



Eighth Grade Bites

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Razorbill is Puffin's new imprint for teens. Launched in response to the success of **Twilight** and the myriad supernatural romances currently dominating bookshop shelves, it promises readers not literary quality but unputdownable commercial teen fiction.

Eighth Grade Bites, with its super cool cover, sassy mix of vampire lore, gore and love-lorn adolescents, certainly delivers on that front. The first in a series, it introduces Vlad Tod, high-school geek with all the usual problems: at school he's bullied, mocked, or ignored.

But Vlad has a whole set of totally unique problems too. He's half-vampire, afflicted with ?fear of the sun, craving for blood, inability to enjoy Italian food?.

Although both his parents are dead, Vlad copes pretty well, living with kindly Aunt Nelly. Nelly it is who smuggles pre-packed pints of blood for him from local hospitals, because feeding off his neighbours is never going to win him any friends ? ?just think of the looks he might get at the next block party if he got caught. Pointing, accompanied by frantic whispers, ?Isn't that the kid who ate Billy?? Things become much more difficult however when the arch-enemy of his vampire father arrives, determined to put an end to Vlad once and for all.

The plot unfolds gleefully and rapidly, preventing any lingering over the language or dialogue, which is perhaps just as well, and despite one unpleasant vampire attack, it all feels strangely innocent and endearing. The bite ? sorry ? when it comes is satisfying though: after spending most of his eighth grade year in hiding, Vlad suddenly realises he's tired of bullies, whether they be class mates Bill and Tom, or the ruthless vampire D?Ablo. He finds depths of strength he never knew he had. It's great fun, made the more so thanks to a sly reference to Scooby-Doo.

In fact Heather Brewer keeps the vamp in vampire throughout, interspersing the action with a sharp teen humour that is much harder to pull off than she makes it look. Vlad Tod is a hero who is happy to laugh at himself and his situation. He'll win lots of fans, deservedly so.

Running Order:

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