

Children's Literature Reviews

Item 21 of 130

The Fruit Bowl Project : a novel

by Sarah Durkee.

Cataloging in Publication

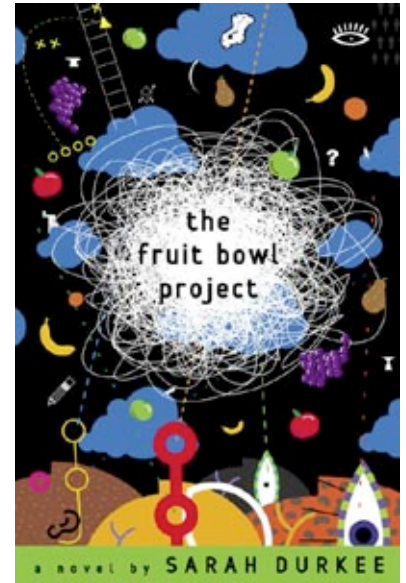
[Contributor biographical information](#)

[Publisher description](#)

[Sample text](#)

New York : Delacorte Press, 2006.

153 p. ; 22 cm.



Annotations:

An admittedly "dork" middle-school teacher arranges for a rock superstar to teach her eighth-grade students, who each tell a story about the same topic, in the style of a rap, poem, monologue, screenplay, haiku, fairytale, and more.

Horn Book Guide:

Fall 2006 Intermediate Fiction Rating 2, Superior, well above average.

Reviews:

Ilene Cooper (Booklist, Dec. 1, 2005 (Vol. 102, No. 7))

The writers in Ms. Vallas' eighth-grade writers' workshop are pretty blasé, as one might expect from kids at a private school in Manhattan. But when Ms. Vallas announces that rock star-songwriter Nick Thompson is coming to talk to the class about writing, they are impressed. He explains that writing something is like painting a bowl of fruit: every artist will see things differently, use a different medium, and arrange the fruit in his or her own way. Nick gives the kids an assignment: write a story containing seven common elements--among them, a dropped pencil, chicken nuggets, a boy who tells a joke, and another boy who laughs so hard his drink spews out of his nose. The second half of Durkee's debut novel contains the fruit of the "Fruit Bowl Project": stories, poems, screenplays, and raps incorporating the elements. The idea is clever, but there are 50 finished offerings--that's at least 25 too many. The best are the limericks and haiku that capture the story points quickly, but some simply go on too long or are repetitive. Almost no one comes up with a joke funny enough to make a kid blow his drink. Still, this will be great inspiration for kids and teachers; it's a creativity wake-up call. Category: Books for Middle Readers--Fiction. 2006, Delacorte, \$15.95, \$17.99. *Gr.* 5-8.

Gwynne Spencer (Children's Literature)

Durkee has created a story that is perfect for anybody teaching middle school language arts, or enduring the same. In this book, the teacher invites a "Famous Rock Star" to her class and he challenges them to write about one subject but from many different viewpoints and genres. This is compared to the way an artist would portray a "Fruit Bowl Scene" in an infinite number of ways. It's a great way to think about the process of creativity and that we are all working from the same "bowl of fruit" or nuts, as the case may be. 2006, Delacorte/Random House, \$14.95 and \$16.99. Ages 12 up.

Kirkus (Kirkus Reviews, December 15, 2005 (Vol. 73, No. 24))

Language-arts teachers who teach writing in workshop format, and the eighth-grade students who write daily in those workshops, will recognize themselves in this reality-based comedy set in a Manhattan middle school. Ms. Vallis has something special planned for her eighth-graders: Her cousin is married to rock star Nick Thompson and he's agreed to visit their writing workshop. Nick's lesson? The art of writing is like a bowl of fruit; writing is

"all about *style*." Nick tells the kids, "It ain't the story, it's *how you tell it* that counts." Then he and the kids brainstorm a list of seven items that must be included in their stories; the stories can be told in any form the writer chooses. The remaining two-thirds consists of the "student-generated" work. Discerning readers may appreciate the Rashomon-like effect of reading many versions of the same story but might find the premise shallow and cartoonish. Certainly, educators and other readers will find this a light, entertaining read but may object to the writing philosophy. Is writing really only about style? Perhaps this fruit bowl has too much sugar and not enough fiber-moral or otherwise. 2006, Delacorte, 160p, \$15.95. Category: Fiction. Ages 10 to 12. © 2005 Kirkus Reviews/VNU eMedia, Inc. All rights reserved.

Horn Book (The Horn Book Guide, Fall 2006)

An eighth-grade class collaborates on a writing project inspired by a rock star's visit. The first third of the novel introduces the teacher and kids; the remainder comprises the project entries, each retelling the same story. The range of styles is enormous, and while the book would obviously be a good writing-technique tool, it's also an entertaining slice of classroom life. Category: Intermediate Fiction. 2006, Delacorte, 154pp, 14.95, 16.99. *Ages 9 to 12*. Rating: 2: Superior, well above average.

Mike Brown (VOYA, April 2006 (Vol. 29, No. 1))

Take two usually nondescript situations-an eighth grade writing class and a rock star-mix well and the result is this novel. Rock star Nick Thompson comes to speak to Ms. Vallis's New York City middle school writing class. Writing is like painting a bowl of fruit, he says. Merely arrange words just right. "BOWL OF FRUIT = IMMUTABLE TRUTH" writes Thompson. What comprises the truth is up to the writer just as the appearance of the bowl of fruit is determined by the artist. There are myriad ways to arrange a bowl of fruit and more ways to view it. Thus ensues The Fruit Bowl Project. The five W's are explained-who, what, where, when, and why-and two situations are proposed-bumping into someone's arm during a test and someone spewing milk out of his nose at lunch. The rest is open. Each student must write a story about the incidents from any perspective and in any style they wish. What is produced results in one hundred pages of every genre imaginable written by aliens, humans, observers, and inanimate objects. Durkee's first novel wonderfully captures the voices and the attitudes of eighth graders, from the grade-grubbing priss to the slacker to the geek, as well as the social posturing that goes along with being in between childhood and adulthood. This book should do well with middle and junior high students and attract some reluctant readers as well. Teachers may want to emulate the exercise to see what lurks within the minds of their students. VOYA CODES: 4Q 4P M J (Better than most, marred only by occasional lapses; Broad general YA appeal; Middle School, defined as grades 6 to 8; Junior High, defined as grades 7 to 9). 2006, Delacorte, 160p., \$15.95 and PLB \$17.95. Ages 11 to 15.

Subjects:

[Teachers Fiction.](#)
[Musicians Fiction.](#)
[Rock music Fiction.](#)
[Middle schools Fiction.](#)
[Schools Fiction.](#)
[Creative writing Fiction.](#)

Link to a Web Feature or Search for Other Works by:

[Durkee, Sarah.](#)

Search for other reviews by:

[Ilene Cooper](#)
[Gwynne Spencer](#)
[Kirkus](#)
[Horn Book](#)
[Mike Brown](#)

Language	Call Number	LCCN	Dewey Decimal	ISBN/ISSN
				0385732899 (trade)

English (eng)	PZ7.D934247 Fru 2006	2005003908	[Fic]	0385903103 (Gibraltar lib. bdg.) 9780385732895 9780385903103
---------------	----------------------	------------	-------	--

View the [MARC Record](#) for this item.

[Next Item](#)

[Previous Item](#)

[Search Results](#)

[New Search](#)

[Browse Search](#)

[Browse the Shelf \(LC Class\)](#)

[CLCD B&N Book Store](#)