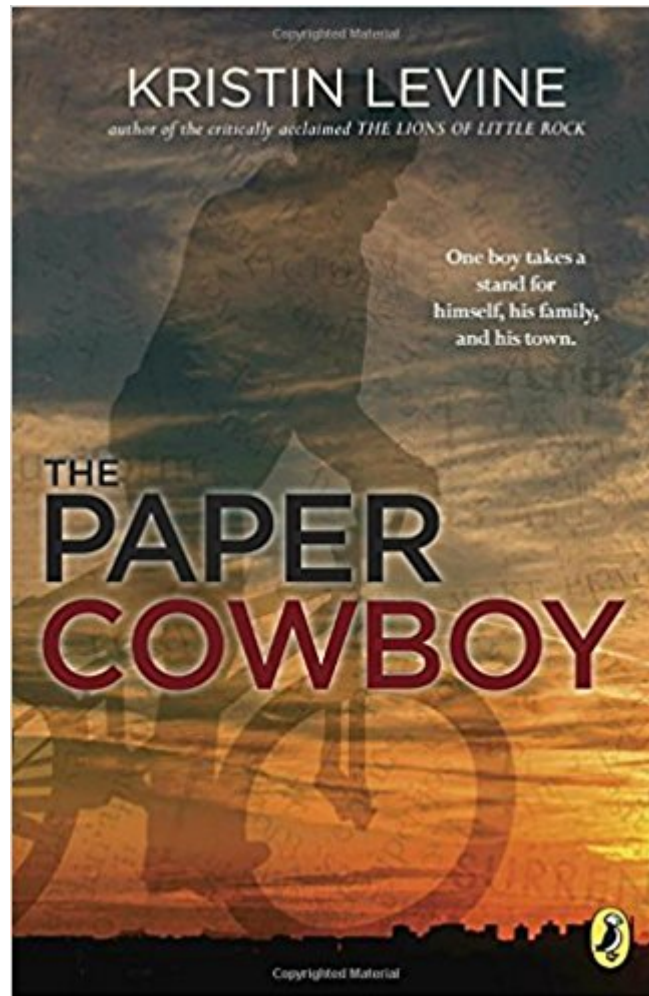




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# The Paper Cowboy



## Synopsis

The newest powerful work of historical fiction from award-winning author of *THE LIONS OF LITTLE ROCK* Kristin Levine. Though he thinks of himself as a cowboy, Tommy is really a bully. He's always playing cruel jokes on classmates or stealing from the store. But Tommy has a reason: life at home is tough. His abusive mother isn't well; in fact, she may be mentally ill, and his sister, Mary Lou, is in the hospital badly burned from doing a chore it was really Tommy's turn to do. To make amends, Tommy takes over Mary Lou's paper route. But the paper route also becomes the perfect way for Tommy to investigate his neighbors after stumbling across a copy of *The Daily Worker*, a communist newspaper. Tommy is shocked to learn that one of his neighbors could be a communist, and soon fear of a communist in this tight-knit community takes hold of everyone when Tommy uses the paper to frame a storeowner, Mr. McKenzie. As Mr. McKenzie's business slowly falls apart and Mary Lou doesn't seem to get any better, Tommy's mother's abuse gets worse causing Tommy's bullying to spiral out of control.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0600 (What's this?)

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Dgs Rep edition (March 1, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142427152

ISBN-13: 978-0142427156

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.9 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #561,585 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #85 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Dysfunctional Relationships #178 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Abuse #601 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Bullies

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 5 Up • Twelve-year-old Tommy struggles with a multitude of problems as he grows up in

