



Mr Gum and the Secret Hideout

Books Reviewed:

[Mr Gum and the Secret Hideout](#) [1]

Issue:

[186](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Andrea Reece](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The inhabitants of Lamonic Bibber reassemble for a new Mr Gum adventure, the eighth in the series no less. Alongside central characters Polly, Friday O'Leary, gingerbread headmaster Alan Taylor and Billy William the Third, there are welcome returns for minor characters including Crazy Barry Fungus, and Captain Brazil, summed up by Polly, with Andy Stanton's typically eye-catching imagery, as 'mad as a bulldozer's cousin'!

There's a great new character too: Surprising Ben pops up here, pops up there, he's everywhere, in a surprising way. Except on page 98. Because just when you expect him to surprise you, he surprises you by not surprising you at all.

Surprising Ben perfectly encapsulates the clever silliness of these books, and Stanton's ingenuity. Even eight adventures in, Mr Gum's adventures are fresh, inventive and still surprising readers in the most unexpected ways.

Under the laughs and the apparent mayhem is a hugely satisfying story too. Stanton keeps an imperceptible but firm hold on his narrative. So we shouldn't be surprised that Surprising Ben has one more appearance, bursting onto the scene, when we genuinely least expect him, to precipitate the explosion in the sherry factory that brings the book to its horribly messy climax.

David Tazzyman's illustrations are the perfect accompaniment, as wild and energetic as ever.

And Stanton slips in two wonderful final treats for his readers: first there's a description of the Portuguese version of Mr Gum's favourite TV programme, 'Bag of Sticks' (it's the same, but with Portuguese subtitles), and then a story told entirely, but logically, backwards: who would have expected that? Genius!

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[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/mr-gum-and-the-secret-hideout>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/186>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/andrea-reece>