



Joey Fly, Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime

Aaron Reynolds , Neil Numberman (Illustrator)

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Have you ever had one of those moments? You know—you're trying to find a stolen diamond pencil box for your beautiful butterfly customer, your mosquito witness won't give you any information, and your clumsy scorpion assistant has just tampered with your only bit of evidence?

Joey Fly has those moments a lot. In fact, he's probably having one right now. But that won't stop him from solving the mystery in *Creepy Crawly Crime*, his fantastic first graphic novel!

Joey Fly, Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime Details

Date : Published April 14th 2009 by Henry Holt & Company (first published August 14th 2008)

ISBN : 9780805082425

Author : Aaron Reynolds , Neil Numberman (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 96 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Mystery, Humor, Childrens, Middle Grade, Comics, Fiction

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From Reader Review Joey Fly, Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime for online ebook

Scope says

A graphic novel detective story that pays homage to (and spoofs) classic crime tales at every turn, Creepy Crawly Crime is made for young readers who enjoy their noir with a heavy dose of levity.

Joey Fly is a detective that's seen it all. Having solved crimes of all shapes and sizes, there isn't much that surprises the private eye. When a wet behind the ears scorpion named Sammy Stingtail comes on the scene, asking to be the detective's assistant, Fly takes on the youngster and gets more than he bargained for. Soon an investigation is afoot (the theft of a diamond pencil box), and Sammy proves to be more of a hindrance than a help. It's a difficult assignment for Joey Fly, who must solve a crime of jealousy and keep his new assistant from ruining everything.

You've gotta admit - the author certainly picks a style and runs with it here. Puns, similes, and metaphors are everywhere. Fools are "one ant short of a picnic". Crime inhabits the city "like a one-winged fly on a fifty-cent swatter". Things are more tense "than an ally cat at a flea market". I could go on. Some work well, others induce some head scratching. The overall success of this style will depend on who's reading.

The pen and ink illustrations ably move the story along. When it's dark, various shades of blue are used to set the mood. When Joey Fly and Sammy Stingtail are out in the sun, sepia tones are used. This limited color palette works well and enhances the "classic crime story" atmosphere.

The world created is well-realized. Elements of the outdoors (trees, plants, swampland, etc.) are incorporated into an urban setting to create a city inhabited entirely by insects. The 8x10 size and uncomplicated panel layouts make for smooth reading.

An encouraging start to a new series. Many young readers will welcome Creepy Crawly Crime with open arms.

Lanae Zaragoza says

This was a fun read! It is a mystery story with the main character Joey Fly, and his apprentice Sammy Stingtail. Their relationship is funny and witty. I like that all of the characters are bugs. The language used in the story is "detective talk," so it would be great for kids who love this genre. The author uses a lot of similes, metaphors and puns throughout the text, it seems to be the theme. The illustrations are great. The colors used help to set the tone of the story, for example, blue shades are used to represent dark, and reddish-brown colors represent day time. These work great to move the story along and keep the mystery alive. The relationships and events throughout the story are realistic and allow the reader to relate. The graphic novel genre is perfect for this story and makes it that much better. Overall, kids would absolutely love this story because of the genre, humor and illustrations. There are also more books in the series I want to check out!

Frieda Vazel says

I had so much fun reading this book to my little one. Very witty, very funny. I laughed out loud often at the clever play on words.

My seven year old son says: "I want to rate it 1000%."

Salsabrarian says

The first pages drew me in and had me laughing. Joey Fly is in the tradition of the hardboiled detective who's seen it all. ("The name's Fly. Joey Fly, private eye.") All the elements are there: the colorful similes ("Crime sticks to this city like a one-winged fly on a fifty-cent swatter."), the beautiful client ("She was a tall drip of water. And I was suddenly feeling parched.") and the terse, no-nonsense dialog. The monochrome palette of the illustrations provides a mock noir ambience. Additionally there is much humor: Joey Fly isn't that hardboiled so much as caught up in the whole idea of being hardboiled, as when he wishes "some cool theme music" would play when he introduces himself. His hiring instincts aren't too keen either; his new scorpion assistant is so exasperating and snarly you wonder why Joey keeps him on. The mystery of a missing diamond pencil box is fairly weak but uncovering a murderer wouldn't be as kid-friendly. As a whole the package is so entertaining, readers will look forward to what promises to be sequels. Added bonus for the detail-oriented: a list of objects to find in the illustrations.

Heather Muzzy says

Mom says: I like this version of a graphic novel because the font is so much better than Spiderman's ALL CAPS THAT WEAR OUT THE BRAIN! Also like the use of curior in blocks for narration. The balloons are nicely arranged to naturally get the proper sequence.

Even if the target elementary kid hasn't seen an old style movie that this is spoofing... the'll better "get" the old style detective "spoof" when they see it done in a commercial or some day a really old movie.

