Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

Jug-a-ro-mack-a-la-lulu-e-quack-a-la-lulu-e-zack-a-la-lulu-o-pippen and the bullies of Badgersville

Eric Jay
Miao Yun Kuang, illustrator
CreateSpace
978-1-4499-8058-0
Four Stars (out of Five)

Bullying is one of the most frequently reported school discipline problems in the United States. A U.S. Department of Education study found that more than 40 percent of middle schools identified bullying as a frequent problem. And a national study of more than half a million American students reported that 17 percent of students in the third through twelfth grades are bullied at least two to three times per month. *Jug-a-ro-mack-a-la-lulu-e-quack-a-la-lulu-e-zack-a-la-lulu-o-pippen and the bullies of Badgersville*, an engaging book written in verse and aimed at children in elementary school, addresses this serious problem.

Author Eric Jay holds dual graduate degrees in childhood and special education. In addition, he is an experienced classroom teacher who clearly understands the devastating effects of bullying. His aptly named "Badgersville" is filled with bullies. Wherever the new kid in town goes, people mock his strange name, which is Jug-A-Ro-Mack-A-La-Lulu-E-Quack-A-La-Lulu-E-Zack-A-La-Lulu-O-Pippin—although he goes by "Jug." In his eyes, the folks who mock him are monsters and they make his life miserable. However, with the gift of a pad of paper from his grandfather, Jug learns to record instances of mockery and bullying rather than responding to them with anger. Grandpa gives Jug fifty cents for each hash mark recorded in his journal. As a result, folks in Badgersville stop humiliating young Jug, and the boy earns a tidy sum to boot.

Kids will love Jug's absurd moniker as much as they enjoy singing the name John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt. And they will identify with poor Jug's plight. In addition, they are likely to find Miao Yun Kuang's comic book-style illustrations appealing.

But three issues mar this otherwise good tale. First, it is troubling that not only children but adults in town badger the boy, including his teacher, a crossing guard, police officers, and

firefighters. Not one of these authority figures stands up for Jug or even offers him a kind word. Worse yet, each adult adds insult to injury by also laughing at the boy's name. Second, it is disappointing that the sole means for overcoming bullying in this story is the almighty dollar. True, Grandpa notes that the tally sheet of mean comments "just showed you the way. It was *you* who ignored the mean words people say." But this comment is so buried in the text it is difficult to believe children will grasp its significance. Third, Jay's story works well in rhyme, particularly given the melodic name of his protagonist, but his rhyme and meter are not perfect, as they should be for books written in verse.

Still *JUG-A-RO-MACK-A-LA-LULU-E-QUACK-A-LA-LULU-E-ZACK-A-LA-LULU-O-PIPPIN and the bullies of Badgersville* provides an interesting tale that, with guided discussion, can help children deal constructively with the serious issue of bullying.

Nancy Walker