



The Infamous Ratsos

Kara LaReau , Matt Myers (Illustrations)

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Louie and Ralphie Ratso's dad, Big Lou, always says that there are two kinds of people: those who are tough and those who are soft. Louie and Ralphie are tough, tough, tough, just like Big Lou, and they're going to prove it. But every time they try to show just how tough they are, the Ratso brothers end up accidentally doing good deeds instead. What'll Big Lou do when he finds out they've been acting like softies all over the Big City?

The Infamous Ratsos Details

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Author : Kara LaReau , Matt Myers (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review *The Infamous Ratsos* for online ebook

Marta Boksenbaum says

The infamous ratsos want to be tough like their father, so they make plans to do things that will show everyone how tough they are. However, they always accidentally help people, making them frustrated and more determined to show everyone they are tough.

Jennifer says

Perfect for kids just ready to move out of the easy reader format with a super sweet plot.

Ms. Yingling says

Pleasant enough, and it is kind of funny that the brothers keep trying to get into trouble but end up doing good things for people. Also, I sort of want to know where the mother is. A very early reader, so perfect for some of my struggling 6th graders.

Cheryl says

Whatever you do, do **not** tell your student or child the ending. Especially if s/he chose it for themselves.

I might have given the book five stars were it not for some unfortunate stereotypes. None are racist or a big deal, or even worth specifying, but I do wish authors and illustrators would think before using cliches that are inaccurate.

Nicole says

The Infamous Ratsos is the first book in a children's series about two mischievous brothers whose "tough" intentions don't work out quite the way they planned. This chapter book is geared for kids 5-8, but I read it out loud with my 8 and 11 year old and we all loved it. I even teared up at the end. It's just lovely. Kara writes with humor and heart, and I guarantee the lessons the Ratso brothers learn will speak volumes to your kids, too. The illustrations are whimsical, the chapters short, and the characters lovable. Five enthusiastic stars!

Vicki says

Goodness gracious this is adorable. This could be such a good opportunity to talk about toxic masculinity as

well as the need for kindness. Very sweet early reader that everyone can enjoy!

Cecil says

Hang tough with the delightful Ratso brothers. Charming and heartfelt.

Erin says

The Ratso brothers want to be tough just like their dad. Every time they think up something tough to do, the people involved thank them! Whether it's stealing a tiny hat from a big bully in front of a teacher who gives it back to its owner or making what they think is the most disgusting sandwich ever for the new girl who ends up loving it, they end up looking kind and helpful instead of their intended "tough". When their dad finds out, he commends them for their actions and encourages them all to do good things together instead of trying to be tough all the time.

Good, funny, and great for those reading their first chapter books.

The Library Lady says

Okay, I am a cynical, cranky, snarky type, but this book made me cry.

Early elementary age kids who read it, probably won't get that. They'll just be enjoying the humor as the Ratso brothers keep trying to emulate their "tough" dad, while each time their badness backfires on them, and they end up as the local good guys.

There are messages here, good ones about how "tough" doesn't need to equal "mean," and how "tough" guys can cry. They're not hammered home mercilessly. But they are there.

And in these mean, mean times, the final lines, the ones that made me cry, should be read in every classroom and household:

"Life is tough enough," says Big Lou. "We might as well try to make it easier for one another, whenever we can."

Mari says

Interesting. I'm curious to see what other library staff friends think of this one.

Kids can be mean. And these kids, the Ratso brothers, think they need to be tough (mean) like their dad. The silliness of their mean-ness backfiring will be appealing to young readers, I think. And I can imagine parents reading this aloud and using it as a way to talk about feelings, bullies, and why people (including kids) do the things they do.

Books are places for kids to play out emotional situations in a safe way - and this book might just be an appealing, fun, interesting way to deal with some pretty intense feelings.

At the same time - I totally understand the reactions of people who just couldn't get past how mean the characters pranks are.

Jenny says

Fun book for the beginning chapter book crowd. The two brothers, Ralphie and Louie, want to demonstrate how brave and tough they are...except their plans never seem to go the way they expect. Sweet ending. This reminds me a bit of the series *The Bad Guys: Episode 1*.

Tracy Smith says

Good beginning chapter book about two brothers trying to be extra tough and mean, but always managing to do the right thing instead!

Pop Bop says

More Heart Than I Expected

So, the premise is that the Ratsos brothers are trying to be as tough as their tough guy Dad, but every mean/tough trick they try turns out to have a happy ending. This, needless to say, is very frustrating for these punk wannabees. Now, that's an interesting premise with a lot of potential, but boy is it loaded with maybe even more potential pitfalls.

All the Ratsos too nasty? Is Dad a bully jerk? Are the pranks too mean? More to the point, does the author have the chops to keep this light and lively and on track to a happy ending?

SPOILERS, BUT DON'T TELL ANY LITTLE KIDS. For me, the answer is that the Ratsos are pretty good kids, Dad turns out to be a decent guy, and the pranks are garden variety silly more than mean. We accidentally clear a neighbor's walk; soaping windows for the widow lady actually cleans them; stealing a hat actually recovers it for the kid from whom it was initially stolen. You get the idea. By the end, Dad learns a lesson about niceness and opens his heart.

And the author gets the tone just right. The Ratsos really are nice boys. Their undertaking to be tough is handled lightly, with a cheerful undercurrent. The worst their meanness gets is borderline silly. The interaction between the two brothers, (a fifth grader and a third grader), is actually pretty funny and loaded with deadpan humor. Indeed, the only awkward bit revolves around the Ratsos' Mom. She's gone and it's not clear why, but it feels like Mom left Dad because he was too much of a tough guy/jerk. That isn't a featured element at first, but figures into Dad's awakening as a nice guy by the end. It does add an element of real world sadness otherwise absent from the story, and I thought it added a bit of rueful weight, but that may not be an authorial choice that everyone applauds.

So, a nice find and a cheerful and well crafted story that had a bit more depth and heart than expected. Well worth a look for a younger reader. (Please note that I received a free advance will-self-destruct-in-x-days Adobe Digital copy of this book in exchange for a candid review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

Melissa says

This book is a great read for children. The two brothers look up to their father and through out the book try to do things that they think make them "tough" to impress their dad. However, most of their ideas are ways to hurt someone, but their ideas end up helping people instead. In the end, they find that their dad is very proud of his children and the impact their good deeds had on the community.

Great lesson on how being tough does not mean being hurtful, but instead can mean being helpful.

Susan Dunn says

Louie and Ralphie Ratso are determined to be tough and mean, just like their dad, Big Lou. But every time they try to do something nasty, it turns out to be anything but. How can the siblings stop doing good deeds on accident?! A short, sweet and fun beginning chapter book.