Not bad and surely this will appeal to kids still needing graphics and be entertaining to the parents still reading aloud to middle elementary. I enjoyed the flip-thru with my kid as we reviewed the character's "style" for book report

Raina says

Cute, uberstylized noir starring an insect cast. I imagine most kids won't get the gumshoe references, but there's some silly humor and the illustrations are accessible and fun with a fair amount of jokes in the detailed backgrounds. Interesting use of color - most of the panels are washed with a color, with virtually no contrasting colors, but there are occasionally multiple color schemes on the page. It took me a while to get through it on breaks from work - it wasn't enthralling. A lot of yawny jokes, and a pretty challenging vocabulary and word count. Fine, fun.

Nicola Mansfield says

This is a wonderful crime noire in graphic novel format. Taking place in the Bug City all the characters are various insects and arachnids. Joey Fly is a Private Eye (da da daaaa) and Sammy Stingtail (a scorpion) is his sidekick. Written in classic thirties private eye style, "It was a muggy summer day when he walked through my door. Right away, I thought he looked like trouble. I was right.", the book is a pure joy to read. The crime is a fun one to keep kids guessing and following the clues and there is plenty of humour. Most of the art is done in dark blue & white to give that old noire feeling but other colour palettes show up as well to add variety. A lot of fun and definitely a winner! Loved it!

Megan Gallagher says

Title (italicize): Joey Fly Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime

Author: Aaron Reynolds

Illustrator (if separate from author): Neil Numberman

Genre: Graphic Novel/Comic Book

Theme(s): Mystery, Adventure, Teamwork, Theft, Crime

Opening line/sentence (type directly from text): Life in the bug city.

Brief Book Summary: This book is about Joey Fly a private investigator and his partner Sammy Stingtail as they investigate Delilah's disappearing pencil box. Through their investigation they determine Delilah was lying and she ends up firing Joey.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1 (cut & paste): Michael Jung (Children's Literature)

Life in Bug City isn't easy, especially if your name is Fly--Joey Fly, Private Eye. When a smart mouthed kid scorpion named Sammy Stingtail shows up demanding to be hired as Joey's assistant, it turns out to be just the start of a real tough day for Joey. Sammy is one of the clumsiest scorpions around. He demolishes most of Joey's office while trying to clean it; as a result, it doesn't look very professional when a beautiful butterfly named Delilah shows up in need of a private eye to find her diamond pencil box. Still, Joey gets the case. He spends the day combing the crime scene, dealing with a shrewish mosquito suspect, and trying to keep Sammy from accidentally destroying of all the evidence. As the day toils on, bug suspects mount, Sammy gets on Joey's nerves, and Delilah ends up firing Joey! Can Joey still solve the case and show that a good private eye always gets his bug? Reynolds and Numberman craft a fun graphic novel that's equal parts Humphrey Bogart and A Bug's Life. Joey's first-person narration is full of funny film noir clichés (e.g., Crime sticks to this city like a one-winged fly on a fifty-cent swatter. The air was more tense than an alley cat at a flea market.). This humor will keep kids--and parents--laughing. Overall, this is a funny new addition to the growing list of animal detective books. 2009, Henry Holt and Company, \$16.95. Ages 8 to 12.

(PUBLISHER: Henry Holt (New York:), PUBLISHED: 2009.)

Professional Recommendation/Review #2 (cut & paste): Kirkus (Kirkus Reviews, March 15, 2009 (Vol. 77, No. 6))

What detective wouldn't benefit from being a fly on the wall? Well, Joey Fly, a cool Sam Spade esque private eye clad in trench coat and fedora, is just that insect. After hiring the surly Sammy Stingtail, a bumbling scorpion who's all thumbs er, make that tail he finds a case knocking at their door. Delilah, a beautiful butterfly, believes that her best friend, a ladybug named Gloria, has stolen her diamond pencil box. As the two gumshoes set out to crack the case, they encounter an imaginative cadre of insect witnesses. Joey Fly tries his best to be the suave sleuth, but is often comically kept on his toes by his hot-tempered young assistant. This playful pun-a-minute comic-book mystery is sure to charm. Numberman provides detailed backgrounds set in cool blues and warm sepia tones to create a visually engaging landscape smacking of noir-lite. Included at the end is a list of items that young detectives must then page back through the art to find. An auspicious series kick-off. 2009, Henry Holt, 96p, \$16.95. Category: Graphic novel. Ages 7 up. © 2009 Kirkus Reviews/VNU eMedia, Inc. All rights reserved.

(PUBLISHER: Henry Holt (New York:), PUBLISHED: 2009.)

Response to Two Professional Reviews:

Both reviews discuss how this is a funny, playful text that readers can enjoy. The second review mentions how there is a list at the end of the book that readers can go back and find. This list is unique and allows the reader to shift through the text again in a fun way. I found it interesting that one review mentions the blue and warm tones that are both engaging and detailed to the text. I do wish the reviews mentioned the text that is sometimes demeaning and inappropriate to women, especially in today's day and age.

