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*J.A. Buckle*

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**Half My Facebook Friends Are Ferrets** J.A. Buckle

**Original UK Edition.** (Ages 12-15) (Genre: teen, humour) Fifteen-year-old Josh fantasises about becoming a death metal guitarist complete with tattoos, piercings and hoards of adoring fans. But it's not easy when his super-strict mom won't let him grow his hair! Luckily Josh has a way of coping with life's setbacks; it's only a diary, but it contains all Josh's hopes, dreams and frustrations (not to mention some great ideas for band names and lyrics!). What Josh doesn't know is that his mother also kept a diary, back about the time he was born, and a secret in there holds the key to Josh's life becoming a whole lot more metal.

*10% of royalties to Wood Green Animals charity.*

Shortlisted for Concorde Children's Book award and Winer of Lincolnshire Young People's book award (12-15 category) Selected as part of the Reading Agency Reading Challenge

## Half My Facebook Friends Are Ferrets Details

Date : Published January 2014 by Curious Fox

ISBN : 9781782020745

Author : J.A. Buckle

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Music, Humor, Contemporary, Teen

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## From Reader Review Half My Facebook Friends Are Ferrets for online ebook

### Pop Bop says

Make Me Laugh; Give Me Hope

O.K., there's going to be a test. Read the following: "...when who should come in but my sister and her crappy boyfriend, Clint. I mean "Clint" - what sort of name is that? It sounds more like a furniture polish than a person." Now, if you think you might like to read the diary/journal of a 15 1/2 year old who thinks and writes like that, then this book is for you.

I like deadpan, dry, understated humor. Bemused. Exasperated. Josh has to cope with school, girls, a difficult sister, a very tightly wound Mom, and a Dad who died when Josh was a baby. Assisting him are three woeful friends, his pet ferret, and the unquenchable dream to be a metal rock star.

The friends, Davey, Ollie and Peter, may be my favorite characters. Each has mastered the casual insult as a conversational staple. For example: "Looking at me," I say, "would you say I come across as, oh ... nerdy?" "Nah," says Ollie. "You're too stupid to be nerdy." "Thanks," I say. "But I mean ... if you didn't know that?". This is tight, well timed humor. Not a word wasted. Some of these bits read like teen angst haiku. Along the same lines, Mom is a psycho force, yet never has to speak more than a sentence or two.

This is very accomplished stuff. Nothing is over the top; nothing goes on too long or stretches too far. It's all timing and craft, and selection of just the right word. It's mostly one liners and bits, but it adds up to a very touching whole. This is like a weird, funny mental "Our Town" that all takes place in Josh's head.

So, very cool, very laid back, and likely to touch your funny bone and maybe a nerve. Nice work and a nice find.

Please note that I received a free advance copy of this book in exchange for a candid review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.

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### Yolanda says

A plea to the publisher: Will you please, PLEASE sort out some of the typos in this novel? I refuse to accept that the author can't spell 'accept.' Furthermore, 'woman' is rendered as 'women' at one point, a hyper-modern spelling affliction that I never saw when I was at school or in sixth form. Please do not reinforce these silly errors in teenagers - they get enough negative reinforcement of bad SPAG online as it is.

Now on to the actual novel.

When I was a teenager, there wasn't very much good teen fiction or young people's literature. There definitely wasn't much good stuff written about the alternative music scene, which was treated in an ultra-patronising way by press and novelists alike (thanks, The Guardian, for your condescending album reviews of media that's actually stood the test of time - for who now listens to, or knows, anything you promoted in - say - 2007?) Usually, if metal was described in teen fiction, it was depicted through the eyes of an older adult novelist who had never been into metal when they were young (it's hardly a new genre) and who transparently thought it was music for morons. There would be some imaginary bands, some cliches about

animal cruelty and the devil, and the lyrics of any songs would be pubescent doggerel of the quality, ironically, found in the worst calibre of pop, but just a lot more aggressive. If I were a world dictator, I would compel every blithering idiot who'd ever written something of this sort to be locked in some kind of oubliette, with My Dying Bride's 'Evinta' on continuous loop, until they saw the error of their ways.

