



Hooper

Geoff Herbach

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From Geoff Herbach, the critically acclaimed author of the Stupid Fast series, comes a compelling new YA novel about basketball, prejudice, privilege, and family, perfect for fans of Jordan Sonnenblick, Andrew Smith, and Matt de la Peña.

For Adam Reed, basketball is a passport. Adam's basketball skills have taken him from an orphanage in Poland to a loving adoptive mother in Minnesota. When he's tapped to play on a select AAU team along with some of the best players in the state, it just confirms that basketball is his ticket to the good life: to new friendships, to the girl of his dreams, to a better future.

But life is more complicated off the court. When an incident with the police threatens to break apart the bonds Adam's finally formed after a lifetime of struggle, he must make an impossible choice between his new family and the sport that's given him everything.

Hooper Details

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From Reader Review Hooper for online ebook

Katie Fitzgerald says

Adam Reed, formerly Adam Sobieski, spent his childhood in Poland in less-than-ideal circumstances. Now that he has been adopted by Renata, his American mother, he lives in Minnesota and attends the local high school, where he is an up-and-coming basketball star and best friend to outsider Barry, who has a number of family issues himself. Though Adam knows that basketball is his passport to all the good things life has to offer, and has in fact been invited to join a prestigious travel team called the Fury, there are some roadblocks standing between him and success. He lacks confidence in his skills as an English speaker, so he often does not talk to his classmates or teammates, leading them to assume he is either disabled in some way or a snob. He also has problems managing his anger and worries about losing his temper as he sometimes did in Poland, which would jeopardize his career. With the help of Carli Anderson, another basketball star who has great empathy for Adam, and his teammates on the Fury, Adam slowly begins to come to terms with his past and to come into his own as both a person and a basketball player.

I have yet to read a Geoff Herbach book I didn't love. While Hooper is more serious than Herbach's wonderful Stupid Fast trilogy, it is every bit as engrossing and fast-paced. Herbach has such a talent for creating believable characters, and Adam may be his most layered protagonist yet. Though many issues are touched on in this book - identity, diversity, racism, child abuse, immigration - the strength of the main character keeps the story from becoming bogged down in political messages. The motivation to keep reading is not the desire to see how one particular conflict is resolved, but to find out what happens to the endearing Adam in all aspects of his life.

The descriptions of sports in this book are also great. I am not someone who follows sports, but I love sports fiction, and the basketball action in this book is as entertaining as everything else. Herbach does a perfect job of balancing descriptions of plays with Adam's thoughts during games and practices, and even someone like me who knows very little about sports vocabulary has no problem following everything that takes place. Herbach always reminds me of Chris Crutcher; with this book, the comparison becomes even more apt. But whereas Crutcher's characters are often very obvious representations of particular causes and problems, Herbach's Adam is just a completely believable and well-rounded person who happens to face some issues. Even after he ceases to have these problems, he would still be interesting to read about.

Hooper is geared toward a teen audience, but the content is certainly appropriate for younger readers as well. There is some romance, but nothing particularly steamy, and the interplay between Adam and his teammates is very reminiscent of the way characters interact in Jason Reynolds's middle grade Track series. Kids who like Fred Bowen as fourth and fifth graders could also easily move on to this book in middle school and enjoy it, especially if they are big basketball fans.

It's early in the year, but I'm already fairly certain Hooper will make my list of favorite books of the year. I'd love to see Herbach also receive some award recognition for his consistently excellent writing. Maybe in 2019? Either way, Hooper is a must-read for fans of YA sports novels.

This review also appears on my blog, Read-at-Home Mom.

Casia Courtier says

Hooper by Geoff Herbach is a sports contemporary YA book. It is a first-person narrative about Adam Sobieski Reed, a young boy originally from Poland, but adopted by an American woman. At the beginning of the book, Adam has already lived in America for a while. He has learned English and is doing well in school. He is also a basketball player.

I haven't read many sports fiction books. In fact, I think the last time I've read one was in middle school with the soccer fiction book, Tangerine. However, that isn't to say that I didn't like the book. I just know very little about sports and don't really read books with a sports theme.

That said, Hooper isn't a book about basketball.

