

## BIMBO'S HEART OF GOLD

**The video kid rides again.** Ian Weir. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1991. 205 pp., \$4.25, paper. ISBN 0-590-73358-3.

*The video kid rides again* combines adventure, comedy, and fantasy, in a familiar setting to produce a cheer-raising story for the ten- to fourteen-year-old age group.

B.J. Noakes is an average fourteen-year-old boy who has just moved to a small town and a new school. One day he comes across a trio of bullies picking on a smaller kid, and unthinkingly comes to the rescue, thereby bringing on himself plots of revenge from their nefarious leader. Complicating this is B.J.'s friend, Bimbo McKellen, who is suffering from a lack of self-esteem. B.J. decides that by getting him elected school president, he will make Bimbo see that he's just as smart as everyone else. But getting him elected is no easy task considering Bimbo is the school's most infamous renegade and only B.J. knows he has a heart of gold.

Around its numerous characters and plots the book weaves a story that is constantly intriguing and tense. While the background characters are rather typical, those in the centre of attention are fresh and exciting. Bimbo is indeed a renegade, best described by Weir himself: "... he grinned coldly. He looked like a show gunslinger who's just received an urgent telegram from the besieged townfolk back home" (191). Yet Bimbo's heart of gold shows in his willingness to help his friends when they so desperately need him. B.J. is a boy faced with troubles: the kidnapping of his dog, the alienating of his family, and the questioning of his own abilities. But by following his heart and trusting his friends he comes through just fine in the end.

The adults in this book are not just figureheads or stereotyped images; they actually have personalities of their own. For example, the school principal, Mr. Tanaka, overhears B.J.'s impassioned speech about why he nominated Bimbo for president and is touched. Right away Mr. Tanaka tracks Bimbo down and convinces him that the idea of his running for president is a good one. How atypical for a school principal to believe in the goodness of a renowned renegade! This wonderful portrayal of adults adds to the story in a most unexpected way, without detracting from the main characters and storyline.

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