Buckle, however, starts her novel with the following disclaimer: 'Public personages both living and dead may appear in this publication under their right names.' And they do. Alexi Laiho from Children of Bodom features, but the novel also namechecks Mayhem, Slayer, Morbid Angel, AC/DC, Pantera, Metallica (naming the members,) Megadeth, and hilariously, Satanic Warmaster (bwahahaha... remember those guys?) I was a CoB superfan when they were The Thing to like, and saw them some five times or more. I've also seen Mayhem and met current vocalist Attila Csihar. This is a gleeful romp alongside a trusty ferret through genuinely exciting music, delivered through the eyes of a funny, quirky mid-teen boy, by an author who is musically literate and knows the history of metal. Buckle very clearly IS a metalhead and it looks likely that she can also play guitar, and the book is all the better for it. The amusing GCSE English oral exam chapter is a little muddled - church burnings are associated with very early black metal, not death metal - but this has got to be deliberate on Buckle's behalf. Not every one of her readers knows what black metal is.

The content beyond music is also good and relateable and, I think, would be a decent read for most teenagers. I always found Adrian Mole insufferable as a character. Josh, Buckle's hero, is a boy you would like if you met; in fact, his group of friends are all likeable in different ways. They deal with bullying, sexuality, the problems of being in a low income family, social unfairness, and sexism towards the women in their lives as best they can. Buckle, apparently, was an eating disorder specialist, and this has influenced her portrayal of one character, but I shan't give any spoilers out. On a slightly darker note, Josh is not a teen whinger when it comes to his home situation - his mother is strict by the standards of a normal parent, and doesn't explain her decisions, which he compels himself to abide by. The reader detects that his mother is acting out some personal issues of her own, especially with her disproportionate reaction to him wishing for long hair - and Josh's discovery of why is plausible and saddening. The happy ending he attains comes across as well-deserved thereafter. A cracking read. Now, can someone please point me in the direction of a similar teen novel about a girl?

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## Lindsey Lewis says

**Disclaimer:** I received a free digital ARC of this book from NetGalley for reviewing purposes.

The presence of human male protagonists is considerably disproportionate in YA. We see females who are intelligent, talented, and interested in a myriad of topics - any teen girl can wander into a bookstore and find a character she can identify with. And of course, as a feminist, I see nothing wrong with literature empowering girls with this variety - but it may make teen boys feel alienated and keep them from reading if there aren't just as many male protagonists. Sure, younger boys have Diaries of a Wimpy Kid, the fantasy genres are full of male heroes, but where are the stories that feature teenage boys facing "ordinary struggles of daily human life?" One has to think a little bit harder to conjure those than it does to think of a book with a female protagonist.

This is why Half My Facebook Friends are Ferrets is such an amazing concept. Josh isn't a teenage boy trying to save the world from political corruption or crossing into parallel dimensions to or timelines - he's just a regular teenage boy facing regular teenage boy problems, from his mom wanting him to get a job, to trying to get a girlfriend, to having a passion for music and taking care of his pet ferret.

But the story is far from boring because rather than penning a dry journal, Josh packs his story with various plots and subplots, from the mysterious arrival of mail aimed at a future, geriatric Josh; to his mission to afford the coolest guitar ever and travel to see his favorite metal band play live; to normal “teenage boy things” (I don’t think I’ve ever seen a YA reference masturbation so candidly, although it is never inappropriately done); to (without spoiling too much) his curiosity about where he comes from and who he is.

It also doesn’t flinch at serious topics like financial difficulty or family issues from the perspective of a child who is not mature enough to deal with them. Josh is a lovable, kind narrator, but because he’s a teenage boy he doesn’t understand that his mother isn’t being intentionally cruel when she can’t afford an xBox. And I think that is probably the most honest depiction of a teen narrator I’ve seen in a while.

It did take me a while to warm up to the book. At first, I thought my review would be rated much lower than it ended up, because some of the humor came across like the author was an adult trying way too hard to make adolescent jokes (I felt like some of the gay jokes and suicide joke were insensitive, as well). I also didn’t like the self-censorship (no teenager says “f\*\*\*”), as it made the “journal” format feel less authentic and more patronizing. There was also some mention of Valentine’s day cards, being in a Boy Scouts-type club, and some of the mean girl behavior that made me “wut,” because the protagonist is supposed to be a 16 year old and they were all behaving like Kindergartners. I can accept the Boy Scouts thing more than the others, partly because I knew people in Eagle Scouts in high school, although they were bullied rather mercilessly for “not growing up” (sad, I know). But I began to appreciate Josh and the way that his high school experience isn’t “the best time of his life” and how his outside and inside appearances don’t match, because I was able to relate to him despite being a female college student.

I definitely think this is an easy read that could get reluctant teenage boys into reading. The ending felt kind of sudden, but for the most part the story was very entertaining and engaging - I finished it in one day!