It's about a basketball player. A young man trying to navigate in a country he isn't sure he's a part of, in a family he isn't sure he deserves, speaking a language that isn't his first, and on top of that, undergoing what every person does . . . adolescence. In the midst of all that, Adam gets a chance of a lifetime.

He gets to be a part of a college-bound basketball team. A team that, if he keeps going, can set him up for a college scholarship and a possible professional career in the sport he loves.

What I really liked about this book is that Adam's narration is similar to a second language English speaker. I say this not in a bad way. For some background, I took a TESL (Teaching English Second Language) class in college and have helped middle school children who had English for their second language. Much of what they said and did was similar to Adam's own ways.

He is a boy from a different culture trying to understand the new one he has been placed in. He's not sure about certain sayings or customs and will just continue agreeing with something even though he may look strange to others. It's the fact he doesn't want to seem stupid that he does this. It's a type of mask in order for him to connect with his peers in a country he is unsure of.

I really liked that.

It was difficult to read sometimes. The prose is written in a way that makes you see the world as he sees it and speak the language as he does. It's not broken English, but there are moments where you will feel slightly disjointed while trying to determine what's going on. This way of narrating really makes his character more interesting. Though, as a reader reading for fun, it can be jarring and may take time to understand.

That said, the book is a good one. It's about acceptance and finding a family. It's about realizing that everything you go through doesn't make your life miserable, it makes you who you are and what you do with that is what matters. These things are important lessons and to put it in the narration of Adam's story makes it that much more interesting. This, I would say, would appeal to both the sports lover and the child trying to navigate in a country that they are trying to adopt and be adopted in.

If this book was around while I was still volunteering in that middle school ESL class, I would have mentioned it for the teachers. I would have suggested it to some of the children. And now, as I'm thinking of one day getting that TESL certification and volunteering again, I have a book that I would recommend.

Aarya Bharadwaj says

This book really showed how love and sports can give you experiences that you have ever had.

Something that really stood out to me was how the author used metaphor in the phrase "Basketball is my passport". Metaphors are used in to basically connect two things that you wouldn't usually connect. When the Adam says "basketball is my passport" he really is saying that all the experiences, places he's gone, and his role models have all come from basketball. The author wants us to know that his experiences are his passport, what's taking him around.

Now of course, really Retina had brought Adam into the U.S, and some may say that Retina is his passport, but it is really basketball. But what does this all mean? It means that basketball is where he can take his mind off things, meet influential people he never would have met. Traveled to places he never would have traveled. (view spoiler) Basketball is what makes him, not who is Polish past is, but his American future. It relates to us in the real world that we don't only play sports because its fun, but the experiences that it gives us.

Amy says

OK, I RARELY read sports books. And when I do, I NEVER give them 5 star reviews. Usually because in order for it to be a true sports book, and not just a realistic fiction book with a team in it, the plays have to be pretty heavy handed, the dialogue and the storyline suffer (in my opinion), and the characters are flat outside of their athletic ability.

This was not that type of sports book.

Yes, there were plays. Yes the main character was good at sports. Yes, there were plenty of team dynamics. But this was more than just about winning a championship. This was about what it means to be part of a team and what you have to do to earn a spot as a teammate, and more importantly, as a friend. I can not wait to get back to school and recommend this to my students and staff. I am already planning on ordering extra copies. Highly recommend.

Adam Reed wasn't always Reed. Before he was Adam Sobieski, a Polish kid abandoned by his father in Warsaw. Now, he has been adopted by Renata and has figured out that he is actually pretty good at basketball. Especially since he's only been playing two years. Even with all of his skills on the court, he still isn't completely accepted at school. But all of that is about to change when Carli, the local college's coaches' daughter takes note of him and decides to help him improve his game. This leads to a spot on an elite traveling team with a group of guys who have been playing together forever. The D1 Fury is all about responsibility and the players have to sign an extensive conduct agreement. When one of the key players is kicked out due to a misunderstanding with the police, social media blows up. And Adam has to figure out what he is willing to risk in order to stand up for what is right.

Like I said, this is a highly recommended, first purchase book in my opinion. Give it to kids who like sports books. Give it to kids who want to read about someone learning to stand up for what is right. Give it to kids to get them ready for *All American Boys* & *The Hate U Give* .

