



The Templeton Twins Have an Idea

Ellis Weiner , Jeremy Holmes (Illustrator)

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Suppose there were 12-year-old twins, a boy and girl named John and Abigail Templeton. Let's say John was pragmatic and played the drums, and Abigail was theoretical and solved cryptic crosswords. Now suppose their father was a brilliant, if sometimes confused, inventor. And suppose that another set of twins-adults-named Dean D. Dean and Dan D. Dean, kidnapped the Templeton twins and their ridiculous dog in order to get their father to turn over one of his genius (sort of) inventions. Yes, I said kidnapped. Wouldn't it be fun to read about that? Oh please. It would so. Luckily for you, this is just the first in a series perfect for boys and girls who are smart, clever, and funny (just like the twins), and enjoy reading adventurous stories (who doesn't?).

The Templeton Twins Have an Idea Details

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Author : Ellis Weiner , Jeremy Holmes (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review *The Templeton Twins* Have an Idea for online ebook

Brenda says

This is the story of 12-year-old twins, John and Abigail Templeton and their inventor father. This is also the story of a set of adult twins named Dean D. Dean and Dan D. Dean who feel that Mr. Templeton has stolen the idea for a Personal One-Man Helicopter from Dean (well Dean D. Dean, in this case). Confused yet? It's not as nearly as complicated as it seems but the twins (Templeton twins) are kidnapped in an attempt to force their father to hand over all of the materials for the invention of the flying machine. One of the instant strengths of this book are the quirky illustrations, speech bubbles and diagrams of some of the inventions. My main complaint is with the Narrator who is snarky and quite humorous in the beginning but at times in my opinion is a little too intrusive in the story for me. What comes off as humorous at the beginning is less so at the end, for that reason I wish that the Narrator had faded into the background toward the end and let the story shine more on its own. Children who enjoy reading Lemony Snicket will mostly likely not mind this so much as I did. Aside from that, the book has some wonderful "cryptic crosswords" that Abigail will need to solve and the action keeps the story going at a good pace.

karen says

i read this because i came across an excerpt that made it sound really fun. despite my aversion to twins, and my not reading much middle grade, i thought i would enjoy this, because - puzzles! and chapters with names like *Other Things Happen In An Exciting Manner!* and an intrusive aggressive narrator who berates the reader throughout the story and gives questions at the end of every chapter such as *What were the names of Abigail and John, the Templeton twins?* and *Explain, in fifty words or less, why you believe the story will actually get started, and why it will be wonderful.* sign me up, even though i am so much taller than all the other readers of this series!

now, i have never read any of those lemony snicket or pseudonymous bosch books, but i gather the tone and the device are similar? and judging by the continued success of those books, i guess the kids go nuts for it. but this one has very limited crossover appeal into the world of the adult reader. again - i know tons of grown folk love that lemony snicket fellow, so it's probably quite different than this one, which i think is best left to younger readers.

for me, the gimmick of the narrator's self-insertion was overused. the book doesn't even start until seven pages and three fake prologues of stalling, and the plot is constantly interrupted by more of the same. it's cute at first, but it gets old quickly. if you remove all the asides and interruptions, you lose at least half of the actual pages, and you never even learn who the narrator actually is, and why they are being forced to write this story, despite all the hints and promises - probably to encourage readers to continue with the series. and the tone of the narrator changes too frequently, from abusive to cajoling to pandering to megalomaniac to just silly.

the story itself, in the spaces when it is allowed to occur, is fine, nothing special. i did enjoy the puzzles, even though they are scaled down to middle-grade level, but it's still fun to encounter puzzles in a story, although *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* did it better.

shrug. it's a kid's book, and younger readers will probably have a blast reading it while they are rolling around on those little wheeled sneakers of theirs and living rent-free while shoving bags of candy into their skinny little bodies and getting to sit on stuffed animals bigger than they are.

conclusion: being a grown-up is no fun at all.

sigh.