the small working class, immigrant community of Downer's Grove, Illinois during the early 1950s. His mother, who suffers from debilitating mental illness frequently lashes out in fits of unpredictable violence that affect the entire family, including his father and two younger sisters. When his beloved older sister is severely burned in an accident that he blames on himself, he takes over her early morning paper route, meeting neighbors and encountering challenges along the way. Despite his valiant efforts to do right and "be like a cowboy," Tommy finds himself acting more like an outlaw, stealing from a local shop and bullying other boys, especially a new-to-town, scar-faced boy he calls "Little Skinny." When Tommy plants a Communist newspaper in Little Skinny's dad's shop, he realizes that his latest prank may have gone too far when it almost puts the shop out of business. As he learns more about the lives of those with whom he interacts, he feels remorse and tries to set things straight. Doing so requires telling the truth, finding surprising answers and nobly asking others for much needed help. Levine deftly captures a time period filled with an overarching paranoia and small-town life filled with tensions on many levels. The story itself is faintly reminiscent of Jack Gantos' *Dead End in Norvelt* (Farrar, 2011), but without the humorous relief. Scenes of violent beatings, emotional hospital visits, and other family and social drama make this historical novel almost too realistic at times. Give it to readers who want to learn about the effects of bullying or surviving life's tough situations. — Madeline J. Bryant, Los Angeles Public Library --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Praise for *THE PAPER COWBOY*: \* "A winningly authentic, realistic and heartwarming family drama." — Kirkus Reviews, starred review \* "A thoughtful story about understanding and compassion, distinguished by complex characters and a supportive, tight-knit community." — Publishers Weekly, starred review \* "A sophisticated, powerful story about a community's ability to help one another out, and the paper cowboy who helps bring them together." — Booklist, starred review \* "Tommy's struggle to bring his family together ends up bringing the whole community together. His journey is filled with many lessons for young readers and many historically accurate portrayals of life at that time... the lessons--acceptance of others, coming together to help others, forgiveness, and coping with mental illness--are well worth teaching." — Examiner.com \* "Levine deftly captures a time period filled with an overarching paranoia and small-town life filled with tensions on many levels." — School Library Journal

Praise for *THE LIONS OF LITTLE ROCK*:  
 "Creating a book that reads as though written in one effortless breath requires a rare talent. Readers will root for a painfully shy girl to discover the depths of her own courage

and find hope in the notion that even in tumultuous times, standing up for the people you love can't be wrong. Satisfying, gratifying, touching, weighty—this authentic piece of work has got soul. • The New York Times Book Review "[A] stunning piece of historical fiction. • School Library Journal, starred review "[A] riveting, frequently tense portrait of 1958 Little Rock. • Publishers Weekly, starred review "[A] quietly powerful page-turner. • Kirkus Reviews, starred review Praise for THE BEST BAD LUCK I EVER HAD: "[An] energetic, seamlessly narrated first novel | Levine handles the setting with grace and nuance. • Publishers Weekly, starred review "This classic story of how unlikely persons can change things for the better should appeal to all readers. • VOYA, starred review ~ ~ ~ Awards and Accolades for The Lions of Little Rock ~ ~ ~ ~ New York Times Editors' Choice ~ ~ ~ ~ 2013 Best Fiction for Young Adults title ~ ~ ~ ~ 2013 ALA Notable Nominee ~ ~ ~ ~ Named a Booklist Top 10 Historical Fiction for 2012 ~ ~ ~ ~ 2013 Amelia Bloomer Project Pick ~ ~ ~ ~ VOYA Topshelf Middle Grade Pick ~ ~ ~ ~ Rebecca Caudill Readers Award (Illinois State List) ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated ~ ~ ~ ~ Connecticut's Nutmeg Book Award List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to ~ ~ ~ ~ the Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Book Award List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to the 2013 Texas Lone Star Reading List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to ~ ~ ~ ~ the 2013-2014 South Carolina Book Award List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to ~ ~ ~ ~ the 2013-2014 Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to the 2013-2014 Keystone to Reading Book Awards ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to the 2014 Kentucky Blue Grass Award List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to the 2013-2014 Maine Book Award List ~ ~ ~ ~ Nominated to Kansas' William Allen White Award Master List ~ ~ ~ ~ A Capitol Choices' Noteworthy Titles for Children and Teens ~ ~ ~ ~ A Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People ~ ~ ~ ~ NY Public Library 100 Books for Reading and Sharing ~ ~ ~ ~ Betsy Bird 100 Magnificent Children's Books ~ ~ ~ ~ 2013 Bank Street Best Book of the Year ~ ~ ~ ~ Arkansas Historical Association Susannah DeBlack Award ~ ~ ~ ~ 2012 Cybils Finalist ~ ~ ~ ~ 2012 Nerdy Book Awards Nominee ~ ~ ~ ~ Multiple Mock Newbery lists, including Anderson's. ~ ~ ~ ~ Sold to Scholastic Book Club and Listening

