor boy a questioning mess about whether or not he was racist instead of going into actual racial issues. And let face it, we all had silly questions we wanted answers to, all the way to very serious, deep questions like our identity and whether or not if we know who we are.

We don't want kids to turn fearful and believe they're racist because of every little thing they do. And to make a logical point, I don't believe it to be racist because you see something that you believed to be yours and stolen, so you chase after the thief. And as I noted in the book, Phil never seem to knew that his brother gave the coat to Daniel's (our racial target point character) grandmother at all. He didn't even knew Daniel at that point yet at all. Say if some random guy was carrying your book bag and walking away with it and furthermore, your said book bag is missing in the area you put it in; wouldn't you go after that person?

The conflicting scene then spirals into a fight, which then somehow boils down to Phil being racist? I don't get it, honestly. They all figure out that someone in Phil's home gifted his brother's jacket to Daniel's grandmother. Conflict solved? No, instead it spirals even further out into Phil admitting to Daniel that Phil knew his grandmother because she's the cleaning lady of his home. Okay then? Is it that big of a deal that someone cleans someone's home? I know people who are dark skinned that work minimal jobs such as cleaning for wage. You also have people (even in the 90s-00s) working much more greater jobs and even being one of the richest people in the world at that point. It's nothing new. And as I looked throughout the book, it doesn't imply the year the book's timeline was in, so I am assuming at the time the book was made (early 2000s) is the time frame of this book, so yes, this wasn't much a big deal, even around that timeline.

I guess I expected Daniel to not know his grandmother is a cleaning lady. As a kid, you don't really begin seeing the world in its full colors at that time. But because of Daniel's temper, he goes off the roof about Phil

apologizing for not knowing about the coat and gives it back to him. This whole scene causes Phil to go into that middle age crisis of his and sees the world in more colors than he did beforehand. At this book, this is where the book goes into a boring struggle to read for me.

All I keep reading is Phil seeing the races of people and their current livelihood. But I know at that time frame (and currently now) you have racial distinctions and their common area of living. Unfortunately, darker skinned people more commonly live in a poorer way of life and thus go into crime in order to survive and help their family, while those who are lighter skinned then to live on the more middle to rich class of life and tend to not default to lower level crime, however, they are more likely prone to white collar crime such as business fraud since they work into more higher waging jobs and the like, while those who are darker skinned do crime in a more lower fashion such as burglary or muggings. Of course, not all people of one color do one thing or the other. But it is the most common form of style for each group of people.

This information can still be used at the time *The Jacket* was made. With this information in hand, I can say that this book did a semi-decent job on the use of showing how others live in a child's point of view. But I feel like this book is encouraging kids to run miles away from their home to some house they found online with the unlikely chance that those people in that house aren't even there, risking their life, especially in a crime-ridden part of the area. Let's also keep in mind that Phil's father is implied to be racist. But between the relationship of his and Daniel's grandmother, I could've pinpointed as adults having disagreements on things.

Now I can sort of see why Phil might come into the idea that he might be racist, but his mother tells him not to think in that way and teaches him not to, while his father...er...doesn't really do anything? His father seems there as a strawman to show racism and we don't really get a personality out of him and all we seem to get is that he's a racist. I get it, racism is obviously bad, but to say that's the whole character is silly.

Phil's father is not even treated with some degree on if it's bad or not, or anything more with him or Daniel's grandmother on this issue. Maybe for all we knew that his father might just want to keep a business relationship with people who work for him. We know that Phil's father isn't a bad father, as he encourages his son to do well in basketball. But I do like the fact that Clements added in a way that racism can be taught, because as we seen with Phil's father, he was pinning his viewpoints on his young child who's mind isn't even developed enough to understand the concept of racism yet.

We don't get background on why Phil's father even thinks like this. We only get that he's racist and that's it.