Dahlia says

Basically, I find this to be a poor imitation of Lemony Snicket's series. The author seemed like he was trying way too hard, and there really wasn't much of a story to tell. If the "narrator" had quit interfering in the story so much, the book probably would not have even been 200 pages. I know that this was meant to add some humor to the story, but it was overdone. Honestly, I found it to be incredibly annoying. Frankly, the only thing I took away from this story was the meatloaf recipe, which sounds quite good. If you're interested in the recipe, ask a friend who's read it, but I do not recommend this book.

Barb Middleton says

The recent crop of metafictional books has left me not lovin' this technique as much as when I first encountered it in children's literature. Or perhaps, reading authors who are really good at it, reveals the lesser talents. Either way, this one goes on my hoo-rah list. I loved it like I love fresh corn on the cob (I'm making a connection with my crop statement. I'm also hungry. I'm also giving you a taste of how this book is written). Imagine a Lemony Snicket-type snarky narrator wired on 10 cups of coffee and inserting his thoughts so much I would argue he is the main character. That's the book, "The Templeton Twins." The over-the-top, babbling narrator never shuts up, pointing out how the book is organized, why he chose to write it this way, why he is using certain words, and basically poking fun at everything under the literary sun. (By the way, I reeeeeaaaally like the word, "snarky". It has a snappy ring to it, don't you know. What's that? You want to know what it means? Look it up yourself. I have a review to write.)

Figures of speech, acronyms and character names are in every chapter such as the metonymic expression, "Abigail's eyes fell on that drawing of a balloon mounted on the refrigerator. By that, I do not mean that her eyeballs literally dropped out of her head onto the drawing. I mean the picture caught her attention." (I think that's called, metonymy. Isn't it? Ahhhh, please correct me if I'm wrong. This is the reason I NEVER became an English teacher. As Weiner would say, "LET'S MOVE ON.") Acronyms scatter the pages like leaves with my personal favorite, the STB or Self-Tensioning Book Ends ("beloved by librarians throughout the universe") and names that bounce like a superball such as Dan D. Dean - sounds like dandy, Dean D. Dean - sounds like dee-dee-dee, or Nanny Nan Noonan- sounds like na-na-na-na-nah. You'd think this nattering narrator would get annoying, but I never reached that point; the author reigns in at the right point keeping the pace going along with my laughter. The "Questions for Review" at the end of each chapter have hilarious questions that parody reviews or tests students take in school:

What were the names of Abigail and John, the Templeton twins?

Bonus Question: There is no bonus Question. Proceed to Question 3.

Isn't it a splendid thing that we have begun? (Hint: No. It means I must write some more. LET'S MOVE

ON.)

The author is experimenting with how stories are presented with graphics, photos, and voice in surprising ways. While the action and cartoonish characters take a back seat to the humor, I admired how Ellis Weiner ties the plot points together and creates his own unique, goofy story while exposing craft at the same time.

Meet the 12-year-old Templeton Twins: Abigail, the genius, and John, the inventor. Abigail and John's mom has just died and they are finagling their father into buying them a dog; a common theme in children's books. You'd think this overused method of moving the plot along would be boring, but the narrator explains he knows this and points it out by writing, "asking for a dog is as old as the human (and dog) race," then he imagines out loud Cain and Abel arguing about getting a dog with Adam and Eve. Bad boy, Cain, sasses his parents while Abel begs "PLEEEEEEEASE?" Abigail doesn't want to ask for a dog in a normal way because that is "tedious and grim." The narrator says, "Now, if I were you, I would immediately think, 'Just a moment, Narrator. Do you seriously expect me to believe that a twelve-year-old child would use the words 'tedious' and 'grim' in private conversation with her brother? wouldn't she be much more likely to say something along the lines of 'But, like, John? If we ask Dad the same old way, won't it be, like, boring and sad and stuff?'" This constant poking fun at the writing craft had me howling in the gym as I worked out. My neighbors on the elliptical machines quirked their brows at my sporadic outbursts. Between my plugged ears and piston pumping legs, I bet my laugh was much too boisterous. What do you expect from a Midwestern gal? I was having fun in my make-believe world. What's that? Oh, all right. I'll MOVE ON. I was just having a bit of a chit chat with you. I thought we could get to know each other.