Madison says

It is going to be hard to put the magic of this book into words. What at first seems to be a simple tale about a boy who plays basketball is actually a richly detailed and poignant story of family, belonging, racial injustice, finding home, and settling into the person you were meant to be. Hooper, with a style all of its own, captures these timely themes in an original and approachable way.

“Basketball will be your passport.” Adam doesn’t exactly understand what that means. After all, he already has a passport from when Renata adopted him and brought him from Poland to his new home in the USA. But he does love basketball. Loves the freedom he finds only on the court. Loves the way it silences the anger and painful memories. As his basketball skills start to give him new opportunities on the court, Adam must balance these with the challenges he faces off the court. And maybe, through it all, he will discover a home, family, and friends, and finally a place where he belongs.

Hooper is a timely, addictive, and powerful book. The first thing that struck me was the clarity and uniqueness of Adam’s voice. Herbach’s writing immediately conjured for me the voice of this 16-year-old boy, with slightly faltering English, and a unique view of his world. Through his adventures of the next few months, Adam’s English improves, as does his understanding of social situations, how others view him, and how he can influence this.

Hooper highlights the importance of relationships: friendship, family, romantic relationships, team cohesion, and that incredible feeling that you belong. Through each of these relationships - with his friend Barry, with his adopted mother, with his new and old teammates, with crush/friend/more Carli Anderson - Adam learns something about himself and about others.

I didn’t want to put this book down. There was just something that captured me. The short chapters, awesome chapter titles, and Adam himself made this a book that was all too easy to love. But it continually surprised me, first with how much I enjoyed it and also with the many layers that are continually added to the story. Racial prejudice and injustice become important themes in the story, as Adam learns the power of one voice and the power of many voices. So too, bullying, violence and how to control these situations are timely subjects. And of course, the themes of accepting others, understanding and celebrating difference, and learning to work together are neatly woven throughout the story. Never preaching, but, as Adam’s friends do for him, gently showing.

Okay, I knew I wouldn’t be able to do this book justice. No words can fully express how this book surprised and enchanted me, captured my attention, and impressed me with its unique character voice, portrayal of topical themes, and how it entwined all this in a highly readable book about a brave young boy and his love of basketball.

The publishers provided an advanced readers copy of this book for reviewing purposes. All opinions are my own.

Find more reviews, reading age guides, content advisory, and recommendations on my blog [Madison's](#)

Library.

Terri says

Minnesota author, Geoff Herbach, scores big with his 2018 publication, "Hooper." This is my favorite book of Herbach's so far.

Timely issues such as bullying, immigration, adoption, racism, friendship, domestic abuse, etc. are covered here with aplomb! As a result, "Hooper" is much more than a sports or basketball novel! The characters are realistic, flawed, and multi-dimensional - even the antagonists! The reader can easily empathize and believe these individuals. My true test of a good book is whether or not it moves me, makes me feel something. I cried both with joy and sadness several times throughout the book.

Highly recommended for both young adult males and females - grades eight and up. This should be an addition to all young adult collections - first purchase and multiple copies.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Plus

Adam Reed (born Sobieski) is fairly happy with his adoptive mom Renata, living in Minnesota. He hangs out with his quirky friend Barry, who has a hard life of his own, living with his mom Tiffany in a local trailer park. Adam has some anger management issues, and does not talk a lot, because he didn't get adopted until he was 11, and he doesn't feel that his English is that good. He frequently runs afoul of Kase Kinshaw, a jerk who calls him "Duh" and gives him a hard time at school. When his basketball skills bring him to the attention of fellow player Carli Anderson and her father, he gets an opportunity to try out for the Fury travel team. Carli helps him not only with improving his basketball skills, but is nice about driving him places when Barry's car falls apart. She also encourages him to talk more, and to interact with his new teammates so they don't think he is stuck up, and the two eventually start dating. When Renata starts dating a neighbor with two young daughters, Adam is concerned that it will end with her being unhappy, although he rather likes Michael and enjoys playing with his daughters. Throughout the course of the book, we learn more about Adam's neglected childhood in Poland, and watch as he improves his basketball skills and tries to get a handle on his internal rage so that he has a chance to attend college.

