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Eugene is remembering the summer of 1938 in Frenchtown, a time when he began to wonder “what I was doing here on the planet Earth.” Here in vibrant, exquisite detail are his lovely mother, his aunts and uncles, cousins and friends, and especially his beloved, enigmatic father. Here, too, is the world of a mill town: the boys swimming in a brook that is red or purple or green, depending on the dyes dumped that day by the comb shop; the visit of the ice man; and the boys’ trips to the cemetery or the forbidden railroad tracks. And here also is a darker world—the mystery of a girl murdered years before. Robert Cormier’s touching, funny, melancholy chronicle of a vanished world celebrates a son’s connection to his father and human relationships that are timeless.

Frenchtown Summer Details

Date : Published May 27th 2009 by Laurel Leaf (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9780440228547

Author : Robert Cormier , Dan Krovatin (Illustrator)

Format : Mass Market Paperback 128 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Poetry, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Teen

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From Reader Review *Frenchtown Summer* for online ebook

Maciek says

It was the summer of the airplane.

Written entirely in free verse, *Frenchtown Summer* is the story of Eugene - a 12 year old boy who writes down the events of a single summer in a series of short vignettes. Obviously modeled after the author, Eugene is a shy and sensitive but also very observant boy: he notices many small details of the city as he delivers the local paper, and tries to make sense of them to understand the world and himself. Eugene says that he knows his name, but does not know who he is; he feels unimportant and unnoticeable, "as transparent as rain"; he adores his mother, who looks like a movie star and fills the home with warmth and love; but he is unable to connect to his father, who Eugene thinks is "Like a silhouette...as if obscured by a light shining behind him".

Even though he is quiet and unassuming, Eugene displays a budding love for adventure and a sense of wonder; he gets a first pair of glasses and sees the world sharply for the first time, falls in love with a nun teaches piano lessons. As he delivers the local paper, he observes many places and situations in his part of town, even venturing into the cemetery. Although Eugene writes about his favorite aunts and uncles with interest and even affection, it is always his silent, distant father, with whom he most wishes to notice and acknowledge him, and whom he wishes to understand and bond with. As the *Frenchtown Summer* will draw to an end, a surprising experience might draw Eugene closer to his father than he would ever have expected.

Frenchtown Summer is very different from other novels by Robert Cormier not only in form, but in tone; it is full of nostalgia and sentimentality of a world long gone, but is not overdone and schmaltzy. Cormier's work is usually very bleak and even depressing - see my reviews for *I Am the Cheese*, *The Chocolate War* and *After the First Death* - but *Frenchtown Summer* is an exception: it's full of bittersweet nostalgia and longing, and is ultimately very satisfying. Obviously basing *Frenchtown* on his own hometown of Leominster and Eugene on himself, Cormier is very successful at conveying a young boy's longing for his father's love and the wish to understand life's "unanswered questions and mysteries". Although very short, *Frenchtown Summer* is full of genuine emotion and great reading for both children and adults alike.

Kim says

Short lines of concentrated wording spin a deep story of family life from a snapshot in history.

AJ Richard says

Short and sweet! More of a long poem than novel. Even though it takes place before I was born, still evokes childhood memories of my hometown.

Charlotte says

poetry, coming-of-age

I stumbled across this book of free verse poetry written by Robert Cormier and didn't really know what to expect. Apart from the fact that this book is written in verse, the narrative style is different from Cormier's other work. Each chapter is a separate vignette about some aspect of the narrator's summer, so it's a little hard to piece together what this boy's life is really like. He has a brother and spends his summer exploring the areas around the Frenchtown. He lives close to several extended family members, and the story seems to focus mainly on the narrator's relationship with his father, who is cold and distant to the boy.

This book contained a little more conclusion than in other Cormier works, but there still is a lot of emotion unresolved. This set of poems is largely autobiographical, and it's interesting to see Cormier in the story.

Mariah says

Autobiographic vignettes of Cormier's youth written in verse that is succinct and vibrantly evocative of the author's boyhood and his hopeful, yet sad, soul. I read this soon after reading Gantos' *Dead End in Norvelt*. They are excellent companion books, with similar themes, yet two distinctly different tones.

Denise says

Vignettes in free verse of memories during a sweltering summer when Cormier was 12. Like his fiction, these have a way of leaving one a bit bruised, those memories that crush. Although found in the children's section, I think adults would get more out of this.

