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Lizzie and Dad live in a rainy town in the north of England. It's just the two of them, and Auntie Doreen, who pops round to check Lizzie's spellings and tell Dad he's daft. But today there's something unusual going on: why is Dad building himself a pair of wings and studying the birds to see how they fly?

My Dad's A Birdman Details

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Author : David Almond , Polly Dunbar (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review My Dad's A Birdman for online ebook

Laura Dowsett says

Written in the third person, this book tells the story of Lizzie and her Father. Although never explicitly written, it is implied that Lizzie's Mother has died and so Lizzie and her Father are left to cope alone. It seems to me to be a story in which Lizzie and her Father overcome their grief through 'Father's' obsession with being able to fly and their partnership in the Human Bird Competition. Although this story did have some sad undertones, it is ultimately a humorous read (especially with the introduction of Auntie Doreen!) The illustrations in the hardback version (Polly Dunbar) added immensely to the reading of the story; it especially helped bring to life the colour and humour present in the Human Bird Competition.

I think this book would suit being read aloud to a class, the descriptive language and witty dialogue is likely to grip all.

Elise says

"My Dad's a Birdman" is a brilliant retelling of the Daedalus and Icarus myth for contemporary times, but it was a little disturbing, especially at the beginning. I love the feeling of being surprised by the strange details of an odd tale. In fact, that kind of surprise is one of the greatest joys of reading for me. With that in mind, however, maybe this one should be shelved as one of those "children's books for adults." There is some valuable wisdom here about the power of love and the necessity of taking a leap of faith during the hardest and darkest times in our lives.

Damian Curran says

I think one of the things I liked about this book the most was the illustrations - which I think brought it to life. I thought the illustrations themselves reminded me of Quentin Blake books - which themselves reminded me of my childhood so was quite happy that I picked this one line title in choosing the book to begin with. The book is about a Dad who wants to enter a crazy competition, and in turn acts like a bird. His daughter (Lizzie) enters the competition with him. We meet some extremely funny characters like the mad aunt - who tries to stop them entering the competition. I loved the heart warming relationship between father and daughter, which i thought was cleverly done. There are sensitive issues in this, where the book does talk (not for very long) but about losing a parent - but it's been done in such a way that really makes the book resonate with you. There are other themes carried throughout like the hope of getting there and making it, and holding on to your beliefs and dreams which again I thought warmed the heart! Good book, and a fun read!

clare o'c says

Lizzie and her dad live in a British city and are clearly suffering the loss of Lizzie's mother. Lizzie has to get her dad up and see that he eats and dresses. Dad is completely caught up with being a bird. He's eating bugs and has made fantastic wings from things he's found and plans to enter the Great Human Bird Competition

and that has Auntie Doreen very worried.

As the silliness goes on, with a Mr. Poop coming round to sign folks up for the competition, Lizzie begins to take a kinder view of her dad's nuttiness eventually making her own wings and entering the contest herself. The tale is a lovely look at how the death of a loved one can throw people off the rails and worry their family. Kindness and listening and not giving up helps those left behind to heal.

Alice Greene says

Alice: 5 stars. Terrific.

Jenny: 5 stars. A very charming book about a dad and his daughter who are trying to cope with life after the death of the mom. The book does not come out and say that the mom died, but that she is gone. The book gives the impression that dad is lost and he directs his energy to creating a set of wings to enter a contest to fly like a bird. Daughter is trying to hold them together by watching over dad, like a parent. Aunt gets wind of it and tries to get the school teacher to make the daughter live with the aunt. It ends with the contest being a big failure, yet it brings them all together because it was a great experience nonetheless. A great read that I read to Alice.

