

Catahoula

Bobby Franklin

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Catahoula is a humorous coming-of-age story that reminisces on a community's past.

Bobby Franklin's entertaining and refreshing young adult novel *Catahoula* follows the escapades of two brothers living in central Louisiana.

It is the 1950s, and the land of rural Catahoula, Louisiana, is hard and punishing. Snooks and Lil'Ray work hard, leaving little time for them to amuse themselves, though they're always seeking methods of amusement in their tight-knit community that values hard work and church attendance above all else. Even with their arduous schedules, Lil'Ray never runs out of captivating ideas for the two; these include scaring eggs out of hens using grenades and organizing a revenge mission that brings down an illegal operation.

Lil'Ray is always up to mischief, which is troublesome at first, but his strength of character is revealed by his persistence in defending his honor and the honor of those he loves. When a malicious driver hits Lil'Ray's dog with his cigarette, for example, Lil'Ray goes after the vehicle, striking one of its tail lights. Later, he plans a revenge mission to avenge his dog's death.

Dialogues are punctuated with the community's accent and local dialect, adding authenticity to the work and reflecting the setting well. This dialect is consistent throughout and leads to some musicality, as with "He was ridin' the horse and it took off like greased lightin' with daddy a ridin' him."

Chapters are long-winded and feature different, unrelated scenes that make reading strenuous at points. One chapter features Snooks and Lil'Ray's lengthy fishing trip; it's followed by another lengthy scene in which they catch the culprit who has been stealing their corn.

Humor is a constant and engaging feature, and pranks and laughter dot many scenes. This makes the book accessible to its audience, but also means that the work is uncomplicated and evades serious discussions. Lighthearted events end in excitement, as when Bill, the community's drunk, buys his son a horse out of remorse and the small, willful creature ends up taking off with heavy Bill as its rider. Such humor also makes the characters feel more multifaceted, as is the case with a secondary character, Wiley, who is mean when he's drunk but who's comical when he's sober.

Sections are individually cohesive, though in the larger text, supporting characters appear and then fade away, while the mains remain consistent. The community's lifestyle is unchanging; Catahoula's appreciation for a good story and religion is highlighted throughout.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (July 26, 2019)

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