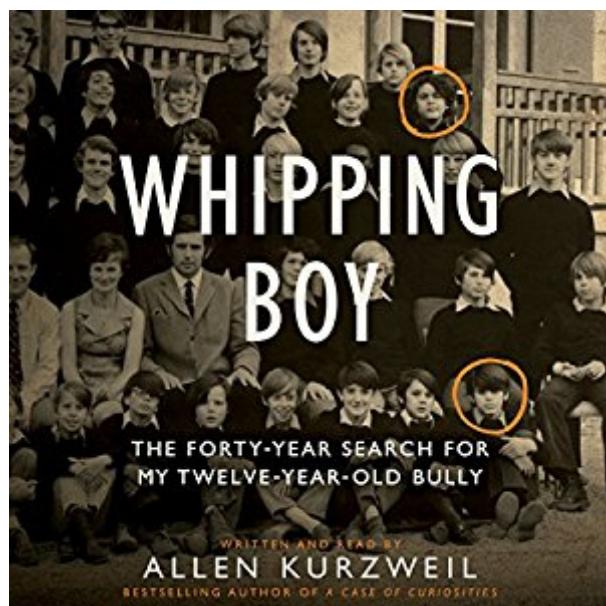


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Whipping Boy: The Forty-Year Search For My Twelve-Year-Old Bully



Synopsis

The true account of one man's lifelong search for his boarding-school bully. Equal parts childhood memoir and literary thriller, *Whipping Boy* chronicles Allen Kurzweil's search for his 12-year-old nemesis, a bully named Cesar Augustus. The obsessive inquiry, which spans some 40 years, takes Kurzweil all over the world, from a Swiss boarding school (where he endures horrifying cruelty) to the slums of Manila, from the Park Avenue boardroom of the world's largest law firm to a federal prison camp in Southern California. While tracking down his tormentor, the author encounters an improbable cast of characters that includes an elocution teacher with ill-fitting dentures, a gang of faux-royal swindlers, a crime investigator with "paper in his blood", and a monocled grand master of the Knights of Malta. Yet for all its global exoticism and comic exuberance, Kurzweil's riveting account is, at its core, a heartfelt and suspenseful narrative about the "parallel lives" of a victim and his abuser. A scrupulously researched and richly illustrated work of nonfiction that renders a childhood menace into an unlikely muse, *Whipping Boy* is much more than a tale of karmic retribution; it is a poignant meditation on loss, memory, and mourning, a surreal odyssey born out of suffering, nourished by rancor, tempered by wit, and resolved, unexpectedly, in a breathtaking act of personal courage.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

On , I tend to follow the age old dictum of keeping negative opinions to myself, however in the instance of "Whipping Boy", I feel as though it's my moral duty as a reader of reasonably good

conscience to warn readers not to waste their time, as I did, on "Whipping Boy." If the author suffered daily beatings and humiliation at the hands of a thug, then sought out confirmation later in life of the thug's personal failures, I could somewhat understand that. It's perhaps a waste of time and I would personally suggest to anyone to get some therapy or let go of their resentment, but we're all human and trying to get through the struggle of life as best we know how, so I'll make allowances. However, IMO, the offense that the author experienced at the hands of his nemesis was so insignificant that I had to re-read the "Jesus Christ Superstar" scene again to make sure I hadn't missed anything. It's possible that Holocaust survivors and MOSSAD agents who pursued their Nazi perpetrators with less zeal for justice and revenge than the author went after his tormentor. Had the author lived my life as a preternaturally skinny kid in high testosterone Alabama, I don't think he would've survived with his sanity intact. He would've been so consumed by the offenses of not one, but a multitude of bullies over the course of years, not just one incident. The Jesus Christ Superstar incident warrants a years long search for the bully, then an entire book about the experience? And this insignificant transpired at an exclusive, elite boarding school in Switzerland, not the Warsaw Ghetto; consequently, that makes it even more difficult to sympathize with the author. For these reasons, the author revealed far more about their own shortcomings of character, rather than anything insightful and useful to the reader. Although Cesar Augustus turned out to be a con-man, at least he was interesting. OK, rant over. Obviously I need to take my own advice and let go of being conned out of time and money.

Oh boy. Turning pages on this one has become a chore. The bully in question wasn't that impressive in his bully-ness. That's the first chapter or so. The rest (up until I gave up) is boring, boring, boring detail about how the writer tracks him down and uncovers details about some flamboyant long con. Heavy on pointless details. Maybe something interesting happens after a couple hundred pages, but I can't wait that long. My grade school bully tried to be buddy buddy with me in college and I cruelly snubbed him. That felt good.

This book is written by a clearly talented writer, and the crime described is interesting. The author's neuroses are distracting, however, and the bullying described seems like it may have been embellished to create a sense of drama. Maybe it should have been more embellished, because the drama was still lacking. It seems to me that the author should have seen a psychiatrist rather than obsessively hunting down his bully. It seems what was really bothering him was the loss of his father and the bully was a convenient scapegoat. So many people the author encountered helped

him out because they remembered having childhood bullies, too-- but how many actually feel the need to publicly pillory them so many years later? Anyway, the whole thing about the bully seemed an necessary contrivance better dealt with by a professional. Just because someone was mean to you did not mean that you should dish it right back to them, especially 40 years later and in the form of a public shaming. I suppose the fraud victims might relish it, though. The story of the crime would have been much more compelling without that distraction. I give it 3 stars for the excellent research and the quality of the writing. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone who doesn't have a distinct vindictive streak or an excess of patience-- the latter is my issue.

Bullies, family members or outsiders, cause painful memories some of which are permanent, thus causing odd patterns of behavior in adulthood. Psychologists will tell you to let go of the past if you want to heal. But it's not always possible to change your behavior no matter how much you want to. By ultimately confronting his childhood nemesis Allen Kurzweil healed himself. However, doing this took great courage, intelligence and persistence which I surmise, from my own personal observation, is a course of action most of us will not pursue. I highly recommend reading this book.

Poorly organized, totally boring in places and over done, too much like filler, anti-climactic conclusion, big build up for a let down. Author did a lot of digging, kind of obsessive, as he admits. There's really not that much of a story here; the most interesting part of the book is about the Badishe bank con men, not so much the perp and certainly not the victim. Author would have been better seeing a therapist and using a better editor before and while he set down to write this.

Very interesting read about one person's persistence in tracking down a guy whose actions at a young age affected others negatively for many years. Worthwhile read, as it has you either remembering the same experience from childhood, or asking yourself if you may have been unknowingly guilty of actions like "the whipping boy's" tormentor.

A fascinating look into the fragility of our being can be influenced, from an early age, by what others have done and not done to them, so much so that they live out that perceived self for the rest of time. I admire the journey the author took to find the childhood bully to free himself from the negative perceptions of himself. I admire the courage and determination, even though it took 40 yrs, to free himself in order to become his real self.

While reading the book, I expected some sort of denouement. Never happened. It ends flat. Good detail through 80% but then disappointment. Good plot idea; too much expectation; never delivers.

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