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### **Anna says**

This book was an okay read - but then again I can't judge too harshly because I'm not a teenage boy. I suspect that there's plenty that teens with angst could relate to in this novel, especially if they keep a journal. At times I wasn't really sure where the straightforward story was heading but once I made it to the last few pages I discovered a bit of twist that tied up the loose ends.

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### **Ali Sadonis says**

First reads winning. What a fun read! Reminded me of how it felt being a "weirdo" in high school.

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### **Kristin Duncan says**

I enjoyed the humor in this book. As a high school teacher, it’s hard to find books that I think my male students would want to pick up. I definitely have some students in mind that would like the humor as well as the writing style. The journal writing makes it easier to read, especially for reluctant readers. One issue I would have liked is more development in the plot. The “secret” wasn’t really built up and just kind of put out there. It seemed odd to reveal it because it didn’t have much impact to the story other than the end. That’s

why I gave the book 4 stars instead of 5.

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## Lauren Stoolfire says

Josh is a big fan of death metal and dreams of becoming a death metal guitarist. However, he has a long way to go - he still needs a decent electric guitar and his strict mom won't even let him grow his hair out. He does have a way of coping with life's little setbacks. It's only his diary, but he uses it to keep track of his dreams and frustrations, and ideas for band names and lyrics. There's so much to do before he turns seventeen.

I noticed this novel after I saw it crop up on a few blogs and the description sounded great - not to mention that title and cover. When the book came in for me at the library, I eagerly dove into the pages. I'm thrilled that I just happened to stumble upon this because it's a real gem. Honestly, more people should check it out.

Josh is a fantastic character who comes across as very real and refreshing. I think teen guys could easily relate to him - I mean, I did and I don't fit either of those categories. I also couldn't get enough of his sense of humor. While the story is very funny, it's not just a comedy as it delves into serious topics.

If you like Ryan Dean from *Winger* by Andrew Smith, you'll want to get to know Josh from *Half My Facebook Friends Are Ferrets* by J. A. Buckle!

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## Amy says

Source: Curious Fox ~ received for an honest review.

Recommended For: I think lots of people will like this. But you've probably realised how little male protagonists are in YA?

Excerpt of review:

Funny & serious. I can't even do it justice but I want to leave it at that. It's always nice to be funny but it was so much richer when I was experiencing something light & humorous one minute and in the same paragraph...

SWITCH. Now I'm not laughing. I'm gawping. That's a serious issue, there. \*points at random paragraph illustrating my point\* (I may even have put one on Goodreads). It gets deeper! It gives you stuff to think about more. It even could seem a little down... But Josh copes with it & I cannot express my love enough for his POV. It's raw and... just Josh. Just teenage boy with brain cells.

Josh is SO quiet though. He thinks of what he'd like to say but a large proportion of the time doesn't. He's a bit of a chicken that way ;) At first it irritated me but I'm probably not someone who understands me so it took a while. I warmed to him in various ways & the reasons are too broad... It's hard to put my finger on it \*clumsy jabbing of finger\* He's just a decent guy, in most ways. He's kind to animals and he doesn't pry in others secrets, even when he could. He has insensitive moments but they're explored and he grows...

I think any reader would really enjoy his overall personality shining through the Diary too. I can't think of any book which is like this in this respect. No book has similar characters, so many different plot lines (which make an awesome web which no consumer or producer could ruin) and is so quick to change from comedy to an issue far from funny (even though Josh can be light about it so it doesn't really weigh you down).

That's when it became easier to read. I wish I'd got to that point sooner. I'm gonna say it again (I feel so bad!), how did it take me as long as it did? I'm not sure how long but it must've been a few weeks even being

one of Curious Fox's smallest reads. Even if you don't get out as much of it as I think I did you will still have read a great book which is unlike many other YA books around now. Why wouldn't you get the same stuff as FB ferrets from me? I don't think it's just me who thinks it's legendary.

Don't make the mistake of thinking it's too boyish (just because we don't get enough male protagonists these days!) or too light. Facebook Ferrets has got real meaning in there & is worth a read. Why not just pick it up right now?... The topics discussed inside this book pack a punch- it only took about 200 pages (yes, tiny)! It's relatable and rather British (always a plus, thinks the biased brit). The school anecdotes- and how there will be random facts etc. about equations or something- are extra pluses. I apparently can take more of GCSE's but the themes of FB ferrets doesn't stop there. Oh, no... From peer pressure, family relationships...

### **Review continues here on my blog & there's GIFs**

#### Summary:

FB ferrets is just (probably more so in paperback so go & buy it! XD) an easy read I'd recommend, in summary. \*taps foot\* I'd love to know what you're waiting for (if it's for you to get to the front of the queue in the bookshop to buy it then that's OK!). Yet, I may be off to stroke my cat & thank him for being an easier pet than a ferret. Not necessarily as fun to read about...