Garth Mailman says

A young boy's memories of a working class walk-up tenement enclave.

Odd formatting on the e-Book version I read

BookWitch_Namine says

Frenchtown Summer was, at first, a bit normal for me. I mean, it seemed to just be accounts of Eugene's life (which it is). Then came the flashlight and the metaphor, the meaning of the flashlight, almost made me cry. I really enjoyed the whole book after the page about the flashlight he received. I believe it was page 81 and I think people should read this book especially for the metaphor on life which, vaguely put, is that happiness is not eternal but can be rekindled.

Mick (JCT) Dundee says

Frenchtown Summer

Frenchtown summer a realistic fiction book by Robert Cormier felt like a tour through the gloomy section of town known as Frenchtown. Eugene is a boy who lives with his joyous mom and his mysterious and silent father who he wants only to connect to but his father's persona gets in the way of their father son relationship so then he is forced to go through the significant summer with no plans of trying to connect with his dad. This is a book I really enjoyed.

One thing I liked about this book is the setting the setting of Frenchtown is very strange kids dive in a river running in many colors because of dye poured in by Frenchtowns many hair shops. And the clown sitting on the street corner who mysteriously disappears and comes back years later. I also thought the characters had unique personalities like the good cop of Frenchtown who has the hots for a married lady, the multiple bullies walking through Frenchtown looking for new victims and Eugene's sad uncle Med you loathes for an unknown lost love.

Frenchtown summer is a great book most everyone generally would enjoy if they are ok with the plot mysteries. And the setting is mysterious as I didn't know if they were in America, Canada or France. Overall I give this book four out of five stars since it is such a short read I recommend you read this as a time killer.

Ricardo Flores says

alright.

Chris says

While I wasn't sure about the whole poems-as-novel thing, Cormier still managed to do what every writer strives for: pull some emotion from these hardened bones.

There are a few moments in this book that are just gorgeous, some of which I wish were expanded upon. But all things considered, Cormier compacts a heartfelt story into these 113 pages, that are made even more sparse by the poem format.

Truly, Cormier is one of the better writers you've probably never heard of, and I'm glad my interest/liking/admiration of him has been re-awakened by this quick little read.

Lindsey says

This is the story of summer in frenchtown. The comb factory is the center of life, and all the members of town work there. The story is told in poetry, so it is a different sort of read, but I found myself enjoying it nonetheless. There is not really a coherent plot to this novel, it is more like a collection of impressions

throughout the summer. Since it is told through poetry the narrator can tell the sensory perceptions of his childhood summer, and even the terrible events that are portrayed in some of the chapters are softened. My diagnosis of the book is the same as my diagnosis of the author... interesting but odd. There are always some disturbing scenes in his novels, but they are very well told stories. Robert Cormier, as always, makes you think.

Laurel Hoffman says

This was an interesting, very quick book about a boy's summer in the 1930's (I believe), and his struggle to define his relationship with his father. It is written in verse form and has some beautiful writing. I have to give it four stars because I thought the writing was great, even though poetry isn't my thing so much. I really enjoyed how Robert Cormier used metaphors in his writing, and how the feel of the book did make me think it was a story being told by a young boy.

Joey Moleff says

Amazing

Patrice Sartor says

GENRE: Fiction, realistic fiction, verse.

SUMMARY: Eugene experienced a busy summer. He had a paper route, got glasses, endeavored to learn more about his family, and visited the cemetery, among many other adventures. So much happens to Eugene during that summer, and he is hyper-aware of it all, from how his piano teacher smells to the few things that his older brother cares about.

EVALUATION: Written in verse and told through a first-person perspective, Frenchtown Summer takes the reader on a magical journey to experience things at a certain place and time in a young boy's life. Sometimes before we can figure out who we are, it helps to figure out what kind of people your parents are. Eugene understands his mother, though his father remains a mystery and distant from him, until a special incident brings them closer together. I really enjoyed Eugene's telling of how he saw his world.

WHY I WOULD INCLUDE IT: A solid tween collection should include some variety, and this fictional account is told in a verse format that may not be fully familiar with some tweens. It can be read fairly quickly, though it still contains a strong story that includes much activity.

READER'S ANNOTATION: Through the eyes of Eugene we learn about Frenchtown one summer, its locations, some of its inhabitants and the varied things they do.

ITEMS WITH SIMILAR APPEAL:

- Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse.
- Stop Pretending by Sonya Sones.
- Foreign Exchange by Mel Glenn.