Evaluation of Literary Elements: I found the word choice used somewhat demeaning to women. The main character Joey Fly calls Delilah words like "sweetwings", "doll", and "dollface". I do not think this word choice is necessary and gives the wrong message of how to treat women or girls. The illustrator's use of detail makes this story engaging and makes the characters really move/pop out on the page. The overall plot of the story is exciting for readers to engage in, it can help stir their imagination and work on their problem solving skills.

Consideration of Instructional Application: I personally would not choose to use this book in a classroom based on the language used in the text. If I had to use it, this book would be great for a fourth or fifth grade classroom. The use of comics is very important to use in a classroom. I would have students create their own comic strips, making up whatever story they would like to write about and draw the illustrations to go along with the text.

Sarah Sammis says

Creepy Crawly Crime by Aaron Reynolds and illustrated by Neil Numberman is the first in what I think is a planned series of graphic novels starring Joey Fly and his eager but clumsy assistant. In this introductory case the detective has to find the missing diamond pencil case, stolen at a recent high society party.

The story is narrated in a Raymond Chandler style fashion and illustrated in bright monochromatic palettes: purple panels, blue panels abound. These single color approaches help to mimic the chiaroscuro lighting used in the old film noir mysteries the graphic novel is parodying.

Creepy Crawly Crime has the same level of complexity to its mystery as a typical Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew. The story is engaging even if the reader is unfamiliar with film noir tropes. For older readers, or ones who have watched a few old movies, will laugh at the parody and visual jokes peppered throughout the book.

I read Creepy Crawly Crime as a second round panel judge for the 2009 Cybils.

Danielle Larca says

"Life in the bug city. It ain't easy" (p. 7)

Have you ever had one of those days? When your brand new assistant doesn't have the first clue about

collecting evidence, bungles eyewitness interviews and nothing generally goes right? Joey Fly, Private Eye is having one of those days. But he's determined not to let little things like a clumsy assistant and getting fired stand in his way of solving the case of the missing diamond pencil case for the beautiful swallowtail butterfly, Delilah. As Fly gets closer to the truth, something is fishy, and it's not just the smell of scorpion aftershave. Will he be able to solve the case?

I don't normally read graphic novels but I really loved Joey Fly. I was amused by Reynolds' use of what Booklist calls "this noir-type story filled with classic detective dialogue and swarms of insect humor." The art is clean and stays firmly within its designated boxes, which I appreciate because it helps me follow the story better. I'm not a big fan of more cluttered pages with a lot happening, like *The Secret Science Alliance*. My only concern would be for the audience-will they appreciate the element of film noir? Or will it be lost on them?

Emilce Guzman says

Audience: This book would be geared towards intermediate elementary students.

Appeal: It would appeal mostly towards kids that like mystery. Girls could be interested as well as it has female characters involved in the plot of the story. The characters consist of bugs and that can be interesting to students as well.

Application: I would have this book at a reading station where the kids would have access to it during reading time. I would then have them write a letter addressed to the character "Delilah" and explain how they felt about her actions in the story.

Award: No award

Copyright: 2009

Becky B says

Joey Fly, Private Eye is on a new case. The case of the missing diamond pencil case. His normal style is a bit cramped by his new assistant Sammy Scorpion. The kid is quick on mayhem and slow on wits. But that won't stop Joey Fly from figuring out who stole the pencil case from Delilah the butterfly's party.

Aaron Reynolds puts on his classic crime detective voice as he writes Joey Fly. Joey's laden with analogies, and well versed in the detective jargon, giving this just the right feel. Oh, and he can actually solve the crime, even with a less than ideal new assistant. I spent half the book wanting Joey to dump Sammy and tell him to hit the road. But patience is admirable in a teacher. The crime is well done enough that it should keep some readers guessing, though there are enough hints the clever readers can figure it out way before Sammy. I like the city full of arthropods. It helps create a gritty city feel while still keeping it plenty kid friendly. A great graphic novel as there aren't too many mystery graphic novels out there for middle graders.

Notes on content: No language issues. No sexual content. Some of the female insects are a little busty, but no cleavage or anything. No intended violence, though Sammy is unintentionally a bit dangerous with his stinger. Usually it is inanimate objects that succumb to his wake of destruction. No one is killed.

Shel says

Reynolds, A. (2009). Joey Fly Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime. New York: Henry Hold and Company.

0805082425

96 pages.

Appetizer: Joey Fly is a private eye, intent on returning Bug City to the innocent bugs who are just trying to get by.

...Wow, describing this graphic novel really does lend itself to rhyming. I blame the title.

