



The Secret of Ferrell Savage

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Middle school romance is hard enough, but cannibalism really gets in the way. This humorous look at first crushes and family secrets is sure to be devoured.

Ferrell Savage is finally twelve, and finally eligible to compete in The Big Sled Race on Golden Hill—the perfect chance to impress Mary Vittles. Mary is Ferrell's best friend...and maybe, someday, something more.

Except the “more” Ferrell first finds is more information about his family. It turns out that his great, great, great uncle had an encounter with Mary’s great, great grandfather. And the encounter was, well, let’s just say...edible. Sure, the circumstances were extreme, but some facts might just be romantically indigestible. At least now Ferrell understands why his family is vegan.

But even as Ferrell and Mary encounter blackmail, a second sled race, and a particularly enticing bag of beef jerky, Ferrell realizes that he might still have a chance with Mary. If, that is, his family secret doesn’t eat them alive.

The Secret of Ferrell Savage Details

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From Reader Review The Secret of Ferrell Savage for online ebook

Angie says

Ferrell Savage is an easy-going twelve year old with a crush on his best friend Mary Vittles. In order to impress Mary, he enters the town's big sled race on his lawn chair on skis sled. He wipes out but becomes the town hero when he comes through the disastrous crash without a scratch. This earns him an enemy of Bruce Littlewood who actually went after Ferrell and won the race. Of course no one noticed. Bruce decides to blackmail Ferrell and Mary with some information he has about their families. Turns out, Ferrell's great, great-uncle ate Mary's great, great-grandfather, which is kind of a relationship killer. Bruce wants a rematch or else he will reveal all.

Pretty funny stuff cannibalism, especially cannibalism books for elementary students. Sure there was some history and Alfred Packer was really a cannibal, but that isn't the point to the book. It is all very tongue-in-cheek silly and a lot of fun. First you have the names which are pretty spectacular. Then you have the fact that Ferrell's family is vegan and his mom panics about him finding out the family truth. Then there is Bruce's hilarious attempts to blackmail Ferrell and Mary. I think kids will enjoy this one as long as they don't take it too seriously.

Christy Lenzi says

I love Ferrell. If I were in middle school, I'd want to share my Skittles with him and listen to him read the Thesaurus. This had me laughing out loud so many times--mostly due to the subtle wry humor Gill uses to portray her good-natured and unassuming main character, Ferrell Savage. And the premise! I loved seeing how Mary and Ferrell's embarrassing family historical connection was woven hilariously into the plot and ended up (spoiler!) drawing them closer together.

Jody Erikson says

Funny. Enlivening. Love Mary, love her vocabulary. Ferrell is also an awesome character; love how he takes life and greatness like it was just the next thing to do and then they'll be something else.

Kathleen says

Fantastic fun!

Ms. Yingling says

Ferrell enters his small town's big sledding race with a lawn chair Super Glued to miss matched skis, and after what looks like a horrendous accident, not only survives but wins. This brings him some acclaim, but it

also puts him in the sites of new kid Bruce Littledood, who was the entrant after Ferrell, and was completely ignored. He wants a rematch, and claims to know a deep, dark secret about Ferrell's family. Aided by friends Coby, Eilio and Mary Vittles (on whom he has a bit of a crush), Ferrell not only investigates his family's past, but makes a determined effort to race the annoying Bruce again.

Strengths: This was a quick read, incorporated some history (go ahead, Google "Alferd Packer"), had funny moments, some action, a good ensemble cast, concerned but not overly pushy parents, and a goofy premise. Not to spoil anything, but Ferrell's family are vegan's for a good reason, but the reasons are described within the bounds of acceptability.

Weaknesses: I've been reading a lot of really, really depressing books (was dreaming about stockpiling protein bars again last night, thanks to Eric Walters and The Rule of Three) so this really was just what I wanted. Why did I hesitate about it? The premise ("cannibalism bites"?), the weird names of the characters-- I don't know. I need to think of this like the book Canned; something which 12 year old boys will really, really like. And I did, too. I just somehow didn't want to!

Ronna says

How did Gill weave such a great trio of characters in and out of each other in such a brief, action packed, heart warming story? I usually find YA fiction simple, overdone and rote. The Secret of Ferrell Savage however, is crisp and clean, refreshing, sweet and funny. There's a whole lot of great literature out there clamoring for me to read it and I don't like to waste my time on standard, ho hum plots and lackluster characters. Read it with or without your kiddo, it's worth your time.

T. P. Jagger says

Never thought I'd see a kids' book that touched on cannibalism. Shows how little I know. :) THE SECRET OF FERRELL SAVAGE was a fun, quick read that quickly forced me to Google "Alferd Packer" out of sheer curiosity. Now, thanks to THE SECRET OF FERRELL SAVAGE and my own online research, I know quite a bit about "The Colorado Cannibal" that inspired this book. I'm hoping it may help me win a game of Trivial Pursuit one day! :)

Julia says

I must read this because I cannot ignore a middle school book about CANNIBALISM

Lizzylyn says

Disclaimer: I know the author, who is a wonderfully lovely person. However, my sons (ages 9 and 12 and big fans of the Wimpy Kid books) do NOT know the author and they LOVED this book. They ate it up (pun intended!) In fact, yesterday while riding in the car, my 12 year old said, out of the blue, "Hey Mom, that Ferrell Savage Book is cool." You can't get a better review than that!

Linda says

This was a fun book to read. Ferrell Savage has ADHD with a carefree attitude and his best friend, Mary, is a competitive brainiac. They complement each other well and spend a lot of time together. They also have a budding romance that neither is initially aware of. They team up to protect their family secrets from becoming public.