This story was rather confusing to me. Maybe I'll pick it up again and re-study my viewpoint on it when I feel like it, but honestly, this work didn't really drive a good point home at all about racism and not to do it. But since this is just a kid's book, I'll give it some slide, but not a long as something being a kids' story shouldn't be an excuse for making a bad story in general.

Hopefully, maybe some readers of this book might find more appeal in it than me. But there are better books on racism to read out there, but unfortunately, this isn't one of them.

carrietracy says

This book addresses the subject of prejudice. Unfortunately, I don't think it does it very effectively. The main character decides he's prejudiced and attempts to raise the topic with his mother who dismisses the issue and admonishes him not to talk to his father about it. When we do meet his father, we discover that his father is

in fact very prejudiced. This is not handled in a way to make children think and reflect on the issue. Frankly, considering the reading level of this book, I think it's pretty irresponsible to give children the impression that this is an issue you can't discuss with white adults. The book ends with a token gesture on the white boy's part to show friendship and solidarity with the black boy. All neat and tied up in a bow. Whites and blacks are alike after all. There is no depth to this book, which attempts to cover a topic that is very complex and nuanced. Andrew Clements is a generally a good author. I was saddened to find him also responsible for this, and bothered that Scholastic chose to distribute it. I will not be adding this to my classroom library.

Maria Cervantes says

It was Thursday morning right before first period, and Phil was on a mission. Hurrying through the fourth- and fifth-grade hall, he waded through groups of younger kids. His little brother, Jimmy, had left the house early so he could ride to school with a friend, and he had left his lunch money on the kitchen counter.

Phil was tall for a sixth grader, so most of the younger kids got out of his way. Which was good, because he had no time to mess around. If he got one more tardy during December, he would have to serve two detentions. The pressure made Phil's imagination run at full throttle. Like, if I'm late for math today, then I might not be allowed to take the test — and then I could flunk math! I might even flunk sixth grade and get left back! And when Mom and Dad yell at me, I'm gonna get so mad, 'cause, like, it's not even my fault! I'll say, "Hey, know what? Forget about school, that's what!" And I'll just drop out and turn into a bum — or maybe even a criminal. My whole life's gonna be a mess, and it's all on account of my stupid little brother! Where is that punk?

Phil was about to stick his head into a classroom to look around. Then up at the corner of the hallway he thought he saw the back of his brother's jacket. It had to be Jimmy. No one else in the whole city had a jacket like that one.

He called, "Hey, Jimmy!" but his brother didn't stop, and Phil pushed his way forward and rushed around the corner. "Hey, idiot, you forgot..."

But it wasn't Jimmy. It was someone Phil had never seen before, a black kid. Wearing Jimmy's jacket.

Phil grabbed the collar and said, "Hey! This is my brother's jacket! Where is he? How'd you get this from him?"

The other boy struggled, trying to pull away. "What're you talkin' about? Let go of me! This is my jacket! I don't even know your brother!"

The kid twisted and turned to break free, but Phil was a lot bigger and stronger. "You tell me where my brother's at, or I'm gonna — "

"Boys! You stop it, right now!" Mrs. Atkin came striding through the crowd that had gathered, pushing kids out of her way with her left hand and pointing at Phil with the other one. "You let go of him, and I mean it!"

Drawn by Mrs. Atkin's voice, three or four other teachers stepped out into the hallway.

Phil let go of the jacket, and the younger boy jerked around to face him, his fists up, his eyes narrowed.

Mrs. Atkin stepped between them and said to the younger boy, "Daniel, you put your hands down. And all the rest of you kids, go on about your business. Get your things put away and get to your rooms. Go on, there's nothing happening here." Then, glaring at Phil and the smaller boy, she said, "You two, come with me."

The other teachers were moving around in the hallway now, talking to kids, quieting everyone down.

Phil and Daniel followed Mrs. Atkin along the hall. And Phil knew where they were headed — straight to the office. He thought, Now I'm gonna flunk out for sure.

