



Clarice Bean Spells Trouble

Author: Lauren Child
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This is the story of a girl who asks a lot of questions about the English language, questions that young or old, we should have raised ourselves a long time ago. Cool!

Young Clarice is generally unremarkable. She goes to school with her friends and classmates like Karl Renbury, has several brothers and sisters and likes reading books about her fictional hero Ruby Redfort, in whose adventures she finds a measure of solace from her otherwise stressful life. There is, however, one thing that does make our heroine stand out: she likes to ask questions, decent common-sense questions we'd like to ask ourselves but never get around to, like why isn't 'you' spelt like 'U'?

Spread over about 200 pages with a good many pictures along the way to grease its metaphorical wheels, this, then, is the story of a girl who has a lot of questions about everything linguistic, mixed in with lots of fun things to keep it all interesting. Such as the many funny 'asides'. But though it does help us readers to learn all this cool stuff, sadly for Clarice, asking about it all doesn't necessarily put her in the good books of her fearsome teacher, Mrs. Wilberton. Then again, teachers – or anybody I suppose – are rarely put in a good mood when they're forced to try and answer a question they don't know the answer to, are they? So I suppose we can't blame her.

Though Clarice's is a jolly good story and great bit of fun, the more mature readers may well infer from it that her adventures are actually no random collection of events. Apart from drip-feeding a good deal of titbits on literacy on almost every page, there is also a wider moral to the story: our protagonist sacrifices her (fairly) clean copy-book to bail out her guilty friend and loses her place in the school play as a result. But as a consequence of undertaking this noble act, she lands a part in a film about her hero instead... cool! So, as a (very) fully grown man, I can honestly say that this girly book was a fun read and worth a go for all the big kids out there (of either sex) as well as for the little ones. Have fun!

8 sausages out of 10

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