

Mrs. White's SUB SNIPS

Laura Moss White

Caitlin Skaalrud, Illustrator

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The comedic panels of Mrs. White's SUB SNIPS have the potential to boost substitute teachers' morale.

The crazy life of substitute teachers is captured in Laura Moss White's collection of one-panel cartoons, *Mrs. White's SUB SNIPS*.

Its material inspired by first-hand observations from across fifteen years of substitute teaching, the book contains sixty cartoon snapshots featuring a number of different substitute teachers in awkward predicaments. Most of the substitutes are women, almost all are white, and there's little variety in the appearance of the school settings. Substitute teachers will find the situations humorous and familiar, though. The cartoons demonstrate the second-class status to which substitutes are relegated in their interactions with students, the administration, and other teachers.

The book's humor is gleaned from every angle; one cartoon shows a substitute who's left without a lesson plan, while another depicts a substitute who's left with a long, all-too-detailed one. The material becomes repetitive, though there are standout moments, as with a picture of a substitute in a room full of screaming kids, one of whom asks, "Why don't you want to be a full-time teacher?" In another amusing entry, a child asks "Why can't you be our regular teacher?" while a second child suggests breaking their regular teacher's legs to create the job opening.

However, some of the dialogue is stilted, as when one child tells another, about their substitute, "He is an actor," instead of using a more natural sounding contraction. Punctuation choices confuse some deliveries, as when a teacher points out a substitute on the stairs and says "Are you mad, because I blackballed you!" Another unclear entry shows a teacher pointing to a clock and yelling at a running substitute "You're late you also will have to work hard in here!"

Caitlin Skaalrud's black-and-white illustrations depict teachers' and students' facial expressions, registering anxiety, surprise, and confusion—three emotions that are prominent in the book's humor. There's not much room for character development or major insights in the one-panel gags, though, especially since they don't feature a regular or repeating character to anchor them. Instead, the book functions as a fast collection of observational humor that's good for a few laughs and that has the potential to boost substitute teachers' morale.

Mrs. White's SUB SNIPS mines a narrow slice of the education community for its humorous panels.

PETER DABBENE (November 20, 2019)

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