



Bonez by: Mr. Roses

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In the middle grade novel Bonez by: Mr. Roses, a young skateboarder becomes a sudden star and wonders what's truly important.

In the rhyming middle grade novel *Bonez by: Mr. Roses*, a skateboarder is faced with a life-altering opportunity—and learns that success comes in other forms than fame.

In small-town Letitbe, skateboarding rules the sports scene. Gus, also known as Bonez, wants to be known as the best skater around. He's got stiff competition: his best friends Quigz and Essie are pretty good, though Sally is his most formidable opponent.

Still, when Bonez wins the annual downhill skating race, he cements his reign as Letitbe's top skater. Afterwards, the world seems to fall into his hands. To top it all off, he meets the perfect girl, Peep, and makes plans to hang out with her. With fame, friends, and a future in the professional skating arena all within his grasp, Bonez works to maintain a balanced life, hoping that his celebrity won't be too much for him to handle.

Written in couplets (the aabb format predominates, though occasional abab schemes are included), the narrative's vibe is entertaining and bouncy. Cartoon illustrations further punctuate the enjoyable text, which simultaneously encourages young people to follow their instincts in order to achieve their dreams, and emphasizes the importance of cultivating and protecting long-lasting relationships. Most of the conflict involves Bonez and his friends searching for what's going to best satisfy their needs in life, with the strife created from Bonez's fame complicating this work as he falls into the traps of his instant stardom.

While Bonez's story implies that it is important to devote time to one's self-improvement and discovery, its characters take such principles to extremes; some detach themselves from others to focus on themselves, and the frequency with which "focus on myself" arises is a point of frustration. As they engage in borderline isolation, they come to seem too self-interested, undermining the book's messages regarding the importance of protecting relationships.

Many of the characterizations stick to archetypes. There's a handsome smooth-talker, a quirky oddball, a mean kid who has a secret soft side, and an average Joe. Each archetype serves a purpose in the story; still, the general development of the cast remains at a surface level.

A goal-orienting exercise comes at the end of the book, encouraging the audience to write down a dream for the future, and then listing goals to set for achieving that dream. It's a helpful learning tool that ably promotes setting lifelong goals.

In the middle grade novel *Bonez by: Mr. Roses*, a young skateboarder faces stardom—and the triumphs and pitfalls that go along with it.

IAN DAILEY (October 22, 2021)

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