



Tunes for Bears to Dance To

By Robert Cormier

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A masterful portrayal of hatred, prejudice and manipulation that challenges readers to examine how they would behave in the face of evil. Henry meets and befriends Mr. Levine, an elderly Holocaust survivor, who is carving a replica of the village where he lived and which was destroyed in the war. Henry's friendship with Mr. Levine is put to the test when his prejudiced boss, Mr. Hairston, asks Henry to destroy Mr. Levine's village.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Numb and lonely after his brother's death, Henry is befriended by a bigoted new employer, who attempts to involve the boy in an act of cruelty against a Holocaust survivor. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6-9-- This brief, compelling book conveys the devastating effects of evil, whether its form is as huge and incomprehensible as the Holocaust, or as small and personal as another human being. Henry, a young teenager, is lucky to be employed. Since his brother's recent death, his father is paralyzed by depression; his mother works long hours to support the family. It's the early 1950s, and, with the return of the servicemen, housing and jobs are scarce. Unfortunately, Henry's boss is a bigoted, abusive individual whose hatred of others is so consuming that he intentionally sets out to corrupt the boy's goodness. He forces Henry to commit an ugly, violent act and betray a friendship with an elderly neighbor who has lost his home and family to the Nazis. As part of his rehabilitative therapy, Mr. Levine lovingly carves his vanished village and its population out of wood. The scenes in which he is ``home'' again demonstrate the Holocaust's horror in a deeply moving manner, and Cormier wrenchingly personalizes the man's grief. *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, more a parable than a fully realized novel, is sharp, short, and to the point. The characters are fairly one-dimensional and their circumstances are portrayed as black or white. Why they are ``good'' or ``evil'' is not explained, and little room is left for shades of gray. They simply embody the concepts Cormier is exploring. This book has limitations, but it will not be easily forgotten. It will make fascinating material for group discussion. -- Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, County of Henrico Public Library, Richmond, VA

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Review

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Users Review

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