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# Crenshaw



## Synopsis

In her first novel since *The One and Only Ivan*, winner of the Newbery Medal, Katherine Applegate delivers an unforgettable and magical story about family, friendship, and resilience. Jackson and his family have fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent. And not much for food, either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again. Crenshaw is a cat. He's large, he's outspoken, and he's imaginary. He has come back into Jackson's life to help him. But is an imaginary friend enough to save this family from losing everything? Beloved author Katherine Applegate proves in unexpected ways that friends matter, whether real or imaginary. This title has Common Core connections.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 540 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Feiwel & Friends; 1st edition (September 22, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250043239

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Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.9 x 196.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 316 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #4,805 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Homelessness & Poverty #120 in Books > Children's Books > Activities, Crafts & Games > Activity Books #152 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6 "In her first novel since the Newbery-winning *The One and Only Ivan* (HarperCollins, 2012), Applegate tells the story of a 10-year-old boy whose imaginary friend helps him cope with a family crisis. Jackson, his parents, and his five-year-old sister once again are staring down the barrel of an impending eviction notice. What frustrates Jackson isn't just the lack of money: it's his artistically minded parents' tendency to gloss over their woes with humor and cheer rather than acknowledging the reality of their situation. It's understandably a shock to Jackson when an old

friend reappears: Crenshaw, a seven-foot-tall talking cat, who first came into his life several years ago when the boy and his family were living out of their car shortly after his father was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Skeptical Jackson tries to dismiss Crenshaw as a figment of his imagination, but the cat's words of wisdom start to resonate with him. Employing sparse but elegant prose, Applegate has crafted an authentic protagonist whose self-possession and maturity conceal relatable vulnerability and fears. While sardonic Crenshaw may not be the warm and cuddly imaginary friend readers are expecting, he's the companion that Jackson truly needs as he begins to realize that he doesn't need to carry the weight of the world upon his shoulders. Though the ending wraps up a shade too neatly, overall, children will appreciate this heartbreaking novel.

**VERDICT** A compelling and unflinchingly honest treatment of a difficult topic.âMahnaz Dar, School Library Journal

âThis accessible and moving novel demonstrates how the creative resilience of a child's mind can soften difficult situations, while exploring the intersection of imagination and truth.â

âPublishers Weekly, starred reviewâThe tone is warm and, occasionally, quirkily funny, but it doesn't sugarcoat the effects of hunger and vulnerability. This novel adds a middle-grade perspective to the literature of imaginary friends and paints a convincing and compassionate portrait of a social classâthe working poorâunderrepresented in children's books.â

âThe Horn Book, starred review

This book does a phenomenal job of being engaging and fun despite material that could so-easily delve into dark and disturbing. The author walks that precise line of creating empathy without creating too much distress for young readers. I have no qualms letting my 10-year-old or even 8-year-old read this one. It *does* talk about homelessness and its side effects for a young child, but somehow the imaginary friend (who's introduced in the first line as a surfboarding cat who's holding an umbrella) makes things lighthearted and safe, even while you recognize that he's a sign of emotional distress.

**FOR PARENTS - CONTAINS SPOILERS** If your child is sensitive (like mine are), it may help to know that the imaginary friend is silly enough to break up the tension on a regular basis. Many of the most-difficult moments of the book happen in the past (from the previous time this boy had to live in the van with his family and their puppy for 14 weeks), so you know they eventually made it out. And although he mentions having seen his dad cry (the only time he had seen such a thing), most of the darker moments focus on things like the van being smelly, or how he didn't like his younger sister kicking him in her sleep (so he decorated a cardboard panel to put in

between them). There's a lot of generosity/kindness from strangers, which helps a lot even though they \*were\* still living in a van, which keeps you empathizing with them but not spiraling into despair. There are also a couple of places where he says "I know other people have it much, much worse, but I still hate this," which again triggers empathy and understanding, without minimizing what anyone has to go through... making you aware of those darker stories, but not taking you into them. Finally, fortunately, at the end of this novel, the family finds a temporary place to stay (an old, run-down, one-room apartment) so again it's clearly not sunshine and roses, but hopeful. The author truly does a masterful job of introducing this difficult topic in a way that creates empathy while being enjoyable and (for most kids) non-traumatizing.

I'm ten years old going into 5th grade, and I had to read this book for school. I usually don't like reading but this book really made me sink into Jackson's perspective. Your child will also learn new verbal skills and to enjoy the magic as long as it lasts. I would recommend this book to 8-12 year olds. The book is about a kid who is fairly poor, Jackson, who one day observes his imaginary friend, who is a cat, Crenshaw, and has many questions about himself such as if he's going crazy. But the truth is he's not. Crenshaw is just there to help Jackson because him and his family might be living in their minivan again. I'm not gonna spoil the book for you, so I would DEFINITELY recommend this book to anyone.

I bought this for my grandson who is 8. He loves math, but not so much reading. This book had a phenomenal impact on him. He wanted to delay the ending (the last three chapters) as he loved the story so much. He was surprised at the ending and he asked if I would contact the author to write another book so he could know what happened after the ending. We had great conversations about what are moral issues and at 8 he understood that sometimes there are grey areas; not everything is absolute--right or wrong.

The only real flaw in this book is its shortness. It's not quite as perfect as *The One and Only Ivan* in the sense of creating a mood of drama, although drama is the heart of both books: the dramatic question of "what will happen next?" Read the book's description if you want to know the ostensible story. The story is about doubt and worry; and how a child shifts from these to a greater sense of self and centered-ness. Some books are for giving away and others are for sharing. This one is definitely for sharing.

Crenshaw is a beautifully written book that deals with some very serious real-life issues that affect children. This is a good book for Read Loud in an upper elementary/early middle school class. My students have enjoyed the story and it has also allowed our class to discuss real world issues such as homelessness and childhood hunger. I highly recommend this conversation stimulating book- but only for older/more mature students.

Crenshaw is a great book. I like the fact that it is something that we can all relate too. I also like that in the book it says "Imaginary friends are always there. We come back, because we are called on." This was very interesting, easy, sentimental, but yet unsentimental. I would recommend this with confidence.

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