

Prince Iggy and the Kingdom of Naysayer

Aldo Fynn

Richie Vicencio, Illustrator

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Goofy minor characters add depth to hero Iggy, helping him grow as a person throughout his journey.

Anyone who has suffered bullying will relish *Prince Iggy and the Kingdom of Naysayer*, in which a boy finds out he is royalty after being called Stinky Iggy and Vomit Face all his life. It's the first of a planned juvenile fiction series by Aldo Fynn and conveys messages of perseverance and resilience while weaving an entertaining yarn.

Baby Iggy once washed up on the shores of the Kingdom of Naysayer, a land of miserable people and negative energy. The first third of the book is full of gloom; Iggy suffers constant physical and verbal bullying. He is so down about his life that he even seeks solace with a lowly cockroach.

But the tone perks up when a magical bird recognizes the ring on Iggy's finger and informs the Rose Kingdom that the lost prince has been found. After King Naysayer steals Iggy's ring, the boy—with the help of a crew of Rose royal subjects—has a wild time getting back the magical gem.

What saves the story from becoming an all-too-familiar good-versus-evil tale is the cast of eccentric characters that shows up to assist Iggy. Among them is a surly but lovable sea captain, a neurotic professor, and a rusty sorceress. Fynn's writing gets more playful with the introduction of each new character in the same way that otherwise two-dimensionally sullen Iggy becomes more dynamic when flanked by his newfound friends.

Fynn is adept at making scenes come to life; a particularly vivid moment is when Iggy and his subjects try to steal back the ring. Illustrator Richie Vicencio provides a few expressive drawings of Iggy's magical adventures, although the book could benefit from a few more.

In addition to enjoying the fantastical tale of peanut butter torture, shrinking ships, and kids turned into rats, readers will pick up some important lessons in self-esteem. "Just because you're not the prince doesn't mean you're what all those other kids say you are. You are who you want to be. It all starts with what's in your heart, and in your head," the sorceress tells Iggy before his royal identity is confirmed.

Ultimately, readers will feel good about Iggy's triumph over his bullies and look forward to future adventures from this unlikely adolescent hero.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (February 24, 2014)

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