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Jonathan Grisby is the newest arrival at the Slabhenge Reformatory School for Troubled Boys -- an ancient, crumbling fortress of gray stone rising up from the ocean. It is dark, damp, and dismal. And it is just the place Jonathan figures he deserves.

Because Jonathan has done something terrible. And he's willing to accept whatever punishment he has coming.

Just as he's getting used to his new situation, however, a freak accident leaves the troubled boys of Slabhenge without any adult supervision. Suddenly the kids are free, with an entire island to themselves. But freedom brings unexpected danger. And if Jonathan can't come to terms with the sins of his past and lead his new friends to safety . . . then every boy on the island is doomed.

Scar Island Details

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From Reader Review Scar Island for online ebook

Rachel Harder says

And a third reason why I love Dan Gemeinhart. I don't know how he manages to write a serious story about boys stranded on a creepy island and I still laughed through parts. Genius, once again.

Kitkat says

I really liked this book! I'm shocked because when I started this book I was nervous about it. It reminded me way too much of Lord of the Flies. I mean couple of boys trapped on an island without any adults and creating a society. Also how Johnathon was Ralph because he's the protagonist and sort of the leader. Also Sebastian is Jack because he wants to be the leader than Ralph. Colin is Piggy because he's super smart and he is completely against Sebastian the entire time. Also there's sort of a monster but it turns out it's just the librarian. I'm not even going to mention how I wanted to kill Benny the little snake!

Anyway, what made like it more was because of the boy's pasts. I loved learning ow they got sent to this jail island because some of the reasons were sweet. I liked that Walter stole the purse for his mother on Mother's Day and he got caught. Also how Johnathon got from the librarian a copy of Lord of Flies. I freaked out and I laughed because the author did it. I really liked how the boys nicknames them Scars and called the island Scar island.

Johnathon's past was heart wrenching because I could see how it was destroying him from the inside. How Johnathon sat on the torturing machine to punish himself was horrible. How Colin cared about Johnathon and tried to stop him made me love his character. I also loved how Colin spoke and it made his character charming. Johnathon kept writing to his parents that he deserved it and understands if his parents hate him. I wanted to throttle him and say that he has to forgive himself. Then how he admitted that he killed his sister in a fire. However Johnathon kept blaming himself because his sister Sophia started the fire. Johnathon took the blame for his sister's death and felt responsible for Colin. How Colin is tied while the room is flooding was heartbreaking. I freaked out that he wasn't going to save him in time. Johnathon felt about his sister and not being able to save her. He felt the same way if Colin couldn't be save.

I also loved Sebastian's past. Sebastian is a jerk but I feel horrible for him like Johnathon. Sebastian is an orphan and he doesn't write to anyone outside the prison. Johnathon asked him why he doesn't send mail and I wondered why myself. How Sebastian cried that he didn't want to go outside the prison because he would have no one to send letters to. I loved how all the boys said that they would be Sebastian's friend and keep in touch. I thought that was heartwarming and I couldn't help but to smile.

The librarian was a unique and clever character. How he grew up here and stayed on the island for his entire life. The librarian doesn't even know his own name because he hasn't had company for years. I felt horrible but how he transitioned a home with the rats was a little disturbing. How his childhood was on the island when it was asylum was really interesting. I loved how he said his mother and father were both lunatics. He gave so many books to Johnathon that made me grin. Then how Johnathon is going to rescue him from the flood and he said no. I was completely shocked that he didn't want to escape and that he was actually aware of everything. The librarian spoke in riddles that made the book really interesting. He knew about the adults not being on the island which is why he gave Johnathon Lord of Flies. The librarian knew everything that happened and he acted like he was clueless. How he knew that the island was going to sink and warned Johnathon from the beginning. The ending for him was depressing because he felt at peace that he didn't

want to leave the island. The librarian had no wishes to leave because there's nothing for him outside the island. I felt so sad that he was left to die.

The ending was fantastic! I loved how Sebastian gained friends. Also how Johnathon forgives himself and wants to finally come home. It made me so happy that Johnathon was crying tears of joy that he was going home. I loved how the book ended and I would recommend this book to anyone. The book had a couple of references to Lord of Flies but it was completely original.

Sara says

Dan Gemeinhart is kinda the man. I have only read this book of his, but from what I hear of his other books...Washington's got a rock-star.

To me, this book feels like contemporary Charles Dickens meets Lord of the Flies. Slabhenge Reformatory School is NOT a nice place to be. The adults are awful, there are literal torture devices, and food consumption is limited to gruel.

But then, all the mean mean adults die...and the boys are left to their own devices, and all hell breaks loose. This is a book about social dynamics, guilt, and redemption. It has the word "hell" and "damn". It's also for elementary schoolers. At first I was a little nervous about the prospect of talking about it to 4th and 5th graders (I think it could go up to 7th or 8th grade), but then I decided that kids can handle it. Kids can handle darkness, and reading books about dark things is a developmentally appropriate way to learn about the world.

