



Prom

By Laurie Halse Anderson

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Philadelphia high school who doesn't care about the prom. It's pretty much the only good thing that happens there, and everyone plans to make the most of it—especially Ash's best friend, Natalia, who's the head of the committee and has prom stars in her eyes. Then the faculty advisor is busted for taking the prom money and Ash finds herself roped into putting together a gala dance. But she has plenty of help—from her large and loving (if exasperating!) family, from Nat's eccentric grandmother, from the principal, from her fellow classmates. And in making the prom happen, Ash learns some surprising things about making her life happen, too.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Ages 12 and up. Who would have thought the author of the gritty classic *Speak* had a gift for comedy? Here she demonstrates her comedic talent in the warm and witty story of Ashley, who is definitely not a prom-type person, and her best friend Nat, who lives for the prom. When the math teacher disappears with the funds just eleven days before the dance, determined and organized Nat goes into high gear to find alternative ways to make the prom happen and drags an unwilling Ashley into the flurry of urgent details.

Ashley has enough problems in her life already, starting with the complexities of her crowded but loving working class family -- her extremely pregnant mother and her three exuberant and prom-crazy aunts, and her cab-driving father and three younger brothers, who think nothing of happily trashing the kitchen in a game of hot dog baseball. Then there's Mr. Gilroy, the evil vice principal of discipline, who has Ashley on endless detention, her awful job at EZ-CHEEZ-E, where she has trouble seeing the customers through the eyeholes of her rat costume, and her good-looking but lowlife boyfriend TJ, who wants her to join him in a future as depressing as the dank one-room apartment he has so proudly rented for them. Not to speak of Nat's loony grandmother, who wears her red bathing cap even when she's not doing the backstroke in a wading pool, babbles at Ashley in Russian, and spits on the floor to show her disapproval.

But in the end it's grandma with her skill at baking (pastries to bribe the custodians) and sewing (a magical prom dress) who saves both the prom and Ashley's belief in herself and her future in this delightful and heartfelt novel. --*Patty Campbell*

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up - Ashley is (in her own words) normal - a senior from a lower-middle-class family, dating a high school dropout, and gearing up for graduation but with no plans for college. But when the new math teacher steals the prom money, Ashley - who swears she doesn't care - finds herself sucked into turning nothing into the best prom ever because it means the world to her best friend, Nat. This is a light, fast read, with "chapters" that range from one line to five pages and a narrative voice that is only a little smarter than it should be. Some secondary characters - Ashley's mother and Nat's grandmother - jump off the pages; unfortunately, the teens do not fare as well. Boyfriend TJ is a stereotypical tough boy, and Ash and Nat's other friends are there mostly as filler. But the first-person narration and the essentially personal nature of the story - Ashley finally comes into her own and proves herself successful at something other than garnering undeserved detentions - makes this a flaw that readers will overlook. In fact, the major flaw is that it's hard to believe Ashley is as bad a kid as she might have you believe. But teens are notorious for making petty misbehavior sound bigger and badder, so this could be read as further proof of just how normal she is. Those looking for another *Speak* (Farrar, 1999) may be disappointed, but this book will delight readers who want their realism tempered with fun. - *Karyn N. Silverman, Elizabeth Irwin High School, New York City*
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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Gr. 9-12. Ashley understands that the senior prom at her Philadelphia school is a big deal to her close friends even though she thinks it's "stupid." So imagine her shock at finding herself the most likely candidate to save the prom after a troubled math teacher makes off with the funds. Many of Anderson's previous novels have been heart-wrenching accounts of teen survivors, such as the date-rape victim in *Speak* (1999) and the yellow fever survivor in *Fever 1793* (2000). Here, though, Anderson's bright, witty narrator is a self-professed "ordinary kid," whose problems, while intensely felt, are as common as a

burger and fries. Ashley's as ambivalent about her gorgeous but undependable boyfriend as she is about her college prospects; her part-time job serving pizza in a rat costume is far from fulfilling; and her family, which she calls "no-extra-money-for-nuthin'-poor," mortifies her (her pregnant mother's belly "screams to the world" that her parents have sex), even as they offer love and support. In clipped chapters (some just a sentence long), Ashley tells her story in an authentic, sympathetic voice that combines gum-snapping, tell-it-like-it-is humor with honest questions about her future. The dramatic ending may be a bit over the top, but teens will love Ashley's clear view of high-school hypocrisies, dating, and the fierce bonds of friendship.

Gillian Engberg

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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