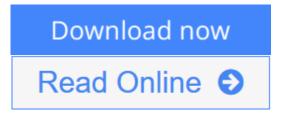


### Scrawl: A Novel

By Mark Shulman



Scrawl: A Novel By Mark Shulman

Tod Munn is a bully. He's tough, but times are even tougher. The wimps have stopped coughing up their lunch money. The administration is cracking down. Then to make things worse, Tod and his friends get busted doing something bad. Something *really* bad.

Lucky Tod must spend his daily detention in a hot, empty room with Mrs. Woodrow, a no-nonsense guidance counselor. He doesn't know why he's there, but she does. Tod's punishment: to scrawl his story in a beat-up notebook. He can be painfully funny and he can be brutally honest. But can Mrs. Woodrow help Tod stop playing the bad guy before he actually turns into one . . . for real?

Read Tod's notebook for yourself.



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#### Scrawl: A Novel By Mark Shulman Bibliography

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up—"I know what you think. You think I'm fixable, don't you? You want to fix the bad guy." Readers slowly learn what makes Tod, a self-confessed bully, tick by reading the notebook he writes in (not, he insists, a journal) during after-school detention. He is supervised by Mrs. Woodrow, the guidance counselor, for a school break-in with his buddies (droogs), who increasingly resent that he's gotten this cushy punishment while they are consigned to clean the school grounds. Tod is no dummy. He reads, does his homework, and gets good grades. But he's poor. His mom, a seamstress, does alterations for a dry cleaners (Tod helps), and he tries to stay away from her husband, whom he describes as "unpredictable." Lacking money for basic necessities like food and clothes, he extorts it from "losers" at school and otherwise tries to keep a fairly low profile. The plot is thin, as Tod gets roped into providing the costumes for a school play written and produced by "that spooky goth girl Luz Montoya." Still, he is a funny, quirky, interesting character. There are loose ends, but in the end it's not so much what happened, as the fun of getting there, finding out whether Tod is right or not when he writes, "I'm a loser, okay? I was born a loser and I'll live a loser and I'll die a loser. And nothing you do here is going to ever change that."—Joel Shoemaker, formerly at South East Junior High School, Iowa City,  $IA\alpha(c)$  Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

#### From **Booklist**

After class-bully Tod and his "droogs" get caught vandalizing school property, his punishment is to spend every day in after-school detention writing in a notebook. "About anything?" he asks Mrs. W., his jailer. "Okay. Fine. You asked for it. I'll write about this desk. I hate this desk." The classic smarter-than-histeachers underachiever with a rotten home life, Tod has a real way with words (the way he crashes, then dominates the spelling bee is priceless), and he soon warms to his enforced writing therapy. Some readers might wish he'd stayed a little more bottled up though—his wordy tendencies sometimes drag the narrative—but Shulman establishes a nice voice for him, as Tod rips jokes so dry they can float away and shows some real heart dealing with his less-than-desirable lot in life. Much to his droogs' horror, he gets involved making costumes for the school play, and his increasingly confrontational clashes with them spell both trouble and growth. An unusual sort of bully redemption story, with patient, not reluctant, readers squarely in its sights. Grades 7-10. --Ian Chipman

#### Review

"Scrawl is the rare novel written from the bully's point of view. . . . It's useful to point out that much can hide under a hardened exterior." ?Los Angeles Times

"There's something special about this book. . . . It's all put together so pleasingly, with punch and wit and smarts, and in such a way that the events and characters stay with you." ?PW.com "Shelf Talker" blog

"A memorable debut." ?Kirkus Reviews

"With the potential to occupy the rarified air of titles like S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* and Chris Crutcher's *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, *Scrawl* paints the stereotypical school bully in a different, poignant light." ?VOYA

"Readers seeking an unflinching look at high-school politics from the perspective of the disenfranchised will find in Tod an illuminating guide." *PBCCB* 

"Tod has a real way with words (the way he crashes, then dominates the spelling bee is priceless). . . . Shulman establishes a nice voice for him, as Tod rips jokes so dry they can float away and shows some real heart dealing with his less-than-desirable lot in life. . . . An unusual sort of bully redemption story." ?Booklist

"In a unique version of a story told in journal format, the writing Tod does in detention becomes this book. . . Through his own words, the reader grows to love this hard-edged character. . . . Tod's voice is natural and consistent. Shulman captures the viewpoint of a believable eighth grader, while conveying Tod's maturity and sharp sense of humor. Tod's backstory is seamlessly woven into his narrative. This book will engage a wide audience, but it will appeal most strongly to junior high school boys, particularly those who may be bored by schoolwork or have trouble finding books that interest them." ? Children's Literature

"This is a different take on the bully story. It lets the readers inside the mind of a bully and see the reasoning for his actions. The story is true to life, funny, and shows that people who are seen as troublemakers can change. . . . Highly recommended." ?Library Media Connection

#### **Users Review**

#### From reader reviews:

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#### **Audrey Mack:**

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