I'm doin' it. I'm bringing it to the schools. Kids are gonna eat up the gritty adventure.

Jana says

I had the opportunity to share a copy of Scar Island by Dan Gemeinhart with my BookRelays Twitter group. What an intense, exciting book! It is the story of Jonathan Grisby, a young man who has been sent to the Slabhenge Reformatory School for Troubled Boys. This institution is in a massive, albeit crumbling, complex on an island. The place is just awful and his sentence appears to be a long nightmare. But on the first day after his arrival, tragedy strikes and all of the grown-ups are gone. Suddenly the kids are in charge. The inmates are running the asylum.

The book is so well written, I was hooked from the very beginning. The story sort of reminded me of Holes by Louis Sachar and Lord of the Flies by William Golding. The characters are very well developed. We find out about them in bits and pieces throughout the narrative. But the main character is very mysterious. It takes a long time to figure out the crime for which he was sent to this island, although the reader is frequently told that it was pretty bad.

Once the boys are on their own, Jonathan manages to find a library from which he can borrow old books. The first book he takes is Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. He starts reading it out loud to one of his friends, and soon there's a whole group of boys who wants to hear it. I love the way the warmth of reading by candlelight with friends is contrasted by the cold, dark imagery of rats, sword, and the hungry menace behind the ancient door.

There's plenty of drama in this book. I think a lot of young readers will enjoy the conflict and suspense that

seems to end each chapter. It's hard to put the book away, when you just want to know what's going to happen next.

There's some strong language and some pretty intense imagery. This would be just right for a mature middle grade reader.

Barbara says

As soon as I got wind that this book was available, I knew I had to read it since I like how this author tells his stories. I raced through it in one big gulp. Although it is nothing like his previous two books, *The Honest Truth* and *Some Kind of Courage*, it does feature a young male protagonist as those others do as well. Jonathan Grisby has been sentenced to ten weeks at the harsh Slabhenge Reformatory School for Boys due to a crime that is revealed slowly to readers. Eaten up by guilt, Jonathan knows he deserves whatever punishments come his way, and he is all set to endure whatever happens. But clearly, this place is not designed to reform anyone since its leader, the Admiral, relies on draconian techniques to keep the inmates in line and has little patience for self-examination or atonement. When this cruel man and the other adults on the island die during a freak accident, the boys are left to their own devices. Anyone familiar with *Lord of the Flies* will be able to predict what happens. One of the toughest boys, Sebastian, decides to take over, and the boys hide the bodies of the adults. Things go from bad to worst as Sebastian tolerates no disagreement, and one of the frailer boys, Colin, angers him by questioning his authority. Jonathan, too, displeases Sebastian by not accepting his offer of friendship, and his exploration of the edifice reveals a hidden library and librarian who offers him books to while away his time. Interestingly, the books he loans to Jonathan are *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treasure Island*, and *Lord of the Flies* although Jonathan never gets to that one as he reads the books aloud to the other boys. Even as a Category 5 hurricane races toward the area and the boys' lives are endangered, Jonathan reaches within for the courage to save his friend Colin, perhaps compensating for his inability to save his sister Sophia in an earlier time. While I had a pretty good idea from the beginning where the story was going, I still enjoyed the descriptions of the water rising during the storm, that hidden library, and the enormous rat, Ninety-nine, and Jonathan's own reluctant bravery. While some might be bothered by the fact that readers are left in the dark as to where and when this story takes place, that omission only added to the pleasures of reading the book for me. I think I'd be willing to read this man's grocery list. And who knows? The book just might prompt some young readers to take a peek at the books mentioned in this one.

Ann says

Oh wow wow wow. This might be Gemeinhart's most suspenseful middle grade novel yet. A tale of misfits and outcasts, forced to survive in a dark and creepy island prison. I can't wait for its publication!

Abby Cooper says

Couldn't put it down!

The Reading Countess says

I am an official fan of Dan Gemeinhart. Scar Island is my third read by him, and it's his third home run with me. He has an engaging way of grabbing you by the shirt collar and pushing you to read more, and more and more until...VOILA! You realized that you gulped the entire book in one sitting.

Scar Island is his darkest plot yet. Set on a remote island once used as an insane asylum, young boys who have been sent to Slabhenge Reformatory don't go willingly. They are court-ordered to wile their time doing repetitive hard labor to pay off the sins they have committed in society. Jonathan, the new twelve-year old boy, finds himself the unwelcome target of the head of the "school." The fifteen boys find themselves in the unusual predicament of sudden independence when a freak accident wipes the handful of adults in charge out. What happens when "bad boys" are left to their own devices? What is that incessant banging down in the basement? Will Jonathan ever forgive himself for what he did in order to be sent to Slabhenge? And what about that huge, one hundred year storm heading straight for the sinking island? Middle grade readers will likely read well past their bedtime to find out the answers to these and many more questions.