#### Teasers?:

"If I don't get a girlfriend soon (number one on the list) I may have to resort to drastic measures like surgery (me) or hypnosis (them)." (page 43)

Maybe more... doubt I'd treat you that well though ;)

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### **Ruth Goldsmith says**

This is a great find for the YA reader in your life.

It's a witty look at the world through Josh's eyes, a narrator with more than a little in common with the great Adrian Mole. If you like your characters warm, well-rounded and just a little bit lost, you'll love Josh. Readers of all ages will enjoy following him and his ferrets as he navigates the challenges of growing up.

Top read - I really recommend it.

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### **Black Veil says**

If you like action adventure or romance I would probably not recommend this book as it is more about laughs and characters. The people in it are typical of today's teens and the sort you'd want as freinds (most of the time!) We read this at our svhool book club and everyone gave it 4 or 5 stars and was discussing their favourite quotes. This is a book I want to keep as if I am feeling fed up I will look into it every now and then to give myself a laugh. There are some sad things in the book but mostly it is funny and feel good. My favourite quote is "At least Davey makes an effort in the looks department. Ollie once had a piece of salami in his hair for three whole days!"

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## **Mewmew says**

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book which tackles real life issues as well as providing a great deal of comedy! The main character is believable and easy to relate to and his friends are hilarious! It is in an easy to read diary format with extra song lyrics which were a great addition to the story. I highly recommend this book if you enjoy the young adult genre and are looking for a witty and engaging read :)

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## **Rachel says**

Just read this and loved it. So full of humour but at the same time some really poignant and deep themes. I really got into the protagonists head. Only criticism is that it is quite short, though around the same length as many YA type diaries around. Hoping for a sequel

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## **Triston says**

The book was funny, and amazing and I loved it!! ??

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## **Mrs Mac McKenzie says**

This was funny. I had a smile on my face the whole time I was reading it. Written in diary style, it follows the journey of a young man as he figures out his life, friends, family and figuring out girls.

A insightful read into a young mans thinking. Good fun and one I recommend people buy for their libraries, and for young men and women who like funny books.

Net Galley pre release reading.

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## **Chapter by Chapter says**

The premise for Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets by author JA Buckle was interesting and hooked my interest. As a teen the same age as the novel's protagonist Josh I thought that I might be able to relate to most of the things that Josh would go through, see or say. I wasn't sure what to expect from the novel and have to say that after finishing it, Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets is a very unique coming of age story about a boy just trying to fit in and get through high school.

In Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets the novel's main character Josh is obsessed with metal and rock and roll. His father isn't around anymore and his pet ferret seems to understand him a lot more than his mother ever will. Josh's dream is to buy his dream guitar, go to a real rock concert and live his dreams. That'll have to wait of course. Josh gets a job at one of the local diners, eying the girl of his dreams while he tries to scrape up some cash. Dealing with high school drama, the struggle of trying to make friends and discovering

who he really is—Josh documents his entire year in a comically written journal.

The overall story for Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets was good. I laughed, I smiled and I felt shock at certain revelations that come later in the novel. The way that the story is written is in a journal format, Josh writes about how much he hates his family life and how he wishes for changes that seem like they'll never come. He just wants to be accepted but acceptance seems a ways away. The events that occur in Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets do show how Josh's character will have to grow up and evolve in an amusing way.

As a teen reading a novel that is supposed to relate to teens, the general gist of the story was totally relatable. Every teen wants to make friends. Every teen wants to live the big dream of a future they've built up in their head and every teen wants to break out into their own person. Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets does a good job of showing that. The only thing that did make me wrinkle my nose was the way Josh talks. Yes, he uses a lot of texting-lingo but I personally felt that it was a little forced to make Josh sound young. There are exclamations of 'OMG!' and 'FML!' that didn't feel very realistic to me as a teenager.

Apart from that, the characters in Half my Facebook Friends are Ferrets are still very well-written. No two characters are the same, all of them seem to grow by the end of the novel. Josh's mother (I thought) turned out to be the most three dimensional of them all which surprised me a lot. A lot of teenage guys could probably relate to his character more than a teenage girl like myself can. And I'll say right now that some readers might want to be a bit wary of some of the topics that come up in the novel like sex, masturbation and partying.

I would recommend this novel to any teenage guys who feel like they can relate to a main character like Josh, any readers who are looking for a coming-of-age novel and to any readers who want a quick, lighthearted read that they can get through easily in one sitting.

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