

Finchosaurus

Gail Donovan

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In Gail Donovan's amusing *Finchosaurus*, a young boy with a penchant for dinosaurs and adventure discovers a mysterious note.

Atticus Finch Martin, nicknamed Finch, is rambunctious, with a dinosaur fascination and a one-track mind. After finding a note in the dirt that reads "help," Finch is determined to provide some.

Who could have left the note? And what do they want help with? Though he doesn't click effortlessly with others, Finch vows to find out, enlisting the help of a boy named Noah and a girl named Angelika. Together, they examine their classmates; who among them is in need? Of course, the answer is not as simple as they think. Many are struggling, from David, who is being bullied, to Graciela, who is struggling with head lice.

Though this low-stakes story is told in close third-person point of view, the tone is that of a fifth grader. Finch's thought process is clear to follow. Language is straightforward and occasionally sophisticated; it does not condescend to its audience.

Finch, refreshingly, is wholly himself. He is not kind because he thinks he has to be, but because he wants to be. He enjoys his own interests and doesn't understand why anyone wouldn't like the same things. There are lessons at work here—to be kind; to help if you can—but the book doesn't preach. Messages are subtly woven in to Finch's fun story.

The mystery of *Finchosaurus* keeps the plot moving, but the delightful characters and events are what make the story truly enjoyable.

HANNAH HOHMAN (November/December 2018)

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