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*Karen Romano Young*

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## **Doodlebug: A Novel in Doodles** Karen Romano Young

Moving is tough. Being the new kid in school is even tougher. But the hardest thing of all about the move that Doreen "Dodo" Bussey's family is making is that she suspects it might be because of her. She got into trouble at her last school.

On the drive to their new home, her mother gives Dodo a blank notebook, which she uses to chronicle the move, the first days in a new city, and the ups and downs of starting a new school and making new friends. In the process, she reinvents herself as the Doodlebug. Her little sister seems to adjust to everything so easily—why is it so hard for Dodo?

## **Doodlebug: A Novel in Doodles Details**

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Author : Karen Romano Young

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# From Reader Review Doodlebug: A Novel in Doodles for online ebook

## Lars Guthrie says

I've been reading some good graphic books aimed at twelve-year-old girls recently. Jane Yolen and Mike Cavallaro's 'Foiled.' Raina Telgemeir's 'Smile.' Amy Ignatow's 'The Popularity Papers.' So good that boys should read them, too.

But 'Doodlebug' is just extraordinary. Doreen Bussey, aka DoDo, aka Doodlebug, chronicles her family's move from Los Angeles to San Francisco, and her adjustment to a new school, in handwritten text and hand-drawn pictures. Her wonderful and not-at-all weird family is not at all like any family I've ever met in children's fiction. Their reasons for moving to San Francisco are not like any plot device I've ever encountered, even though they are totally realistic, and all too likely.

Doodlebug herself is irrepressible and irresistible. Don't you worry, she, and her sister Momo, are going to win the day. And that's not giving anything away.

Plus, her initiation into drawing is a sketch of the post office tower in Ojai, a familiarly comforting sight to me. Some bonus points there.

Like 'The Popularity Papers,' I've seen 'Doodlebug' categorized as another 'Wimpy Kid' spinoff. Oh, come on. Was 'Wimpy Kid' the first ever one of its kind? What about 'Diary of a Part-Time Indian?' By the way, didn't Kinney kind of rip off 'In Ned's Head?'

Anyway, the relationship between 'Wimpy' and 'Doodlebug' is pretty tenuous. Black and white drawings. Doodlebug is no blasé, brash tween. Karen Romano Young has created a unique and enduring character with an original and profound story for fourth graders on up.

Highly recommended.

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## Kristin says

I really enjoyed the novel in doodles aspect- would have liked to seen the story line a little more developed.

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## Carol says

Middle-schooler Dooreen (Dodo) Bussey has had a few problems at school. So you think she would be excited about moving to a new city and starting fresh at a new school. Not so, she is still quite nervous about relocating from LA to San Francisco. On the drive there she discovers doodling and even decides to call herself "The Doodlebug". Filling her blank sketchbook with doodles of the move and her new life proves an excellent outlet for her ADD. Unfortunately, not all of her new teachers find it acceptable. Dodo and her sister Momo both face challenges at their new school and they each have unique ways of coping. Reading Doodlebug is a bit tedious at times as the writing is sometimes cramped and chaotic, causing the flow of the

story to not always be clear. However, for fans of illustrated diary-type books, this is a decent one that has a real story dealing with some fairly serious issues.

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### **Tasha says**

Dodo has been expelled from her last school because she tried to sell her Ritalin to other students in her class. Now her family is moving from LA to San Francisco. Her parents are hoping for a fresh start for their careers and for Dodo. Her younger sister Momo is angry about the move, and Dodo is unsure that it will make any difference at all. On the trip, Dodo discovers that she loves to draw, that doodling makes her calmer and better able to deal with the drive and the move. Dodo starts a new school, changing her nickname to Doodlebug. Her doodling is accepted in some classes and forbidden in others. Momo is desperate to join the school's choir, so she tries several stunts, like singing into the PA system of the school. Both girls may have pushed it a bit too far in their new school. Will Dodo be expelled again?

A fabulous combination of journal, graphic novel and story, this book allows readers to really understand what it is to be a visual learner and to have ADD. Dodo is a great character, fully developed and complex. Just as wonderfully drawn are her family members, even the new cat, Sven. They are all complicated and interesting, portraying a real, multicultural family dealing with change and opportunity.

Young's creativity is fully on display here with pages filled with a variety of lettering, lots of drawings and plenty of forward momentum. Several touches will resonate with young artists who will find the names of the pens used to make the black and white illustrations. They will get plenty of inspiration to create their own journals, capture their own lives and adventures.

Highly recommended, this book will be enjoyed by readers who enjoyed the Joey Pigza series, Amelia's Notebook, and Diary of a Wimpy Kid. Appropriate for ages 9-13.

