



Juvenile Fiction

Diary of a Would-be Princess

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Mrs. Bright says we have to do journal writing EVERY day. Guess what she says? If you want to be a good writer you have to WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE, WRITE!

In this delightful first novel, written for ages nine to twelve, readers follow Jillian in her journey through fifth grade by way of the journal her teacher has assigned. Much to Jillian's dismay, Mrs. Bright actually collects, reads, and responds to the journals each weekend. Readers will giggle their way through the journal as Jillian learns to survive "life's slings and arrows."

Jillian wants more than anything to be a Princess. But the "Princess" girls won't let her play a game of elastics, because her elastic is homemade from cutoff pieces of her undies and PJs. They prefer Kirrilly's fluoro green elastic from the shop. So Jillian befriends Nigel, who writes acrostic poems about marrying her; Raymond, who thumps her for collecting seed pods instead of running the next base; and Sam, without a mum, who learns to read and do math because of Jillian's help this year.

This book is sure to please children who will recognize their own classmates and the misfortunes of daily school life. Green captures the essence of children in all their glory and pathos as they navigate their way through party fiascos, the bumps, bruises, and humiliations of sports, writing character references for a friend caught shoplifting, and a peasant's revolt against the Princesses' self-proclaimed Royal Family during the unit study on forms of government.

Mrs. Bright gently guides Jillian with weekly diary responses, using wit to adjure Jillian to loftier ideals and straightforward goals. In response to an entry about personal role models and missing homework, she writes: "I'm not sure whether I'm insulted or flattered about the comparisons to Elizabeth I and Boadecea. But even flattery will not make me believe fairy

stories about homework left at home. I was a child once, you know! Queen B.”

Green is a primary school teacher whose experience informs her writing. She skillfully addresses themes of bullying and acceptance, friendships and personal growth, in a gentle and humorous way. The growth her characters exhibit is refreshing, from loners who alienate classmates at the beginning of the year, to heroes and heroines celebrated by the entire school.

When Jillian tries desperately to be a Princess, she finds herself “Nigelized” into Dorkdom instead, as the Princesses mock Jillian about the ubiquitous presence of her new friend and refuse to allow her into their small circle. How will she manage to survive the year? She befriends the bully who teaches her how to play soccer, learns to stand in solidarity with less fortunate souls in her class, and throws the party of the year. In the end, Jillian not only survives her fifth year, she thrives!