At the office door Mrs. Atkin stopped and herded the boys in ahead of her. "Mrs. Cormier? Sorry to start your day like this, but I found these two going at it down in the fourth-grade hall. I've got to get back to my room before something else breaks loose."

The principal still had her coat on from being out at the curb with the buses. She frowned at the boys and pointed toward her office. "Walk in and sit down. And I don't want you two to even look at each other, is that clear?"

Both of them nodded and walked into her office.

A minute later Mrs. Cormier came in and sat down behind her desk. She motioned to Phil, who had taken a chair against the wall. "Come over here and sit in front of me. I want to be able to look each of you in the eye."

Daniel kept looking straight ahead at Mrs. Cormier. When Phil was seated, she said, "Phil, you've got no business being in the four-five hall in the morning. Why were you there?"

"My brother, Jimmy, forgot his lunch money. And I still have to give it to him."

Mrs. Cormier nodded. "All right, that makes sense. Here," she said, putting out her hand, "give me his money, and I'll make sure he gets it."

Phil dug in his pocket and gave the coins to the principal. She put them on her desk and then turned to the other boy. "Okay, Daniel, you first: What happened?"

"What happened is, I'm talking with my friends, and this kid comes and grabs me and starts yelling at me. I've never seen him before. I didn't do a thing!"

Mrs. Cormier turned to Phil. "Did you grab him, Phil?"

"Yeah, 'cause he stole my brother's jacket! That's my old jacket, and now it's my brother's, and this kid stole it, so I grabbed him."

"Liar!" Daniel jumped to his feet and faced Phil, his fists clenched. "I never stole a thing! My gramma gave me this jacket for my birthday, and that's the truth, so you stop saying that!"

"Daniel," said Mrs. Cormier sharply, "you sit down and stay put!" Mrs. Cormier swept her eyes between the boys. "I think this is a simple misunderstanding. Phil, isn't it possible that Daniel happens to have a jacket just like your brother's?"

Phil shook his head forcefully. "No way. My mom bought that jacket when she went to Italy, and she brought it back for me. Go ahead, look at the label inside the neck. It's gonna say 'Ricci di Roma.' That's because she got it in Rome. Go ahead and look. That's my jacket."

Mrs. Cormier stood up and walked around to the front of her desk. "May I look at the label, Daniel?"

He shrugged and stuck his lower lip out. "I don't care. 'Cause this isn't his jacket."

The principal gently pulled the collar of the jacket back, and then twisted her neck and adjusted her glasses. Her eyebrows shot up. "It says 'Ricci di Roma.'"

"See? I told you so," said Phil triumphantly. "He stole it!"

"Did not, you big liar!" And if Mrs. Cormier hadn't been on her feet to catch him, Daniel would have been on top of Phil, fists swinging. She pushed him back into his chair and shouted, "Silence! Not another word, either of you!" Calling to the secretary through the open door, she said, "Mrs. Donne? Get me the emergency cards for Philip Morelli and Daniel Taylor, would you — right away."

Thirty seconds later Mrs. Cormier was dialing her phone, then smiling and speaking. "Mrs. Taylor? This is Mrs. Cormier, the principal at Daniel's school....No, he's fine, but there's been a disagreement this morning, and he's in the middle of it. It's about a jacket, the one Daniel says he got for his birthday. Another boy is here, and he says the jacket belongs to him. Can you tell me anything else that might help?...Yes....Oh. I see....So it was a gift....Yes, I see. Well, that's it, then. I'm awfully sorry to have bothered you....Yes, you too. Good-bye."

Daniel turned to Phil. "See? I told you so. It was a gift — for me."

Mrs. Cormier said, "It turns out you're both right, boys. Someone gave that jacket to your grandmother, Daniel, and then she gave it to you."

Phil made a face. "Gave it to his grandmother? How come?"

Mrs. Cormier started to say something, then stopped, smiled awkwardly, and said, "Well, really, I...I think it was just...to be kind. That's all."

