The Neverending Story

The hype which accompanies the recent film may ensure sales, but I wonder how many young readers will reach the end of *The Neverending Story*. Bastian, fat, weak, unloved and unlovely, comes by an unusual book, which nurtures his only real talent, that of storytelling. Ensconced in his school attic he becomes increasingly absorbed with the adventures of Atreyu, the questing hero and enters the world of Fantastica himself, becoming its acclaimed saviour and learning, after several mis-adventures, how to cope with his own, real world, to which he is eventually returned. It's a very long, strenuous read and brimming over with imaginative invention, factors which could restrict its child readership. It exceeds beyond saturation point for fantastic artifice and becomes indigestible. In the last half especially, the reader is presented with a monotonous series of creative problems, followed by slick fortuitous answers. The end hints at a sequel -- it could be repeating on us neverendingly!

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