



# The World of Norm: May Contain Nuts

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

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The success of the various Diaries of a Wimpy Kid have put awkward pre-adolescent boys right in the publishing spotlight and fans of Jeff Kinney who pick up **The World of Norm** looking for a Wimpy style adventure will not be disappointed. It's a funny, clever book that puts a particularly British spin on geek appeal.

Norm is a hapless twelve-year-old, nearly but crucially not yet thirteen, beset by all sorts of problems and tribulations: his family have just moved into a new house, considerably smaller than their old one; his two little brothers cause huge amounts of trouble, for which Norm gets the blame; he is desperate to pimp up his bike, though he knows that no matter what he does, he'll never be as good at riding it as his best friend Mikey; even his dad's snoring is driving him mad. Never has the pre-teen cry 'It's not fair!' been so heartfelt.

Norm's astounding self-absorption makes him oblivious to much of what is going on in his world, and completely unable to interpret his dad's moods. His misunderstandings result in many of the book's laugh out-loud moments. Gradually though, and long after the reader, Norm comes to understand why the family had to move, and just why his dad is so grumpy.

Meres clearly understands the world of the twelve-year-old boy very well indeed, describing it with a witty veracity that is touching as well as funny. Alongside the humour there are moments of insight and sympathy for Norm, and even for his parents.

The different relationships between the characters are a real source of enjoyment too. I particularly like the scenes between Norm and his straight talking grandpa: 'Pain in the backside, grandchildren. Always scrounging sweets and wanting you to play with them.' Of course, we know he doesn't mean it.

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