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### **Jan Polep says**

In my search for stories told in letters, diaries, graphic novels...I fell on this one which is written for middle schoolers and written in mostly doodles. ADHD Doreen renames herself Doodlebug after she moves from LA to SF, starts at a new school, and is in and out of trouble for inattention, talking back, ditching class and most of all doodling in class. Quick read, not at all heavy handed, that might help an ADHD kid or any kid for that matter, to realize that there are different learning styles, rules can be questioned, and sometimes a little gumption is needed to make it through new situations.

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### **Sarah says**

12 year old Doreen "Dodo" Bussey is moving to a new city, which means new school, new home, and new friends. To help her relax she starts a sketch book. She soon finds that sketching helps control her A.D.D. and even helps her learn! With the help of some new friends, Dodo uses her sketch book to prove to her teachers, and even her Principal, that she doesn't need medicine to control her behavior--she just needs to be able to doodle! Through her sketches and diary entries, the reader learns to stand up for themselves and

others, that it's important to encourage creativity, and that sometimes it's important to know that not everyone learns the same way.

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### **Casey Terryn says**

I loved this book because it was interesting from the pictures to her life.

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### **Amy says**

Maureen "Dodo" Bussey got kicked out of school (selling her Ritalin pills to the other students for \$.25 a pop was NOT a good idea), so her family is picking up and moving to San Francisco. Dodo's mom gives her a blank book to draw in to keep her busy on the trip, and once Dodo starts drawing, she can't stop. She chronicles everything in her life with words and doodles, and is determined to re-create herself at her new school as "Doodlebug." Drawing isn't just a part of her new image, though - it also helps to suppress the behaviors that the Ritalin was supposed to (but didn't) control. Even though Dodo is making friends at her new school, she's afraid that her teachers won't understand her need to draw and she'll be back at square one. In the end, everything is "okay for now" - the whole family, Dodo included - find ways to make their lives in San Francisco work. A believable ending to a well-told story.

This book made me want to start doodling about my own life, and I think it will have the same effect on kids. In my opinion, any book that makes kids want to pick up a pen and paper and create is a winner! This is also a good one to recommend to girls who like the Wimpy Kid books, although it doesn't pack the same witty, laugh-out-loud punch.

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### **Sarah Sammis says**

Dodo and Momo are moving to San Francisco with their family. For the ride from Los Angeles, they are each given a blank sketch book. Dodo decides to turn her's into a diary. Doodlebug by Karen Romano Young is Dodo's diary.

What caught my attention first was the plot, namely the move they were making. Having gone through that move myself, though not with children and not as a child, I was hooked. The diary part also got my attention. When I was in high school I briefly kept a doodle diary.

Some of the pages are very crowded with Dodo's artwork. It takes a couple pages to get used to her crowded, conversational style. Younger readers might need extra time to work through all the words crammed onto a page. Older readers though should find the story engaging enough to not mind the busy pages.

It was fun to see San Francisco as rendered in ball point pen doodles. Fans of Smile will recognize many of the same locales. I think the characters even go to the same school at one point.

Best of all though, was its appeal to my children. My son actually borrowed the book from me for about a week to read it himself. My daughter wanted me to read it to her.

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## Elizabeth A says

I came home with a large bag of books from my library sale, and this was one in the stack. Dodo is diagnosed with ADD, and has been expelled from school. And if that was not bad enough, her Dad has a new job and the family needs to move from Los Angeles to San Francisco. To keep her amused during the move, Dodo is given a sketchbook and a pen, and she finds a new passion - doodling and journaling. She chronicles the challenges of the move, a new school and making new friends. This graphic novel's pages are full of "handwritten" text and doodles, and will resonate with middle grade kids who find they do not fit in for whatever reason.

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## Dorothy says

I was interested to read this, as it is part of this genre I'm just discovering exists . . . fictional autobiographic comic-style journals drawn by fake youngsters. This one was extra eerie because it reminded me a lot of my typical old drawing style. Then I remembered that it was supposed to be drawn by a twelve-year-old, and that made me sad. Reminded me again of why I've pretty much given up this style . . . even though I can pretend my drawings were better. I'm sure this author's drawings would be better if she wasn't pretending to be twelve.

But herein lies my first critique of the book -- the drawings are almost too good for that. Supposedly, Dodo just picked up the sketchbook for the first time and started doodling. Within a week she has all these crazy layouts and fonts and just plain knows how to draw? No, these are seasoned drawings, however good or crappy they may be.

(The same goes for the writing style and focus. It's just NOT twelve.)

Then, the story just isn't believable. This girl is keeping a personal journal of her move in 7th grade, and she is instantly fine in her new city just because she saw some sea lions? No mention of missing her old friends? I don't think so. (Clearly she must have had friends, because she makes new ones IMMEDIATELY -- which, by the way, is extremely hard in real life -- so she was not a wallflower or social outcast at her old school.) And suddenly art and drawing are the most important things to her in her entire life? What's that about?

