



STARRED REVIEW

Lucy and CeCee's How to Survive (and Thrive) in Middle School

Kimberly Dana

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Remember seventh grade? Or would you prefer to forget it? This book brings it all back: the first crushes ending with the thrill of reciprocation or the agony of rejection; ditching school only to realize that you're too young to actually do anything else all day; hall passes; funky lunch foods; and bonding with your besties...until they stab you in the back. Styled as a handbook written by two best friends, *How to Survive* also contains a plot thread that's revealed through passed notes and diary entries, wherein Lucy and CeCee wrangle with boys, grades, cyberbullying, food issues, and each other. Tempers flare, but a teacher intervenes to help put things right in the end.

Author Kimberly Dana has won awards for her writing and is a middle school teacher. She knows her audience well, and has pitched this book to them perfectly, packing useful information into a fun, frothy read. The girls confront real problems and, through their diary entries, readers can see what each one thinks but is afraid to say to the other. They have near-opposite personalities that make them great friends, then sworn enemies. But all's well that ends well, and the book is peppered with funny slang definitions and wry observations about the weird world of adults and older siblings that keep things light.

Dana has done an absolutely perfect job with every detail of this book. Her use of different fonts for each of the girls' public and private voices clarify who's saying what, and also adds to the book's cheery delivery. The cover design is eye-catching, with its wraparound row of lockers and purple bands containing the text. The one typographical error in the book leaps out only because the text is otherwise completely clean. Any sixth grade girl who's facing middle school as if it were a firing squad will find great comfort here. Both entertaining and useful, *How to Survive* is a winner.

BlueInk Heads-Up: This book is recommended for so-called "reluctant readers": the varied points of view will keep them attentive to who's talking, and the mall, food, and endless chat/text/IM references may let them forget they're reading a book at all!

Also available in hardcover.