Selma D says

My Dad's A Birdman by David Almond and illustrated by Polly Dunbar

Published: 2007

Age range: 7 years +

Brief Synopsis:

This is an imaginative story of fiction. It provides an element of descriptive wonder, set in a realistic real world setting. Jackie Crow is Lizzie's father, who sees himself as a 'Birdman'; somebody that can fly with man-made wings just like a bird. Lizzie is a young girl who takes on the mother figure in the household, looking after her father (who is perhaps dealing with depression after the loss of his wife). It is an endearing story of unconditional love, juxtaposed with the humorous and larger than life characters of Mr Poop and Auntie Doreen. The novel follows their journey as things start to change whilst preparing their wings for 'The Human Bird competition' to be held at the River Tyne near where they live. Will they fly or will they fall in the 'drink'?

My Opinion:

I would interpret this as a novel about loss, yet it is dealt with in a light-hearted manner, that it actually becomes a story of a man wanting to fly. The issue of loss is not dealt with directly, yet it is inferred between conversations between the characters. As a result Jackie has become detached from reality and yearns to be a bird, to be free and fly the great Northern skies, all to please and make his daughter Lizzie happy. Almond shows the role reversal of parent and child, Lizzie has responsibilities other than school, becoming a carer for her father by making sure that he is eating well.

David Almond creates a light-hearted atmosphere about a serious issue. This is a good book to use to enlighten and develop the use of imagination in writing and inform students of loss. For this reason, I think this novel should be used as an example to explain the different types of households and families that exist. To cement the idea that everyone has their own type of family unit. The novel ends with the moral that it's not the winning that matters but the taking part. This fits in well with highlighting the importance of participation. In the novel even though the characters fail to take off into flight like a bird, they become

closer and showed that regardless of their situation, they still care for one another.

Uses In The Classroom:

This is a simple book, in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure, to read to children aged six, however children aged eight and above will get the most out of it. The long descriptions will help them in identifying how to tackle creative writing. Ideal to be read aloud to a class, which could be completed within a week as it's not very long. This is a good resource for cross curricular activities, to be used to support topics in art, drama, science, design and technology and literacy.

For a key stage one class, after reading through the whole novel, asking students to draw their own 'Birdman' competition entry will allow them to be creative and express themselves in art lessons. A further development would be within science and topics of forces, resistance and weight. To use the idea of creating wings, allowing students to think what the best materials will be to glide through the air. Looking at different modes of flight and how it can be adapted to a smaller scale. This enriches a child's imagination as well as developing their problem solving skills.

With a key stage 2, Year 3-4 class a good incorporation of the book would be to use the theatre adapted version and teach students, 'reading theatre'. To be used within literacy lessons, this would help them understand the uses of emphasis in reading and, promote confidence in reading and acting out scenarios. Enabling students to understand how punctuation can be used to represent excitement, anger, frustration and different moods and emotions. Within science and design and technology, the idea of creating wings to fly though the sky would be a good project to support the novel read within literacy lessons. Children would first learn about resistance and force, and then they would research the best materials to use to make models that will fly the best. This can be put into practice by putting students into groups and measuring which model travels the furthest.

Zoe Pluck says

I was excited to read this after reading Skellig, and it didn't disappoint. A lovely, fun story with fantastic illustrations.

Christopher says

David Almond is exceptional. He is an author that gives young readers enough to take with them to bed at night and come out triumphant the next morning. He wants kids to think and be challenged, but he has an uncanny ability to mete out the goods in dashes and dollops perfect for his audience.

I would highly recommend this book for a stage 2 (years 3 and 4) shared reading text or group text.

Like all his books, it warrants real discussion to draw young readers to the big themes which they might overlook (and this is a masterful ability by Almond) if they read it alone.

This is a tale of a caregiver who has lost the ability to make sound decisions. His daughter rises to the challenge of raising herself, keeping her dad as safe as possible, and warding off an intrusive, but well-meaning aunty. It is also about recognising the value of seeing things differently, and being respectful of those who might be cracked, but might also be visionary.

If you're old man was William Blake, you'd have yourself a handful. Well, this dad's a birdman.