Something registered in Phil's mind, and his mouth dropped open. Turning to Daniel, he asked, "Who's your grandma? What's her name?"

Daniel curled his lip. "None of your business. But her name's Lucy. Lucy Taylor."

Phil's face reddened. "Hey, look. I'm sorry I grabbed you, okay? You're right. It's your jacket."

"What?" Daniel looked sideways at Phil, cocking his head as if he hadn't heard clearly. "You come and almost pull this thing off my back, and now you say just keep it? What's that about?"

Phil looked at the floor. "It's just that...like, I think I know your grandma — that's all. So the jacket's yours."

Daniel frowned and narrowed his eyes. "You? Know my gramma? Right!" He smiled, taunting Phil. "Yeah, like, how you gonna know my gramma? Maybe you see her when you go to the same beauty parlor she does,

huh? That it?"

Mrs. Cormier stood up and said, "Boys, that's enough. This is all settled. Daniel, Phil said he's sorry, and we know the jacket is yours. So both of you run along to class now. Mrs. Donne will give you notes for your teachers."

Daniel stood up. He stuck his chin out and said, "Fine with me. Because this boy just keeps telling lies and lies. Like how he knows my gramma."

"I do too know her!" Phil almost shouted. "I'm not a liar! I see her all the time because...because she's my mom's cleaning lady!"

The words seemed to echo off the walls.

Daniel looked like he'd been punched in the stomach. He backed toward the office door, his face working angrily. He yanked the jacket open, pulled himself free of it, and threw it on the floor at Phil's feet. "There's your jacket! You take it and you tell yo' momma that my gramma and me don't need nobody being kind to us!" And looking at Mrs. Cormier, he snarled, "Nobody!"

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Part II: Friends with Everybody

The rest of Phil's Thursday wasn't so good. Compared with the thoughts swirling through his mind, decimals and adjectives and Ancient Egypt didn't seem very important.

Phil knew that all he had done was tell the truth. About the lunch money, about the jacket, about Daniel's grandmother. It was all true. But he couldn't shake the feeling that he'd done something bad.

He kept thinking about the early morning scene in the principal's office, replaying it again and again. He kept seeing the look on Daniel's face, the anger in his eyes as he threw the jacket to the floor. And instinctively Phil knew that his being white and Daniel's being black was part of this. Maybe a big part.

Phil had known a lot of African American kids at school, ever since his first day as a kindergartner. And he thought, I don't care what color anybody is. I never pay attention to that. I'm friends with everybody.

But being friends with everyone and being someone's friend, those were two different things. And as he thought about it, Phil knew he had never had a black kid for a friend, not really. The kids on the school basketball team were good guys, but not really friends. Black kids went to his school, but did they live in his neighborhood? Not in his part of the city. That's just how things were. Every morning Daniel and the other African American kids arrived at school by bus, or sometimes their parents dropped them off. A lot of Hispanic kids too. Phil didn't know exactly where they came from. It didn't really matter to him, and he'd never thought about it much. Until today.

Phil kept arguing with himself. He thought, Yeah, but during school, everyone gets along fine — white kids, Hispanic kids, Asian kids, black kids. No problems.

Most of the African American kids sat together at lunch, and they tended to hang around together in the halls and at recess. But that didn't seem weird to Phil. When you eat lunch, or if you have a little free time, you

want to be with your friends, that's all. Besides, everyone played sports together during gym, and sometimes at recess, too. Everyone, together. No problems. And all the black guys on my basketball team? I get along great with them.

Still, after school every day almost all the black kids got onto buses or climbed into cars and drove away. Those kids just disappeared as Phil went to basketball practice or walked home with his friends.

Sitting in math class, Phil thought about Daniel's grandmother. I've known her longer than Daniel has! And it was true. He was two years older than Daniel, and Phil had known Lucy all his life.