Strengths: Herbach is a brilliant, brilliant writer. He understands what his audience wants, and he delivers: sports, romance, interpersonal problems, humor. He has the best ability to write a slightly off-kilter voice of any author I can think of! Adam's English isn't broken exactly, but his voice is so distinctive that I could HEAR it. The basketball details are interesting, and Carli is fantastic. She is a better player than Adam (although recovering from injuries), and she has a fantastically equal relationship with him. Adam's anger and his problem interacting with others is realistically portrayed, as is Renata and her difficulties. Adam makes a few comments about his black teammates that are insensitive, and I appreciated that these were fully discussed. Teens do sometimes make comments that show a lack of understanding, and the other players don't just react to Adam, they show him the error of his ways (in a slightly angry fashion, which is also

realistic) and he is able to understand what he did wrong and change his views. We need more of this in teen literature. Enjoyed this tremendously. Herbach's Stupid Fast, Fat Boy vs. the Cheerleaders, and Anything You Want (which is definitely YA) are all fantastic.

Weaknesses: While I understood the genesis of Adam's social difficulties, it might have helped to have a tiny bit of explanation about how childhood trauma can lead to issues of anger and failure to connect with others. Not sure how you would work them in.

What I really think: While Adam is an older high school student, Herbach is circumspect in language and situations enough that this is perfect for middle school students who want more of a challenging read.

Dawn says

Great story! Fans of Carl Deuker will love this book.

Ben Lamorte says

Stumbled onto it. My son read it in 2 days and literally asked "why is this book so damn good?" at 11pm and didn't want to sleep... hasn't happened since Harry Potter series. We were looking for a basketball book that is also decent literature, and Hooper is that book.

Vicky Who Reads says

psst! want more fun stuff on *Hooper*? check out my stop on the blog tour for a giveaway and more!

4 stars

I'm not a basketball fan, or a sports fan in general. But I did really enjoy *Hooper*. A lot more than I expected to.

At first it came off as a kid playing basketball to be successful--but this grew so much more into that.

It's honestly quite understated, kind of like Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay* in the way that there are a lot of things being said without actually saying anything. For one, Adam is an immigrant from Poland and so part of the narrative revolves around what it's like for him to be an immigrant and not have a perfect grasp on English--thing like hearing "MVP" as "envy pee" which gave me a laugh.

I did think that there was a little hitch here because at the beginning this barrier was really emphasized and by the end it was never mentioned. Although it's great that the communication barrier is down and Adam is talking to people, even if it's not perfectly, I feel like he could still encounter a few things that he wasn't too sure of. I definitely wanted to see growth, but I did think it was almost too fast in the language aspect.

There's also commentary about justice--not only with Adam's best friend who is getting into some trouble that wasn't really his fault, but also with his teammate Khalil who is also getting into unwarranted trouble because of racism.

I really liked how all of the storylines weaved together. There was the thing between Adam and his best friend possibly getting expelled--but there was also something about Adam blowing off his best friend. And his best friend staying with Adam's family. And Adam's mom feeling neglected as well.

It really all comes through in a great big circle as the subplots intertwine, and I really enjoyed that about this book.

It talks about so many realistic things--justice, friendship, immigration, family--and I thought that this was the best aspect of the book.

It was real and although Adam definitely isn't perfect at the beginning, and still not perfect at the end, he really learned a lot about life throughout the book. He finds courage and he faces bullying and it all really comes full circle.

I also really enjoyed how developed the side characters were--both Adam's adopted mom Renata and his best friend Barry and his love interest Carli and his teammates and even the guy who bullies him. They all really contributed to what made this book feel so whole and complete.

It was easy to read and I sped through it in a couple of days. Of course, there's sporty stuff in there, but even as a non-sporty person, I could really appreciate the base of this story. It's not really about basketball (although basketball is cool) or what it's like to be a Polish immigrant. It's about growth and learning and figuring out how to do what is right.

Overall, I really enjoyed this one and think that anyone looking for a more nuanced read, or readers who love basketball, will enjoy Adam's story in *Hooper*.

Thank you so much to Jean Book Nerd Blog Tours and Harper Collins for sending me a copy in exchange for an honest review!