When the Templeton's absent-minded professor-of-a-father moves the family to a different university, the twins get kidnapped by the idiotic villain, Dean D. Dean, AKA Tweedle Dee; aided by his equally idiotic twin brother, Dan D. Dean, AKA Tweedle Dum (my aliases). I love that Dean turns to crime because the professor gave him an F in class. He's even the moustache-twirling "Mwuh-ha-ha" stereotypical character, but because the narrator points it out, I found it funny. Dean's biggest problem is he accuses the Professor of stealing his idea to build a Personal-One-Man Helicopter. The notion that an idea can be stolen is so ludicrous that its humorous and on a metafictional level points to the fact that many ideas are reused in children's literature. Weiner's presentation is what works. At least for me. I do have an odd sense of humor. While structure and plot are the building blocks of craft, it is the author's language and voice that makes this story rise on its own.

The parody of the slapstick villains and doofy adults is a familiar trope in children's literature where the adults are idiots and the young protagonists solve the story's problem because they are smarter and wiser. (Do you know the meaning of trope? "How very disappointing. And yet I know exactly what it means. Isn't that fascinating?" It means an overused theme or device.) Here Abigail and John not only unkidnap themselves, they save Dad in the process. They are helped by their ridiculous dog, Cassie a hyper fox terrier, that "runs and spins and wags its little tail like a metronome that has lost its mind. When you bring out the leash to take it for a walk and you tell it to "Sit!," it proceeds to leap straight up into the air, like a dolphin in a SeaWorld show, over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over until you finally give up and say, 'Oh for goodness' sake,' and you just hold it down and clip on its leash. You may do this four thousand times over the course of five years and it will never, ever sit." Are you laughing? No? Then I suggest you read the SERIOUS book, "Bomb: The Race to Build --and Steal-- the World's Most Dangerous Weapon." Do you get the idea of what this book is like with an in-your-face narrator? Good. "LET'S MOVE ON."

Ms. Yingling says

Before Abigail and John Templeton are even born, their professor father was pestered by a student who is unhappy with his grade, but when news comes that the birth is imminent, the professor rushes out without giving the student any satisfaction. Years later, the family is reeling from the death of the mother. Professor Templeton is working on his Personal One-Man Helicopter, and Tickeridge-Baltock (Tick-Tock Tech) will give him more funding than his current employer. The twins are not happy to be uprooted (along with their active terrier), although the nanny they get (Nanny Nan Noonan) is pleasant enough. These things are immaterial when Dean Dean shows up and claims that the Personal One-Man Helicopter was his idea, and he was the student brushed off by the professor on the way to the twins' birth. He hates the twins and literally wishes they had never been born, so kidnaps them in hopes that he can get the professor to sign away his rights to the POMH. Complications ensue, the narrator intersperses the story with quizzes and monologues, and eventually the twins save the day.

Strengths: Even in the ARC, the brilliance of the book design is evident. The hardcover will be very visually appealing.

Weaknesses: I have little patience for the overly precious, intrusive Narrator, and this book certainly has a lot of the Snicketesque goofiness that I personally do not enjoy. However, it must be noted that *The Bad Beginning* was published in 1999, and I still have about five copies of each book in the series, many in tatters, that circulate frequently. While this sort of book is not something I can stomach, the students all seem to like them.

Wendi Lee says

This middle grade book about fraternal twins and their inventor father is reminiscent of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, complete with an over-the-top narrator. I love the comprehensive questions at the end of each chapter, where the narrator's snark shines.

Paul Hankins says

A longer review to come as the publishing date approaches (we're still some three months out for this one).

What I do like about *THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA* is that the narrator challenges the reader to double back and consider, "Do I remember that the narrator said this earlier?" or "Do I remember this aspect of the story?" Elements of foreshadowing and revelation would make *THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA* an excellent text to demonstrate these literary elements.

