



***Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* by G. Neri, illustrated by Randy DuBurke**

Lee & Low Books, an imprint of LEE & LOW BOOKS, INC, 2010

ISBN: 9781584302674 (Paperback)

*Age Range: 10 & up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 6 & up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

A graphic novel based on the life and death of Robert “Yummy” Sandifer, an eleven-year-old gang member from Chicago’s Southside who was killed by his own gang members.

Eleven-year-old Roger is trying to make sense of his classmate Yummy’s death, but first he has to make sense of Yummy’s life. Yummy could be as tough as a pit bull sometimes. Other times he was as sweet as the sugary treats he loved to eat. Was Yummy some sort of monster, or just another kid?

As Roger searches for the truth, he finds more and more questions. How did Yummy end up in so much trouble? Did he really kill someone? And why do all the answers seem to lead back to a gang—the same gang Roger’s older brother belongs to?

Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty is a compelling dramatization based on events that occurred in Chicago in 1994. This gritty exploration of youth gang life will force readers to question their own understandings of good and bad, right and wrong.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ “A harrowing portrait that is no less effective given its tragic familiarity. The facts are laid out, the suppositions plausible, and Yummy will earn both the reader’s livid rage and deep sympathy, even as the social structure that created him is cast, once again, as America’s undeniable shame. Tightly researched and sharply written, if sometimes heavy-handed, the not-quite-reportage is brought to another level by DuBurke’s stark black-and-white art, which possesses a realism that grounds the nightmare in uncompromising reality and an emotional expressiveness that strikes right to the heart. Like Joe Sacco’s work (*Footnotes from Gaza*, 2010), this is a graphic novel that pushes an unsightly but hard to ignore socio-political truth out into the open.” —[Booklist](#), **starred review**

★ “This is the real deal. Comics illustrator DuBurke’s gritty black-and-white artwork employs foreshortened backgrounds to bring the action right up in the reader’s face, whether it’s talking heads calmly discussing their theories on Yummy’s disordered personality, families in mourning, or a semiautomatic pointed directly out of the frame. . . Heartbreakingly contemporary.” —*Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, **starred review**

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★ “DuBurke’s raw illustrations evoke the heightened emotions of the time. The artist adeptly balances the contradictions of Yummy’s life, as scenes of exaggerated violence (torching cars and looting stores) slowly dissolve into typical childhood vignettes (pet frogs and beloved teddy bears). A much-needed look at the terrifying perils of life on the margins that will have all readers pondering the heady question of moral responsibility.” — [Kirkus Reviews](#), **starred review**

★ “Neri’s retelling is based on public records as well as personal and media accounts from the period. Framing the story through the eyes and voice of a fictional character, 11-year-old Roger, offers a bittersweet sense of authenticity while upholding an objective point of view. . . Realistic black-and-white art further intensifies the story’s emotion. A significant portion of the panels feature close-up faces. This perspective offers readers an immediacy as well as emotional connection to this tragic story.” — *School Library Journal*, **starred review**

“Compassionate and unflinching.” — **Gene Luen Yang, award-winning cartoonist and former National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature**

“Neri’s straightforward, unadorned prose is the perfect complement to DuBurke’s stark black-and-white inks; great slabs of shadow and masterfully rendered faces breathe real, tragic life into the players. Like Roger, in the end readers are left with troubling questions and, perhaps, one powerful answer: that they can choose to do everything in their power to ensure that no one shares Yummy’s terrible fate.” — [Publishers Weekly](#)

“Illustrated with the rough vigor of a Jack Chick evangelical tract, this graphic novel, evoking Yummy’s famous mugshot for its cover image, makes for an authentic parable of the dangers of gang life and gang-ruled streets. It’s too real to feel preachy, and Roger’s narration of Yummy’s brief life is realistically stoic and sympathetic.” — [The Horn Book Magazine](#)

“Gritty, real, willing to ask tough questions, and willing to trust that young readers will be able to reach their own conclusions. . . This is a story that needs to be told and it needs to be told to kids. Hand it to teens all you want (this would make a fantastic reluctant reader pick), but remember that there’s going to be nine and ten-year-olds out there as well who are ready for what Mr. Neri has to say.” — [Betsy Bird, A Fuse #8 Production](#)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- ALA Coretta Scott King Author Honor (American Library Association)
- ALSC Notable Children’s Book (American Library Association)
- Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Best Publication for Teens nominee
- YALSA’s Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers Top 10 (American Library Association)
- YALSA’s Great Graphic Novels for Teens Top 10 (American Library Association)
- Notable Book for a Global Society Book List (International Literacy Association)
- Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) Choices
- *Booklist* Editors’ Choice Books for Youth
- *Kirkus Reviews* Best of Year for Teens
- *Publishers Weekly* Best Books
- *School Library Journal*’s Good Comics for Kids Best Comics of Year
- Chicago Public Library Best of the Best Book
- Once Upon a World Children’s Book Award (Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance)
- Eliot Rosewater Indiana High School Book Award (Indiana Library Federation)

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- Garden State Teen Book Awards (New Jersey Library Association)
- Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice Award, Grades 9-12 (State Library of Louisiana)
- Maverick Graphic Novel List (Texas Library Association)
- Rhode Island Teen Book Award (School Librarians of Rhode Island & Rhode Island Library Association)
- Virginia Readers' Choice, High School (Virginia State Literacy Association)

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Teacher's Guide](#)
- [Author & Illustrator Interview](#)
- [Book Trailer](#)
- [Book Club for Kids Podcast: Episode 145 Yummy & A Conversation with G. Neri](#)
- [Lee & Low's The Open Book Blog: School Visit with G. Neri, author of Yummy](#)
- [The ALAN Review \(Summer 2012, Volume 39, Number 3\): Exploring Identity\(ies\) in Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty](#)
- [Literacy Design Collaborative Library's Yummy Lesson Plan](#)
- [The Practical English Teacher Free Unit for Yummy by G. Neri](#)
- [TeachingBooks' Meet-the-Author with G. Neri](#)

AUTHOR STATEMENT

"I kept searching for a different way to tell the tale of Yummy, one that might have positive ramifications. After many years and many false starts in mediums that ranged from theater to art installations to short stories, *Yummy* (one of the stories from *Lil' Killers*) found its way to being a graphic novel. It seemed like the perfect way to reach young males – reluctant readers might read comics and if I was lucky, I'd get them right at that prime age where they might be making these life decisions about whether to join a gang or not. I didn't want to hit the reader over the head with it (*just say no to gangs!*) but I felt in just telling Yummy's story simply and without a heavy-handed moral lesson, they could decide for themselves what lessons there were to be learned. I wanted to plant seeds, just enough to start an internal discussion when a young person was confronted with joining a gang. Maybe that seed of doubt might bloom into something positive.

My hope is that *Yummy* will find its way into classrooms, libraries and into the hands of reluctant readers. This is a story that needs to be talked about and I hope that *Yummy* is just the starting point for a deeper, more meaningful discussion with young people all over this country." —**G. Neri**

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.