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AviP_C2 says

This book was amazing I loved it. This book was awesome because it was a very interesting topic for me because I am a hooper. When Adam Reed (the protagonist) meets The Bully Adam is freaked out and gets beat up by the buff football Bully. But Adam slowly starts becoming a star in his local school. After winning eleven consecutive games, the team gets invited to the NEO Nike tournament. They have to play six games in that tournament. After they win in the NEO Nike tournament. I really want to be like Adam one day. I want to go to the NEO Nike Tournament. Overall this book was a 5/5 because I could connect to this a lot.

Haley Laverne says

This was a fantastic book for sports fans and non sports fans. This book is about a young Poland born boy named Adam Reed or previously known before coming to america Adam Sobenski. Adam was adopted by

an american woman named Renata who lives in Philadelphia where Adam starts to play basketball. After a while they move to a small rural town in Minnesota where Adam starts to draw attention to his basketball skills and his ability to slam dunk. Along with Adam a young female player who plays basketball for the girls team at the same high school named Carli talks to Adam about the potential he has and that he should try out for the AAU team. Adam who develops a crush on Carli throughout the book helps him along with the identity issues he is having by having changed his last name when coming to America, being called "Farmer Boy", and also facing racial tensions once he makes the AAU team. At first when Adam makes the team that is predominantly black look at him like he will not fit in and try to throw everything at him to make sure he fails. One night Adam and the rest of his teammates go to a players house where Adam for the first time talks more English then he ever has tells about his past and where he comes from and the difficult challenges he has faced. Soon the team becomes united and more unfortunate events happen to Adam where he always believe basketball was his passport. Passport to what? Is it a passport if the game can only take you so far? Maybe Not? This would be a wonderful book for young adult readers to read because many social issues are addressed in this book. Many young adults play sports and they could relate to the characters. This book I would use in my classroom as away for students to read about social issues and how they connect to their real life. While reading this book I felt that I related to the characters and what he faced happens to a lot of young adults who play or try out for sports and the racial stigma that might associate in sports.

Dan says

Hooper was the first book I read in 2018. It was also one of the best basketball stories I have read since The Crossover. With complex characters, humor, and some of the best basketball scenes I have read in years, this is a book you definitely want to check out!

Teenreadsdotcom says

In Geoff Herbach's HOOPER, readers meet Adam, a teenage boy with a talent for basketball and a passion for much more.

Adam is a young boy adopted from an orphanage in Poland by an American woman. He lives in Minnesota, playing basketball for the local high school team --- and he's good. Really good. Good enough to be playing on teams he's never even dreamt of playing with. Basketball is his passport to a greater life but how much is he willing to sacrifice for the sport?

HOOPER deals very heavily with basketball but that was not a barrier to me at all (unfortunately, my 5'0 frame leaves much to be desired when it comes to basketball). I was not expecting to relate to this book very much because I am not someone who enjoys watching or talking about basketball. However, I was surprised by how much the topic of identity resonated with me. I moved to the United States when I was 10 years old. At that age, I was too Nepali to be American and I was too American to be Nepali. Adam dealt with a lot of those similar feelings. He was too American to be Polish but too Polish to be American. The feeling of not fitting in either culture you live around felt incredibly authentic to me and Herbach portrayed in a way that resonated with me. Additionally, Adam's feeling of resentment towards Renata, who he started viewing as someone who directly took the action that made him feel like that was also something I really understood.

One of my absolute favorite parts of this book was how it showed how parts of everyone's life can be broken. Supporting characters in books often either have it all or have nothing at all. However, this book was different. Every character had something they were struggling with but also had good things happening in their life. This felt more real to my experience with people in general. Every character felt like they were real and not just one dimensional figures on the page.

The progression of Herbach's writing style from the beginning of HOOPER to the end allowed me to feel like I got to know Adam well. I related to his story but also found all other characters to be real and complex.

Reviewed by Pranshu Adhikari

Hoover Public Library Kids and Teens says

Adam is Polish, adopted and brought to America just four years ago. He doesn't feel he fits in until he discovers basketball. And, even then, something keeps him on the outskirts. Until The Fury.