Further, when the narrator challenges the reader's "knowledge." If you have children around you--right now--ask them what burlap material is. Chances are they may not know. And so a reader might think, "Do I know this reference?" "How do I know this reference?" "When did I come upon this?" These kinds of authorial intrusions (or in this case, insertions by the narrator), can lend to a reader's cultural literacy as much as build their confidence for the things they know that a snarky narrator believes they may not. English teachers and friends in the English teaching business will appreciate a passing reference to Donald Hall.

And, somehow. . .it looks like I am writing a review. Which I am not. You must have sensed that I was merely making some connections after having read the book. What kind of responsible reviewer would write

a review for a book that's three or more months from release. Might I not even know what "buzz" is all about?

In the meantime, *THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA* does have some neat ladders to other titles that are available now (you do have some summer reading to do, right?) that present in a similar fashion of narrators who speak directly to the reader or deal in hilarious scenarios that all seem to come together in the end:

Fake Mustache by Tom Angleberger

Leaving the Bellweathers and The Butler Gets a Greak by Kristin Clark Venuti

A Tale Dark and Grimm by Adam Gidwitz

And while you wait for *THE TEMPLETON TWINS*, here is a cryptic for you:

I HOBOS LOVE KIT. Mix. Review. (4)

Emily says

This book is just so darn coool looking. Seriously. Find a copy on the shelf, pick it up, and flip through it. See? If you really don't want to leave your computer screen (I can't blame ya), check out some sample pages here. See? So cute! And it is all in blue ink, including the story text, which has driven me crazy in the past (Shiver, for example), but it works here. The cutesy look of it all offers a nice counterbalance to the snarky, frightening, borderline dark tone of the book. The narrator is condescending, and sarcastic, and is all about the snark, but it doesn't feel contrived.. It makes sense, and definitely makes you laugh. The titular characters, John and Abigail Templeton are fantastic. They are intelligent, resourceful, clever, and have more than one idea. There are puzzles, a complete recipe for meatloaf, and a thoroughly engrossing mystery with just enough twists and turns. As far as the actual plotline goes, I will leave you with the summary from the back cover: "The Templeton twins must use all their cleverness to foil kidnappers and blah blah blah. They figure it all out in the end. Done."

Alexander W says

[Currently the twins are being held captive in a house belonging to a former student of the twins' father who got an f so he took the twins. I can't wait to read more about what is going to happen next because this book is really funny and exciting!! I rate this book 5 stars because of the comedy part and because he managed to write awesome realistic fiction because it has gadgets and gadgets are cool!!!!!! I re

Cathy says

I found the narrator, who speaks directly to the reader to be utterly annoying. Maybe kids would find the sarcasm and stupid questions at the end of each chapter funny, but I didn't. I was so tempted to take the book back to the library without finishing it, something I rarely do.

Bookworm1858 says

My review of this book should be split into two parts: the story and the way the story is told.

The first part I am very excited about. The Templeton Twins, twelve-year old John and Abigail (making me think of the Adamses) are fun kids. John is a drummer and Abigail solves cryptic crosswords so they're smart and creative thinkers. They get tangled up in the schemes of another set of twins with a grudge against their father and outwit the villains in a most clever way. I really enjoyed everything about their story.

The second part though includes the narrator, who I found extremely grating. The narrator is definitely going to be off-putting to some people, of which I was one. The narrator talks directly to the reader-which I often like but in this case it is to act superior. I guess I was not in the best mood so I was a little bit more ruffled by this than I otherwise would have been. The narrator kind of reminded me of Lemony Snicket in "A Series of Unfortunate Events" but it has either been a very long time since I read that series or Snicket was much less in your face than this narrator. Basically my irritation with the narrator stifled my enjoyment of this book.

One other element to note is that this book does have illustration. However since I received an ARC, I have not seen the final drawings. I did really enjoy the sketches though and feel like they were a great addition to the story. That was actually a major draw for me when requesting this book-I am really growing to love when books have additional content like that.

Overall: I feel like the narrator is make-or-break it for the book. Try and read a chapter or two to see if it works better for you!

Aarifa says

i kinda liked it. it reminded me of the unfortunate events a lot because the two twins, Abigail and John, act a LOT like Violet and her brother. the dog, Cassie, is like Sunny. there are two other adult twins named Dan D. Dean and Dean D. Dean who are like count Olaf. The narrator is soo funny!! YOU ALL SHOULD READ IT!

