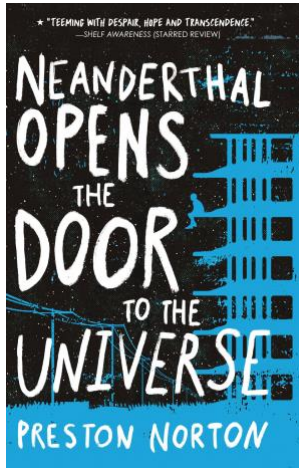


Book Resume: Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe



***Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe* by Preston Norton**

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019

ISBN: 9781484798683 (Paperback)

*Age Range: 14+ (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: Gr 9+ (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

A “funny and sweetly oddball” (*Publishers Weekly*, starred review) novel about an odd-couple friendship formed by a mission to make their high school to suck less, for readers “seeking doors to the universe” (*Booklist*, starred review) and a razor sharp, moving, and outrageously funny read.

Cliff Hubbard is a huge loser. Literally. His nickname at Happy Valley High School is Neanderthal because he’s so enormous—6’6” and 250 pounds to be exact. He has nobody at school, and life in his trailer-park home has gone from bad to worse ever since his older brother’s suicide. And there’s no one Cliff hates more than the nauseatingly cool quarterback Aaron Zimmerman, who after a near-death experience claims God gave him a list of things to do to make Happy Valley High suck less. And God said there’s only one person who can help: Neanderthal. To his own surprise, Cliff says he’s in. As he and Aaron make their way through the List, which involves a vindictive English teacher, a mysterious computer hacker, a decidedly unchristian cult of Jesus Teens, the local drug dealers, and the meanest bully at HVHS, Cliff feels like he’s part of something for the first time since losing his brother. But fixing a broken school isn’t as simple as it seems, and just when Cliff thinks they’ve completed the List, he realizes their mission hits closer to home than he ever imagined.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ “At the story’s core is an unsentimental treatment of a bullied kid and his one-time bully discovering their commonalities. That Norton accomplishes this without moralizing and in inventively rhythmic and pop-culture–saturated language only adds to the fun.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

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★ “The book... cogently explores large issues that plague and perplex teens... Will appeal to teens who are, themselves, seeking doors to the universe.” —Booklist, starred review

★ “Preston Norton's.... characters speak with a whip-smart, profanity-laced snark that belies the fragility lurking in even the biggest brutes. Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe is a book for any teen, teeming with despair, hope and transcendence.” —Shelf Awareness, starred review

“Preston Norton brings an exciting, sharp voice to YA. NEANDERTHAL is both heartbreaking and hopeful.” —Goldy Moldavsky, bestselling author of *Kill the Boy Band*

“Touching, funny, and utterly unforgettable.” —Robyn Schneider, author of *The Beginning of Everything*

“Cliff... is intelligent and vulgar in equal measure in this story about belief both transcendental and intimate... With a number of references any cinephile would appreciate, the cleverly plotted novel attests that discovering meaning anywhere or with anyone is invaluable.” —BCCB

“Laugh-out-loud. Funny, well-plotted and sneakily thought-provoking.” —School Library Journal

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- ALA 2019 Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults
- YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults List
- 2018 Cybils Award, young Adult Fiction Nominee
- Teenreads' Teen Choice Book Award 2019, Nominee
- Nominee for Florida Teens Read Book List, Missouri Gateway Readers Award, Texas Tayshas List, and Vermont Green Mountain Book Award

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Preston Norton, NEANDERTHAL OPENS THE DOOR TO THE UNIVERSE, on being “the best you can be” as a state of progression](#)

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

[From Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District \(WI\):](#)

"It's important to understand that many of our own students would feel a strong connection to this protagonist's experiences. A connection that helps to minimize the damaging effects of feeling ashamed of ones circumstances."

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AUTHOR STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

In the most rudimentary sense, I understand why NEANDERTHAL OPENS THE DOOR TO THE UNIVERSE is being banned. It has the f-word. It had a lot of them, actually. And every righteous person knows that the f-word is the vilest thing in the world, aside from democrats.

I jest, of course. We're in a time of mania, and all manias end sooner or later, because ignorance-driven panic—especially those with blatant, artificially Christian-flavored political agendas—cannot last forever. Enlightenment always finds a way.

The thing that is truly baffling to me is that NEANDERTHAL OPENS THE DOOR TO THE UNIVERSE, at its core, is about finding God. But for its protagonist, Cliff Hubbard—like most of us—finding God is not about going to church and reading a 2,700-year-old book. It's about grief, and pain, and f***ing up, and self-hate, and then—maybe at the end of it all—forgiveness.

Maybe God can be found in books that were written in this millennia. Maybe God can be found in a funny, foul-mouthed book that was published in 2018.

Maybe God can be found in banned books.

***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.

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