When Sammy Stingtail enters Joey's office he knows the young scorpion looks like trouble. And he is. Sammy wants to be Joey's new assistant. Joey takes in the scorpion and soon the two receive their first case from a butterfly named Delilah who is missing her diamond pencil box. But the detectives won't be able to solve the case if they can't find a way to get along (I mean, could a scorpion and fly every truly coexist comfortably?).

Joey Fly's narration truly captures that film noir detective voice that's been popular for decades. Except, he's much more humorous, with jokes that will appeal to many middle grade readers (but may seem a little silly to early young adult readers).

You can get a sample of the voice by watching the book trailer:

As I began reading, I was a little worried about the way gender roles would be presented. Following the usual content and archetypes of detective fiction, then the men would be macho and the women would be sex objects or victims. Delilah pretty much confirmed my worry. She's described as a beautiful butterfly and as being "one ant short of a picnic" (p 16). Another female character who provides a helpful lead is stereotyped, with Joey narrating, "It's scary, all the junk females keep under their wings" (p. 49).

The lack of empowered female characters was really a downer for me. As a girl, I felt excluded by the story and a little insulted. The cure? Watching episodes of Veronica Mars. But still, even though I liked what this book was doing, the fact that the story didn't challenge the way female characters are presented in detective stories killed my enjoyment. Just killed it. Literally, this would have been a four or five explanation point story, but it's been relegated back down to average levels of excitement: !!!

Now, some might argue, that the entire story is about playing into the stereotypes of detective noir stories. And that might be true. But still, there was an opportunity to improve the genre, and it was ignored.

Steps off the soapbox

Dinner Conversation:

"Life in the bug city. It ain't easy. Crime sticks to this city like a one-winged fly on a fifty-cent swatter" (p. 7).

"My name's Fly. Joey Fly, Private Eye" (p. 9).

Sammy: "Fighting crime is my gig. I'm looking for work."

Joey (narrating): "They say crime doesn't pay, but fighting it paid me pretty well. I had more cases than a flea has dogs. Maybe I could use an assistant. This bug seemed like just the guy" (p. 10).

"But I didn't have time for that now, for at that moment, a customer walked in.

A butterfly. Swallowtail, if I didn't miss my guess. She was a tall drip of water. And I was suddenly feeling parched" (p. 13).

"I work for crumbs. Literally. And these were the good stuff. Angel food cake crumbs. Fifty big ones" (p. 18).

"My assistant may have his faults, but when it comes to pointing out the obvious, he's sharper than a bumblebee's butt" (p. 36).

To Go with the Meal:

Aside from encouraging visual literacy, this text encourages its readers to identify the types of insects and arachnids that are characters. For example, when Sammy Stingtail first enters Joey's office, he's described as a "crusty arachnid type. His stinger gave away his species. Scorpion. But young, barely hatched" (p. 10). Plus, since Sammy is a young scorpion, he's meant to be a relatable figure for young readers to relate to. (Just in case an old jaded detective fly doesn't appeal).

Also, Sammy is new to the crime-fighting biz. So, as Joey Fly shares the rules of how to gather evidence and treat suspects the reader can learn too (that is of course, assuming they haven't grown-up with a crime procedural on a TV in the background of their entire short little lives).

I think this series would be a wonderful read to try to engage reluctant readers, especially boys who are entertained by bugs or mysteries.

Students could act out parts of the story easily, interviewing one another as they search for the pencil box thief. They could also develop their own stories following the model of Joey Fly or they could illustrate their own character ideas, choosing from other species and paying attention to drawing the insect anatomy correctly.

The book can also be used to discuss jealousies and conflict resolutions as well as how to determine who you can trust when multiple kids are giving different accounts of an event.

This would be a fun read to support a science lesson on insects (their eating habits, anatomical structures, etc.)

Tasty Rating: !!!

Angela says

fun noir style read with an excellent voice

Traci says

Genre: Junior Graphic Novel

Summary:

This is the first book in the Joey Fly, Private Eye series. Joey and his sidekick Sammy are hired by the beautiful butterfly Delilah to find her missing diamond pencil box. Joey attempts to solve the crime while having to keep Sammy out of mischief. He is eventually fired by Delilah but goes on to solve the crime anyway.

Critique:

(a) The book is accurate in the graphic novel sense. The characters of the book are all insects and the world in which they live in is realistic and their interactions are typical interactions. The occurrences are realistic to us and readers can relate to the comedic elements as well.

(b) The story is funny and animated and will be entertaining, especially to young readers. I do think however that some of the phrasing in the book could be difficult for some younger readers to comprehend.

(c) At one point the text says "Crime sticks to this city like a one-winged fly on a fifty-cent swatter." I think that this would be difficult for younger readers to understand and relate to in any fashion.

Curriculum Connection:

This book would be a wonderful tool to use when presenting a literary unit about graphic novels in particular.
