

Richard and the Boyz: The Puberty Experience

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Doc N Jock (Jun 21, 2019)

Softcover \$15.99 (88pp)

978-1-73302-720-5

Richard and the Boyz is a puberty guide for boys, men, and parents that's filled with information and humor.

In Nadine Pierre-Louis and Jason A. Caffey's helpful coming-of-age guide *Richard and the Boyz*, a friendly doctor guides two boys through the challenges of puberty.

Knowing that puberty is a sensitive and awkward topic, Pierre-Louis and Caffey devised an entertaining guide to assuage related concerns. In it, a cartoon doctor who is a sentient penis, Dr. David Richard, begins his puberty seminar by using the illustrations of two characters, Preeb and Pube (also talking penises).

Preeb and Pube have a series of realistic conversations and encounters, expressing fears about puberty, sexuality, bodily changes, and individuality; Dr. Richard pauses the story to expand upon these topics, and to educate both the boys and the audience about them. Dr. Richard is respectful and uses slang, science, and humor to reinforce straightforward concepts that real men talk about, making the discussions feel normal and natural.

The lecture format is engaging and eschews dry textbook tendencies, delivering talks to an unnamed audience seen from the back. It cycles through Preeb and Pube's episodic adventures, punctuated by returns to Dr. Richard at his lectern and the responsive audience. This method allows for a fun balance between humor and information.

Illustrations accompany the text, including of Preeb and Pube. When Dr. Richard mentions a slide or specific illustration, that material is shown as a distant screen with Dr. Richard and the audience in the foreground. However, there are too few of these slide illustrations, and they are too small, to be truly helpful.

The text is geared toward an audience of prepubescent boys, but is also designed to be accessible to males of any age, with special attention given to parents. It normalizes topics and conversations that some are hesitant to discuss. This normalization also promotes reaching out to a trusted adult when curious or scared, approves of valid information gleaned from the internet, and encourages turning to medical professionals for expert opinions.

The book's tone is formal and accessible, and the bulk of its material is shared in Dr. Richard's friendly, professional voice. He employs medically appropriate terms; Preeb and Pube use slang and widely accepted terms, guaranteeing that the book is accessible to its audience. The result is a sympathetic and attentive guide.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (August 22, 2019)

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