



HOLLYWOOD

Book Reviews

Title: Creeples!
Author: Patrick D. Pidgeon
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Reviewed by: Carol Davala



Hollywood Book Reviews

In the vein of Harry Potter joining up with a young version of the science nerds from the popular TV series "The Big Bang Theory," author Patrick D. Pidgeon has created an imaginative and entertaining read in his first middle-grade fantasy novel, *Creeples!*.

Against the backdrop of the fictional Aberdasher Academy of Science in upstate NY, an institute known for its fringe research, freshman students Johnny Spignola, aka Spigs; Theresa Ray Rogers, aka T-Ray; and Pablo Torres, aka Peabo have gained the coveted title of assistants to renowned Professor Sally Bodkins and her genomic work. When they learn her department is about to be shut down, the clever threesome,

affectionately labeled the "Lab Rats", look to crowd-funding and the use of a 3D bio printer in the hopes of gaining interest in DNA replication. Unfortunately, things go vastly awry when a stolen secret serum used in their experiment unleashes six mini-humanoids. Dubbed "Creeples", these unique creatures with their mustard yellow eyes, ashen-gray potbellied bodies, prodigious teeth, and sprouting plumes of neon-colored hair, leave a trail of humor and chaos across campus. Whether releasing toxic flatulence, tumbling down laundry chutes, giving atomic wedgies, or bringing inanimate objects like vending machines and models of classic cryptic creatures to life, the Creeples exhibit a monstrous metamorphosis with amplified powers.

Pidgeon creatively presents an intriguing, multi-layered storyline. While the Lab Rats attempt to keep their rare creations under wraps, other ne'er-do-wells have their own nefarious intentions. A shady carnival owner who gets wind of the Creeples existence plans to add them as a star attraction to his exotic animal show. Meanwhile, the school's off-limits ten-story Bell Tower that's rumored to be atop an ancient burial ground, ultimately reveals connections to a mysterious cult and a campus conspiracy that threatens to destroy the modern world.

While Pidgeon weaves typical middle-grade angst into the narrative, from student run-ins with authority, conflicts with bullies, and classmate crushes, he also showcases the individuality of these adolescent characters. Here he details Spigs as a precocious child, raised by a great-aunt who doesn't like kids. T-Ray is a straightforward, probing student with personal reasons for wanting to become a doctor, and Peabo is a shy but brilliant tech wiz. Though seemingly an unlikely grouping, their climactic escapades prove the power of friendship and an enticing mix of science and mythology amidst imaginative revelations including ghostly entities and a flying dragon.

Within this kid charged quest, Pidgeon offers up likeable heroes that confirm the adage "Teamwork makes the dream work." Using their knowledge, wits, and ability to problem solve, the Lab Rats face challenges from the bungling campus security guards to the darker sinister foes, all while attempting to circumvent the precarious surrounding dangers. In a plot filled with unexpected twists and turns and a strong presence of good vs. evil, the inventive, action-packed storyline will keep readers thoroughly invested. Chapters are interspersed with some fun black & white illustrations by Marco Bucci and include informative data reports that detail specifics about each individual Creeple. The images ideally capture these pint-sized creatures who bear a likeness reminiscent of the memorable wishnik trolls made popular in the '60s.

In an artful blend of science, technology, ancient mystery, and humor, Pidgeon's well-crafted venture into this middle-grade literary genre proves an experiment with truly positive results. The ending's hint at a sequel is sure to entice readers and have them looking forward to more calamity and chaos from this brainy trio and their mad-cap lab creations.