Library  
Scholastic Bestseller (Feb. 2013)  
Awards and Accolades for The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had  
2010 ALA Best Book for Young Adults  
Nominated to the 2012 Garden State Children's Book Award List  
Nominated to the 2012 Utah Beehive Award List  
Nominated to the 2011-2012 Land of Enchantment Book Award Master List (New Mexico)  
Nominated to the 2010-2011 Virginia Readers' Choice Award Master List  
Nominated to the 2010-2011 Alabama Children's Choice Book Award Master List  
Nominated to the 2010 Kansas State Reading Circle Catalog  
Nominated to the 2010 Pennsylvania School Library Association's Young Adult Top Forty (or so)  
2010 Judy Lopez Memorial Award for Children's Literature Honor Book  
Indie Next Spring 2009  
2010 Top Ten Novels for Youth on Audio  
Sold to Scholastic and Korea  
• Kristin Levine

...that it's based on Levine's father. This story teaches us about choices and consequences, and that behind every bully is a person seeking help and control. I also love the theme of differing ideologies, a current issue today. The writing, however, isn't great; I find it simplistic and not overly inspiring. I haven't read other books by Levine, so I'm not sure if this is her style. I will read at least another book by her, though.

This author is wildly accurate and engaging for adults as well as intermediate readers. Her research and settings reflect accuracy in terms of what I remember about growing up in the South. I plan to read all of her works, and am sharing them with my 13 year old granddaughter. She completed THE LIONS OF LITTLE ROCK and said to me, "Do you know what it's like to come to the end of a book, and be sad because you don't want it to end?" My reply, I surely do, particularly after reading this book. I highly recommend this author!

Fantastic YA read!!! So much packed into this book. I would recommend this to any of my high school freshmen as a great read about communism, friendships, family, and bi-polar disorder. Really a fantastic book!

good

You could feel the sting of the belt. Hiding under your desk for protection from the communists. Burning garbage out in a pit. Bullies, standing up for others, neighborhood friends and families. Never any money. But always someone helping out.

Paper Cowboy is a highly engaging and heart warming story. The book has many layers and themes intertwined with likable characters that moves you emotionally to a happy ending. Our book club read this book and everyone LOVED it - adults and kids alike.

Very quick listen and account is honestly told with an ending that is believable.

An unexpected, beautiful story about a family full of problems during the McCarthy era. Wonderful!

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Paper Mache: The Ultimate Guide to Learning How to Make Paper Mache Sculptures, Animals, Wildlife and More! (How to Paper Mache - Paper Mache - Paper Crafts ... Mache for Beginners - Arts and Crafts) Guitar Journal and Homework Book (Blue): TAB paper, Staff Paper, Manuscript Paper, Theory Tools, Practice Planner, Notebook Paper, Chord Charts, Goal ... Guitar Journal and Homework Book) (Volume 5) A Lone Star Cowboy: Being Fifty Years' Experience in the Saddle as Cowboy, Detective and New Mexico Ranger, on Every Cow Trail in the Woolly Old West (1919) Cody Cowboy (The Cowboy Ranch) (Volume 1) Cowboy Slang: Colorful Cowboy Sayings Cowboy Poets and Cowboy Poetry Tutus & Cowboy Boots (Part 2) (Tutus & Cowboy Boots Series) Graph Paper Notebook Journal : 1/4" Squared Graphing Paper Blank Quad Ruled: Graph , Coordinate , Grid , Squared Spiral Paper for write drawing note ... 120 pages (Math Diary Worksheet) (Volume 4) Blank Sheet Music: Music Manuscript Paper / Staff Paper / Musicians Notebook [ Book Bound (Perfect Binding) \* 12 Stave \* 100 pages \* Large \* Antique ] (Composition Books - Music Manuscript Paper) Blank Sheet Music: Music Manuscript Paper / Staff Paper / Musicians Notebook [ Book Bound (Perfect Binding) \* 12 Stave \* 100 pages \* Large \* Carnival ] (Composition Books - Music Manuscript Paper) Blank Sheet Music: Music Manuscript Paper / Staff Paper / Musicians Notebook [ Book Bound (Perfect Binding) \* 12 Stave \* 100 pages \* Large \* Music Panda ] (Composition Books - Music Manuscript Paper) Music Manuscript Paper : 6 Stave Manuscript Notebook: 100 Pages Extra Wide Staff Music Paper 8.5" x 11" (Music Manuscript Paper Notebooks) (Volume 1) Blank Sheet Music: Music Manuscript Paper / Staff Paper / Musicians Notebook (Composition Books - Music Manuscript Paper) 100 pages 12 stave per page Blank

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