Nan says

This is a fun, quick read. The characters are marvelous. Although Littlewood is a little over the top, Mary and Ferrell are lovable and absolutely believable. More than a book about cannibalism, it's a text on how to accept and love yourself. I will recommend it to all the 8 to 12 year olds I know.

Dawn Moews says

This was a fun and quick read. Ferrell Savage and his best friend, Mary, are shocked to discover that their families share a long-standing secret.

Ferrell never knew about the family's secret. It is a real shock when it is revealed to him by Bruce Littlewood, a new kid in town.

Mary has known about the family secret and she believes that it is almost like a curse. She will be a failure no matter what she does. The thing is, she doesn't let it stop her from trying very hard to succeed.

The two kids handle their respective family secrets very differently. Ferrell just thinks it's one more thing not to really worry about--it is in the far distant past, and nothing he can do will change it. He's not even concerned about whether others find out about it or not. Mary, however, is driven by her fear of failure. Nothing is ever good enough--second place in any contest is a failure; being elected vice president of the student council instead of president is a failure; any grade less than the top grade is a failure.

It is their shared experiences as the work together to prevent Bruce's threatened revelations to the whole community that helps Mary and the readers to see that Ferrell's laid back approach to life is one to be desired.

The book is entertaining and amusing. It is loosely based on the true story of Alfred/Alferd Packer and Polly Pry. The chapters are short and easy for those kids just beginning to read chapter books. The vocabulary is interesting--Ferrell has what is probably a pretty average vocabulary for his age, but his friend Mary has an exceptional one. In an effort to keep up with her, Ferrell tries to use words which are not part of his normal vocabulary, but usually winds up misusing them.

I was curious about Bruce Littlewood's role in this book. He is the one who knows the families' secrets, but he appears to have no connection to them. I really expected him to reveal that he had been related somehow to one of Packer's victims/meals. That didn't happen. (16-17: I-0, II-1, III-0)

karen says

nature abhors a vacuum.

and when it becomes glaringly obvious that there aren't any middle-grade books about cannibalism, here comes this book to plug itself into that slot.

and thank goodness for it, really.

and while all the cannibalism takes place in a historical context, and no one is getting noshed right on the page, it is still a delightfully bold topic for the 8-12 set.

ferrell savage is twelve years old. which means he is now eligible to compete in the big day-after-christmas sled race that is the tradition of his town. ferrell has been raised vegan, and doesn't care at all about the sled race. i am pretty sure that being raised vegan removes the competitive spirit, because young ferrell doesn't really let much bother him, and is just a chill fellow overall. his best friend mary, though, is a meat-eating, brilliant-minded girl with ambitions who is all about the sled race.

and since ferrell has been developing feeeelings for mary and her huge...vocabulary, he enters the race to prove that he is game, and totally on-board with all of her interests.

unfortunately, he not only wipes out and almost gets himself killed, but he attracts the attention of a new boy in town, one who knows a secret about mary's family history, and ferrell's own.

this is probably a spoiler, but since it is the coolest thing, and what drives the narrative, i can't *not* mention it: (view spoiler)

AWKWARD!!

so the rest of the book involves blackmail and more sled races, and overcoming history, and deepening relationships and the consumption of about a million skittles.

it is a completely lovely story with two very likable characters (and one insufferable one) and i am so glad that i got a chance to read it. but why isn't the cover up on this goodreads?? because this cover is just perfect and adorable and completely fitting.

if you are looking for a book about cannibals for your young ones (and you really should be), this is the perfect book for you.

and hopefully, this subject matter will become a new trend for YA and MG fiction. universe, answer my prayers!

come to my blog!

Tara says

This is definitely the most adorable book about cannibalism that I've ever read. :) Seriously, it's a terrific, original premise, and Ferrell just has the most hilarious voice--I constantly found myself laughing out loud (which I rarely do, even with purportedly "funny" books). And the development of his relationship with Mary was spot-on. Kids will love this one!

Matt says

Pay no attention to the similar last names of this reviewer and the author! Ferrell Savage is a great character with a great funny voice. He's sort of a Greg Heffley with some self-awareness and perspective. The story takes place a comic heightened reality where people have names like Mary Vittles and Jerry Dunderhead, and small towns have Big Sled Races in which everyone takes delight in seeing twelve year olds almost kill themselves. On the cartoon world spectrum, this book falls closer to the realistic end than Wimpy Kid, but still far short of our real world of safety regulations and helicopter parents. And that spot is the exact right place for this story. Gill smartly relegates adults to minor roles leaving the children all the fun and adventure for themselves.

If you've ever seen one of those 80s teen movies involving some sort of obscure sport—skiing, white water rafting, karate, BMX racing—you know how they always end with some Big Event (that somehow draws large enthusiastic crowds) where the lovable, unorthodox hero beats the cold, cheating bad guy. Gill riffs off of these movies and gives us a very peculiar Big Event that no one (except for one) comes close to taking seriously. (And for young readers who won't get the reference, there is still an essential appeal to the formula that works.)

The careful comic tone of the book is a lost a bit at the end when the inevitable lesson-learning appears, but that's my complaint about everything funny that's not Wimpy Kid or Curb Your Enthusiasm. At its heart, this funny book is really a story of the moment when boy-girl friendship becomes something just a little bit more. It's a moment and a feeling hard to capture, but somehow underneath this silly story of sled races, genealogy, and swallowed marbles, Gill captures it perfectly.