Then we get into the thing about her A.D.D. and her sister in the choir and how it all works out hearts and rainbows in the end. Again, I don't think so. School doesn't work like that. Let me tell you a few things about MY seventh grade experience:

1. First, I could doodle in most classes without anyone caring. In my class notebook. Because you know what? Most classes, we weren't allowed to have other books and papers and bags littering our desks!
2. The whole "lav pass" thing -- Can I just say, if these girls are coming from a small private school, do they even know how a bathroom pass works? Anyway, in my school, you wrote out your own hall pass on a scrap of paper and went up to the teacher and asked them to sign it. Sometimes they did and you could go, sometimes they told you to wait until another student got back, sometimes they told you to sit down. I had plenty of teachers announcing to the class that they weren't signing any passes that day, so don't even ask. I

don't know what the wooden-looking thing in Dodo's school was all about -- that she seemed to be able to take freely and just leave??? You have to be joking.

3. Momo tricking her way onto the P.A. system? Um, no. I barely knew where that was in the main office, because it was behind 2-3 sets of doors and barriers and no secretary would have taken a student's word that she was supposed to sing on it. Please. It would have been double-checked by the brass, I'm sure.

4. Can I just say that I doodled MANY circular designs and repeating patterns, and no one thought I was a math genius.

5. The paper cranes. Some teacher would have seen those shenanigans and shut that business down in about 5-7 minutes.

On the whole, I was annoyed with Dodo and Momo, because they basically got rewarded for being spoiled brats. They lie, cheat, break rules, get all uppity when things don't go their way, deal drugs, cut class, stow away on a bus. AND Dodo came up with the winning underwear ad idea? AND got the cat to come out of the tree? ugh. I guess she can do no wrong.

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### **W.H. Beck says**

Moving is tough. Being the new kid in school is even tougher. But the hardest thing of all about th...more She doesn't just love doodling, she needs it. . . .Moving is tough. Being the new kid in school is even tougher. But the hardest thing of all about the move that Doreen "Dodo" Bussey's family is making is that she suspects it might be because of her. She got into trouble at her last school. On the drive to their new home, her mother gives Dodo a blank notebook, which she uses to chronicle the move, the first days in a new city, and the ups and downs of starting a new school and making new friends. In the process, she reinvents herself as the Doodlebug.

(blurb from goodreads.com)

(112 pages)

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### **Elise says**

I think Doodlebug had potential, and the style was fun to read, but, like some other "novels in doodles" I've read, the plot left something to be desired. I think authors generally tend to assume that if there're enough interesting/funny illustrations, the actually story doesn't need to shine--which isn't true. The plot felt very rushed and there was no real climax--or conflict, come to think of it. It's too bad: Dodo's story of trouble at a new school that she just can't help (she has, essentially, ADHD) could have been explored beautifully. While the illustrations were cute, I almost think that they prevent the story from exploring the emotional depths it could have. And I would have liked to have learned more about what exactly happened at her last school--it's alluded to that she got more or less expelled for trying to sell her medications to the other students. Why? What was the motivation? Does she still take meds? Frankly, that would have been a more interesting story.

So Doodlebug gets three stars--interesting premise, but too shallowly executed to have any real impact.

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## **Stephanie Croaning says**

This book is very creative and fun to read. The story is told from the viewpoint of a 12-year-old girl with ADD who has learned to control her fidgets by doodling. The entire story is told with hand-written text and doodling...lots of doodling. Karen Romano Young put in a lot of work on this book!

Dodo was kicked out of school in LA, so her father takes a new job in San Francisco and the family make a big move. Dodo has the chance to start anew, and decides to be known as "Doodlebug." Will the family adjust to the move? Will Dodo fit in better at her new school? Read this unique novel and find out!

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## **Cindy Hudson says**

Dodo (short for Doreen) renames herself Doodlebug when she starts drawing to pass the time during the family's move from Los Angeles to San Francisco. She likes it so much, and she's so good at it, that she keeps on doodling through her classes at her new school. It helps her make friends, but some of her teachers are not amused. Can she convince them that doodling helps her learn?

Doodlebug, a Novel in Doodles by Karen Romano Young explores how some children have different learning styles and ways of coping to help them through emotionally trying times. Doreen and her sister Maureen (or Momo), both have to figure out how to adjust to their new environment, and they have different styles of coping. Their parents are also adjusting to new jobs, and maybe not paying as much attention to their children as they need to while they do.

The illustrations, made to look like doodles, are a perfect companion to the story. They're sophisticated enough so you know the author is also a talented illustrator, but they're also simple enough for readers to feel that maybe they could take up doodling as well. Doodlebug ends up being her own best advocate and learns a lot about addressing problems instead of ignoring them and hoping they will go away.

I recommend Doodlebug for mother-daughter book clubs with girls aged nine to 12.

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