L.H. Johnson says

Dear David,

Well, you got me. After my rapturous reading of My Name is Mina, I came to My Dad's a Birdman with open arms. I fell in love with the jacket and then, I fell in love with the book.

The thing about your books, about Mina, about Skellig, and about My Dad's a Birdman, is that they are full of magic. And it's not top-hat, wand-wielding, rabbit out of a hat magic. It's the sort of magic that lives next door. Or in the kitchen. Or in the hands of a dumpling pulled together by song.

And it's the sort of magic that knows shadow, and knows light. It's the magic that knows pain, that understand that life can *be* pain, but doesn't give it rhyme or reason or rationale. It's the sort of magic that just *is* and accepts that it *is* .

And it's beautiful. It's beautiful.

And My Dad's a Birdman is beautiful. It's the sort of book that you have to go along with, because if you're left behind, that's it. You need to jump. You need to fly. Because if you don't, then you're just grief, raw and shadowy and lost in a life you once lived.

So David, can you stop making me cry? Can you stop making me cry with the quietest of words and the softest of sounds and the damn damn suet that seems to just embody everything and everyone in the briefest of moments?

And can you just, please, just keep on doing what you're doing?

Yours,
Me.

Powells.com says

David Almond struck a chord that resonated throughout the Kids' Team with My Dad's a Birdman, a novel that is whimsically illustrated and darkly comic in a very British way. The story of Lizzie and her dad bonding over the Great Human Bird Competition (which also serves to mask their grief over Mom's death) has both the strange lightheartedness of Roald Dahl's Matilda and the emotional maturity of Michael Rosen's Sad Book. My Dad's a Birdman was originally a play, and one of the character's names is Mr. Poop — try reading it out loud and not laughing.

Recommended by Adam P., Powells.com

Fionn Oakes says

This book was amazing, absolutely loved it. However, I did feel something was missing.

Pato Pereyra says

Un libro bellísimo y necesario

Que retrata con mucha poesía la relación entre un papá y su hija

El Sr Cuervo intenta volar, y así participar de una competencia para pájaros humanos. Su hija, Isabel, que lo quiere y protege primero intenta detenerlo, pero al final se une en su intento

Es la tía Dorita la única con los pies apoyados firmemente sobre la tierra. No importa que el Sr Popó la invite a sumarse a la competencia, ella no lo haría...como sí lo hace el profesor Menta, el maestro de Isabelita que se termina entusiasmando

Los personajes son altamnete queribles, las ilustraciones muy bellas, y el final...tan lleno de magia que me dio pena cerrar el libro y dejarlo ahí, solo...

Recomendado, Almond es un autor que siempre me sorprende

Gwen the Librarian says

Okay...here I am a month later and I have to say just thinking about this one creeps me out...keep that in mind...

Lizzie and her dad live alone together. Dad wants to be a bird. He eats bugs, makes wings, and doesn't do normal adult things at all. Lizzie is the adult in the family but can't cope because she's a little child. An aunt checks in on them frequently, but does not understand how to deal with their world. When a "human bird contest" comes to town, Lizzie and her dad decide to show off their stuff.

This is tough book. It's whimsical and sweet, but confusing. Is Lizzie's dad mad or merely daft or simply fun and child-like? Is this a problem we need to worry about? I must confess that I was worried and had a little worried worm in my tummy the whole time I was reading. Judge for yourselves, I guess.

Also, I was dismayed at how the book is marketed to appeal to Roald Dahl fans since it is nothing like the same kind of disturbed that his books are. Uncomfortable, not raucus.

Polly Dunbar's illustrations are delightful, as always; she's one of my favorite illustrators.

A Severs says

A lovely story exploring responses to grief - great at all levels. I finished it and immediately my 6 year old daughter snapped it up - she's enjoying it so far and it's the first long book she's read on her own.

Ben Trevail says

It's batty. It's barmy. It's wonderfully wacky. A terrific heart-warming story of a family coping with grief, enjoying each other's company and shared experiences. Very Dahl-esque and very good.