The pretext is set up much like William Golding's classic tale of island survival, Lord of the Flies. In fact, Gemeinhart makes no bones about the comparison because he actually mentions the book in HIS book. One of the many things that makes Scar Island work is the "librarian" tucked away in the deep confines of the reformatory. He is the only adult on the island Jonathan feels he can trust, and in return, he is rewarded with a classic book (or two, or three). Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe and yes, even Lord of the Flies make an appearance within Scar Island. You can take the librarian/teacher out of the school (Gemeinhart is no longer working in an elementary school setting full time...he's hit it big!), but you can never take the school out of the librarian/teacher-turned-full time author. These classic books, often ignored and largely going unnoticed by middle graders, will surely receive some much needed resuscitation after kids read references to them in Scar Island.

Besides a nod to classic literature, though, readers will likely pick up on the messages of bullying, the strength of family ties, and forgiving oneself of past wrongdoings. Although I marked this book as a "guy read," Scar Island will appeal to both girls and boys alike (and even middle-aged teachers). Highly recommended!

Now I just have to bide my time waiting for Gemeinhart to hit another home run...I think I'll run to the library and grab a copy of a classic book. After all, as Scar Island's librarian repeatedly says, "...you cannot leave a library without a book."

Julie Kirchner says

Dan writes another amazing book! I was lucky to receive an ARC to share with our #BookVoyage group and what an adventure Scar Island is!

Jonathan Grisby is sent to Slabhenge Reformatory School for Troubled Boys. It is a stone structure set in the middle of the ocean. It made me think of Alcatraz and was definitely more similar to a prison than a school. He joins other boys and a group of ruthless adults determined to teach the boys the errors of their ways while stripping them of any self worth they might have left. Jonathan accepts his fate, feeling he is deserving of whatever horrifying punishments are in store. His sentence is longer than those of the other boys leaving the reader to wonder what a young boy could have done that is so horrible.

A surprising turn of events leaves the boys on their own with no adult supervision. A blessing or a curse?

They decide to enjoy their freedom for a while before leaving the island, but with freedom comes danger and someone is going to have to be brave enough to save them all!

Fantastic book! Highly recommend!

Jacqueline says

I wanted to finish this before midnight 2016, but fell about 75 pages short, so it's my first finish of the new year and my last book of 2016. Lord of the Flies with an interesting twist. I like it for parent read aloud - if for no other reason than the opportunity to talk about how your secret failure may be terrible, really terrible. But we are all hiding secrets we think will make us less appealing to others. It's a common theme in kids books. Worth the conversation time. And a page turning plot to keep the interest over the course of days.

Scott Fillner says

Dan has done it again! Another gripping story sure to satisfy all readers.

This time Dan brings us an amazing story of loss, leadership, survival, and redemption. Along the way of this story, which is nearly impossible to put down, Dan gives us strong emotion and locations we can close our eyes and see through his excellent details.

Dan has created strong adolescent characters which reminded me of books and movies including The Outsiders, Goonies, and Lord of the Flies. He creates antagonists that will make you grind your teeth in frustration and yell at the book because of their despicable acts.

This is destined to be another instant classic from Dan. He certainly has become and proven himself an author that we have come to know and trust for amazing writing and gripping tales.

Cameron Chaney says

Scar Island is a middle-grade contemporary/survival story written by Dan Gemeinhart. It follows Johnathan Grisby who is sent to Slabehenge Reformatory School for Troubled Boys. The school is an old lighthouse building that sits on its own small island in the middle of the sea, which reminds me very much of the lighthouse at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

We are unsure at first why Johnathan has been sent to this place. All we know is that he is very sad, has burn scars on his arms and back, and writes home to his parents asking them to give his love to Sophia. Whatever happened, he feels he deserves to be at Stabehenge.

The adults in charge of the school are very cruel and when they are all killed in a lightning strike, the boys of Slabehenge decide to stay at the school and make it their own domain. From there, the story transforms into a story of power, survival, bonding, friendship, guilt, and ultimately redemption.

I picked this up at my book review group as part of my job. Honestly, I didn't expect much out of it. The cover didn't grab me but it was one of the few books left on the table. Little did I know that of all the books I

chose that night, this would be my favorite.

Scar Island hits hard and has true emotional impact. I was completely surprised at how invested I was in the story and in its characters. I went into this without any expectations and came out feeling sad, hopeful, and uplifted all at once. Keep an eye on this one.

4.5 stars

Leigh Anne says

I won an ARC of Scar Island in a Twitter giveaway by the author. I was one lucky winner!

One thing I feel makes a great writer is when each one of their books has a different feel. This is what I have felt when I read all of Gemeinhart's books. Scar Island will reach a reader that might be different than The Honest Truth reader or Some Kind of Courage reader.

His ability to create a setting - and this is some setting - is amazing. I have used many of his passages as mentor texts for writing lessons.

This book comes out in January, and you may as well just put it on your list now - it is that good!

Patrick says

Lucky to get an ARC of this and read the whole thing in one sitting. A complete page turn about a reform school on an island that is taken over by the group of residents! Loved every page and every full paced moments that occurred throughout the entire story!

Stacey says

Wow, wow, wow!