Liviania says

I sometimes chat with people while reading books. It's a rare sometimes, because most of the time I prefer to focus on my book rather than talk to people. I tend to talk when I need to think something through.

In the case of THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA, I was having issues with the narrator. Now, the narrator is very funny. Hir voice is idiosyncratic, with a strong opinion on the story, and often digressing to things like meatloaf recipes rather than the main plot. Yes, it is very much like Lemony Snicket. A Series of Unfortunate Events ended a little more than five years ago. There's room for a new story in the same vein. But there were times I found the style uncomfortably similar.

Abigail and John Templeton are fraternal twins living with their inventor father. After their mother's death,

their father decides to go to work at a different university. There a man accuses their father of stealing his idea and demands credit. Dean D. Dean and his identical twin Dan D. Dean are willing to kidnap the Templeton twins in order to get what they want. But fortunately Abigail and John are experts at cryptic puzzles and the drums, respectively.

THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA is very funny and smart in a way that's accessible to younger readers. I particularly liked the quiz questions at the end of each chapter. They're silly - either easy, not a real question, or a facetious request for an essay - but I felt like they did increase my engagement with the text.

I liked Jeremy Holmes's artwork. I read an ARC so most of the illustrations were only sketches, but I liked the way they looked. Each image is stylish and dynamic. And the design of THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA extends from the illustrations to include playful borders and some special speech bubbles. It's both attractive and tempts rereading in order to find more details.

Young puzzle lovers and Lemony Snicket fans will enjoy THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA. I think there's always an audience for hilarious books about smart kids getting in and out of trouble. At least, I hope there is. And that audience will find THE TEMPLETON TWINS HAVE AN IDEA.

Beth says

Originally published at Beth's Book Reviews.

Received for review.

I really liked the idea of this and was excited to receive it for review but the execution left much to be desired. Granted, I did receive it in e-galley form which I read on my iPad, but various unfinished artwork and such does not affect the story itself and the story was sadly lacking.

I wasn't particularly impressed with the characters, who were rather bland, or the "narrator" who was actually more than a bit annoying rather than amusing which was what the author was going for. It felt like it was trying too hard to provide the energy, humor, and pace of a Lemony Snicket and it frankly just fell short. Very, very short.

What the story sadly lacked was somewhat compensated for but the lovely illustrations by Jeremy Holmes. but overall I'd have to recommend a pass on this one unless you are really desperate for something new and have literally nothing else to read.

Eli says

Ahh. What's the word?

Not necessarily acting like a jerk, but more... something. There's a word for it...

Haughty

Indifferent

Detached

Arrogant

Stuck up

Rude

Careless

Eh. I'll go with rude. Oh yes, and careless.

You know, the narrator of this book is both rude and careless. In fact, I just get the impression while I'm reading that he (yes, it does say on the back flap that it's a he) simply doesn't care about enough about his audience while he's telling the story. Like he's above them. Acting like he's doing you a favor by telling you the story.

To be honest, I think I detect a little bit of Lemony Snicket and Pseudonymous Bosch in here. Okay, the slightest pinch of Lemony Snicket and a few drops of Pseudonymous Bosch. All I'm going to say is, I think that there are very few people who can pull off storytelling the way that Lemony Snicket and Pseudonymous Bosch can without coming off as the above words.

And, in the spirit of honesty, I don't believe Ellis Weiner was able to pull it off like they can.

Overall, the plot of the book wasn't bad. I liked the story and the Templeton twins as characters. But the narrator? He just annoyed me at every single page of the story.

I think that middle-grade readers and even elementary school kids can enjoy this story. About fourth grade to sixth or seventh. But for an adult or teenager? They might find it annoying like I did.

Congrats, Jeremy Holms. I really liked the pictures you put into this story. It gave the book an extra star. Keep on illustrating. 3 stars.

This review and more are on my blog: <http://middleschoolersreadtoo.wordpress...>