Lucy. That's what he'd always called her. Just Lucy. She came every other Saturday and helped his mom clean the house. Phil had never even wondered about her last name. It had never mattered. She was just Lucy. Until today.

When he was little, Phil had loved helping on cleaning day. He would take hold of the bucket with all the supplies in it and heave it up the front stairs, one at a time. Lucy would smile and say, "Why, Philip, look at you! You sure are big and strong!"

And now that he was almost twelve, sometimes as he ran through the house to get a baseball glove or grab a quick bite of lunch before going out to shoot baskets with his friends, Lucy would look up from her work and narrow her eyes at him. She'd put her hands on her hips and say, "Isn't that just the way — now you're big enough to really help your mama, and do you? No, 'cause you've got too much goin' on to be bothered with that!"

But that was just to tease him. Because it wasn't like Phil didn't do chores. He did plenty around the house. He took out the trash, raked the yard, mowed the grass, shoveled snow in the winter — stuff like that.

And he didn't mind doing housework, either. But Mom always said he and Jimmy didn't do it right. She said, "You guys pick up the big pieces, things like shoes and dirty clothes. Leave the little stuff for me and Lucy to worry about." Which was fine with him.

Phil kept trying to reason away his feelings. Can I help it if we have a cleaning lady, and she's black and we're white? And can I help it if she's Daniel's grandmother? I mean, it's not like we're rich or something. It's not like we force Lucy to work for us, is it?

Which was true, especially about not being rich. His mom and dad each had a full-time job. And back when Phil was born, his mom had decided to give herself a treat once every two weeks — that's what she called it, a treat. And that was having Lucy come to help her do the deep cleaning.

Phil thought about his own grandmothers. He had two, one here in the city and one in Florida. His mother's mom was the one who lived close. Grandma Morcone was sort of rich. She and Grandpa lived in a condominium on Herndon Street, not too far from the big museum. Her place was way up on the fourteenth floor. You could see the city parks from her windows, and the view looked like this beautiful painting. On the Fourth of July and sometimes on New Year's Eve, Phil and Jimmy and their big sister, Juliana, would sit with their grandparents on the balcony and watch the fireworks.

Grandma Morcone had long arms, thin and white. She wore silver bracelets on both wrists, and on one of her hands there was a ring with a big green stone in it. Phil could picture her fine clothes, her small diamond earrings, her silver blue hair, always neatly styled. His grandma didn't clean houses for other families. She

probably never put a bandanna over her hair and pulled on yellow rubber gloves. Like Lucy did.

At lunchtime Phil edged into the cafeteria. He scanned the big room, looking for Daniel. He wasn't there, and Phil was glad. He got in line and started loading food onto his tray — grilled cheese, red Jell-O, carrot sticks, chocolate milk, and an ice-cream sandwich.

The lady at the end of the counter took his money, looked at his tray, and then shook her head. "You need another quarter, honey. Or else put the ice cream back."

Phil dug deep into his pockets, but he didn't have another quarter. And he knew why. This morning when he gave the principal Jimmy's lunch money, he had given away too much.

Phil had picked up the ice cream from his tray when a voice behind him said, "That's okay. Here's another quarter." Phil smiled and turned to say "Thanks," but he stopped before the word came out.

It was Daniel. He was three kids back in the lunch line, and he was holding up a quarter, and he was smiling. But it wasn't a real smile. Phil could see that. It was a smile that said "Gotcha."

Phil shook his head and felt himself starting to blush. "No, that's okay. I don't want the ice cream anyway."

"You sure?" asked Daniel, his smile getting bigger. "What's the matter? It's a gift — I'm just being kind."

Phil put the ice-cream sandwich back in the freezer. He took his tray and walked stiffly to a table where some of his friends were sitting. He took a seat facing the wall and began to eat, tearing off big mouthfuls of soft grilled cheese, chewing without tasting. He didn't talk and he didn't look around. When he was done, he dumped his trash, dropped off the tray, and went straight out the side door to the playground.

