Zoobreak by Gordon Korman

Turning My Special Needs 5Th Grader Into A Reader!

When Griffin Bings class goes to a floating zoo, they don't expect to see animals being treated so badly. They don't expect to find Cleo, Dog Whisperer Savannah's pet monkey who's been missing for weeks. And they really don't expect to have to hide the animals once they've rescued them! Hilarity ensues as Griffins team once more pulls off a heist...trying to break the animals back into a (better) zoo! No animals were harmed in the making of Gordon Kormans funny, crowd-pleasing next middle grade novel.

My Personal Review:
Eleven-year-old Griffin Bing is known throughout Cedarville, New York as "The Man with the Plan." Recently, he and his friends had gotten tangled up in a mess involving a stolen Babe Ruth baseball card. Since that crisis has been resolved safely, Griffin has been on the lookout for another adventure, and he doesn't have to look very far. His good pal, Savannah, to put it mildly, is an animal enthusiast: she loves every creature and can recite all sorts of information on just about every one. She even has her own pet capuchin monkey, but to her horror, he goes missing, breaking her heart.

Griffin and his best friend, Ben, help her search for her monkey, but the boys find nothing. It isn't until their class goes on a field trip to a visiting zoo on a boat that they make a horrific discovery --- the "All Aboard Animals" floating zoo has Savannah's monkey locked up in a horrible cage. And what makes it even worse is that the entire zoo is dirty, and the animals are skinny and obviously miserable. Savannah tries to get her monkey back, but the zoo's operator swears he is the legal owner. There's nothing Savannah, her parents, or her parents' lawyer can do.

But there is something Griffin and his friends can do --- Operation Zoobreak! Everyone on the team has a special talent, like Pitch and her climbing abilities, Logan with his acting skills, and Melissa, who knows everything about computers. A person by himself or herself is alone, but a group of friends working together can accomplish anything. The team gets started right away on their plan to sneak aboard the floating zoo and rescue the monkey. Of course, things never go completely according to plan, and at the last minute, Savannah decides they should save every creature in the zoo. It's a good thing that Griffin is so talented with plans; they're going to need some good ones.
Gordon Korman has written a number of awesome books, and ZOOBREAK is yet another winner. He has a wild sense of humor, and his characters are colorful and entertaining. Griffin and his friends are so much fun; the pages flew by in a huge, hilarious adventure. This book is overflowing with energy, and each chapter ends with the promise of more excitement. In addition, woven perfectly into the story, without sounding preachy or lectured, are the themes of friendship, working together, accomplishing the impossible, and having the courage to do what is right. I can't wait to read more adventures involving Griffin and his friends.

--- Reviewed by Chris Shanley-Dillman

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