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Blade; Mutant; Respect!; Smoke

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

The single word titles are a dead giveaway for the easy read, pared down contents and language difficulty of the books. These are contemporary tales aiming to encourage interest and solo reading among reluctant teens. The authors' notes at the onset give insight into where the story originated and act as a useful motivator to encourage readers to become involved and started. As far as the black and white illustrations go, I liked them, but you never know how older kids will react.

Powling's book goes back 40 years to introduce a particularly nasty bully with a knife. New Year 7 boys, Rich and Lee, come up against the psychopathic Toxon in an alley, where Lee uses his disability to turn the frightener into the very, very frightened. Powling ends with a suitable, right-on reminder to his readers that 'Schools today have bullies sussed. Always tell a grown-up, that's the best thing.'

Mutant is the result of reading about Dolly the sheep and getting into cloning and the possibility of espionage in the labs. Creepy things happen, that have very dangerous potential and otherwise nice Profs become raving Bondesque loonies whilst abandoned experiments take on a gruesome life of their own?

Walter Tull in Respect! was the grandson of a slave and an orphan. He is largely forgotten, yet he was the first black professional footballer and British army officer, awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal, and recommended for a Military Cross. His story is very sympathetically told by a writer who obviously wants to share her view of the man as absolute hero and wants us to understand the abuse he suffered because of his skin colour. In a way Tull deserves a longer book to do him full justice.

Smoke is a 'what if?' novel charting the problems that befall Dan and Helen when their dad steps off a train for a smoke and then fails to get back on again in time. Brittle relationships are in a sense repaired by the scenario that follows, but

not before the kids have a scary time in the big city. DB

Running Order:

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