The cold wind felt good on his burning cheeks. The thing was, Phil saw exactly what Daniel had been doing when he offered him that quarter. Daniel was trying to get back at him, to embarrass him with a gift. And it had worked.

Walking beside the fence, kicking a stone ahead of him, Phil kept on thinking. But Mom giving something to Lucy, that was different, right? Because it's not like Lucy was begging, and it isn't like Mom was trying to make herself feel all rich and grand or make Lucy feel small and poor. Because Mom was just trying to be nice, right? And there's nothing wrong with that. There can't be anything wrong with being kind, can there?

A burst of laughter came from the other side of the playground, and Phil turned to look. Six black kids, all fourth and fifth graders, all boys. No one was looking his way, but Phil still had the feeling they had been laughing at him. But was it true, or was it just his imagination?

A gust of wind made his eyes water, and he zipped his coat up under his chin. And still looking at the black kids, Phil recognized one of them, the one with his hands jammed into his pockets and his shoulders hunched up against the cold.

He recognized the kid who wasn't wearing a jacket.

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An incident at school forces sixth grader Phil Morelli, a white boy, to become aware of racial discrimination

and segregation, and to seriously consider if he himself is prejudiced.

Amanda says

This would be a great book to introduce students to during Black History Month. All the books by this author are nice but this is great in introducing the topic of prejudice. It is very interesting how they tell the story and the character questions whether he is prejudice and how he handles that. It shows that we may not always realize how we are jumping to conclusion about people. Great quick read.

Jennie says

Phil sees a kid with his brother's jacket on and accuses the younger boy of stealing it. It turns out that Phil's mother gave it to her cleaning lady who gave it to her grandson (the kid).

Phil then freaks out and thinks he thought the jacket was stolen because the kid was African-American (even though it was weird, because it was a fairly distinctive Italian jacket, so the race card seems a bit forced in this case).

It deals with the issues well for the intended age range, but I wanted a little more character development-- for Clements, it left me a bit underwhelmed.

Laura Howard says

Can't wait to start a Literature Circle with this book. It's good to question, as the main character does, your own prejudices and to examine the system in which we settle into the unsettling.

ABC says

Would like to have seen it from daniel's pov. It was all the white kid's pov.

Danielle says

I think this is one of the first books I read that dealt with racism in an explicit way: and Clements really lays the narrative out for the reader. The book is very clear about addressing racism from a white perspective and tackling intrinsic anti-blackness. I really appreciated that the book acknowledged more races than black and white and that someone who we don't see as a "bad" person can still be racist. It is a little dated with its "we're all the same deep down" (which glosses over the problem) and is very introductory about racism, but I still think it's a good start. This definitely shouldn't be the only or last book read on the topic though, since there have been lots of better books published since.

Jo says

Could have been better. Though I am glad there is a book where it can start a conversation for white kids who live as he does. Especially because this kid is "seeing" better the racial divide/differences in his local community.

Elizabeth Conlon says

Definitely not as good as Frindle. I read this book to see what my 9 year old was reading. I'm not really sure how I feel about it. It's probably good for a kid to read if they are struggling with a similar issue but I feel it may put thoughts into the minds of the children who are "color blind". I suppose it is teaching them about the way the world can be but I hope it doesn't bring confusing thoughts to my daughter who is "color blind" when it comes to people. I will definitely ask her what she thought about the book when she is done and if she has any questions or comments.

Heather says

I starting reading this book to the class this morning at Summer Camp. It was the one time of the day that almost everyone was totally quiet. When I came home I finished it on my own and now this book has earned the top spot in my Read Aloud list. It's short but it is jammed with current issues that students face when it come to relationships between cultures. This is not only a must read for elementary and middle school students but this is a must read for adults as well. This book was definitely a great surprise from Andrew Clements, who I am not familiar with such a serious side.
