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# Brave



## Synopsis

In his daydreams, Jensen is the biggest hero that ever was, saving the world and his friends on a daily basis. But his middle school reality is VERY different--math is hard, getting along with friends is hard...Even finding a partner for the class project is a huge problem when you always get picked last. And the pressure's on even more once the school newspaper's dynamic duo, Jenny and Akilah, draw Jensen into the whirlwind of school news, social-experiment projects, and behind-the-scenes club drama. Jensen has always played the middle school game one level at a time, but suddenly, someone's cranked up the difficulty setting. Will those daring daydreams of his finally work in his favor, or will he have to find real solutions to his real-life problems? The charming world of Berrybrook Middle School gets a little bigger in this highly anticipated follow-up to Svetlana Chmakova's award-winning *Awkward* with a story about a boy who learns his own way of being brave!

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Svetlana Chmakova was born and raised in Russia until the age of 16, when her family emigrated to Canada. She quickly made a name for herself with works like *Dramacon*, *Nightschool*, the manga adaptation of James Patterson's *Witch & Wizard*, and the webcomic *Chasing Rainbows*. She graduated from Sheridan College with a three-year Classical Animation Diploma. Her latest work for

middle grade readers, *Awkward*, has been a runaway critical success and was named one of YALSA's 2016 Top Ten Great Graphic Novels for Teens!

After reading *Awkward*, I saw this book and instantly decided to buy it. No regrets. The book's message is really important and bullying is a very serious issue. I actually cried a bit while reading the part where Jensen cried. (The scene above was one of those "depression" references that you can't have too much of in a children's book. The art style was amazing, as always, so you don't have to worry about that. I think the expressions are SUPER cute and funny. The ending of the book was a pretty good (kinda) plot twist. IF there's a third book (I hope so) I'd like to see more of Foster as a "nice" character. In conclusion, I loved this book and hope to see more from the author!

I can't say that I have personally read this title, but my 9 year old daughter absolutely adores graphic novels and this is one of her favorites. She has read it multiple times and I'm sure she will go back to it again.

one of the best books i have ever read

My 9 yr old daughter hated reading before she discovered graphic novels. She reads way past her grade level now. These books are the best. She loves this author.

My 10 year old loves this author; she said this book is wonderful if you liked *Awkward*.

I was super excited when I found out that *Awkward* would have another book, this time about another character but still taking place in the same school. I pre-ordered it immediately. The protagonist this time is Jensen, a slightly overweight guy who is in middle school and is utterly confused by a lot of things (though I don't blame him, anyone would be confused). He is trying to traverse through school and getting by as best as he can. Some hurdles on his way include maths (I can imagine he is confused though, that math looks hard, or maybe it is just my brain blocking out all the maths I had in high school), but also bullies, friendship (is it truly friendship or not). Jensen was a great character and I loved his daydreams, his hopes, and how hard he tried to work to get better at things. His drawings are amazing. Though his sunspot obsession was a bit too much at times (I did like that the author explained why he was so obsessed though). That he saw his daily life in game levels was really fun, I did the same thing as well!! I would have liked to see a bit more of

his family situation at home. There is some talk about it, but not that much and I am sure it would have made the character even better. The book changes in mood/tone as the book progresses. From slightly confusing events (how the hell do I survive this day) to him finding out that maybe he is truly bullied (um, yes, yes you are) to him getting more and more sad as the days pass by. The ending is back to happy again. I felt so sorry for Jensen, though I was shaking my head that he didn't get that he was bullied, and that he even thought that words wouldn't hurt. Um, sorry dude, but really, words can hurt just as much, if not more. Sorry, but those people in the art club were terrible. I was definitely not expecting that from Peppi, girl from the previous book, to go along with it, or at least not notice it happening. I just wanted to shake some people in the art club for making Jensen feel this way, for hurting him like that. Bleh, what a terrible club. :| Then there are Yanic and Foster, I so didn't like those guys. They were terrible. I was kind of worried that the author may do a redemption arc (due to some stuff happening), but thankfully that didn't happen. Just something Jensen decides on his own at the end, which fitted perfectly. The newspaper-club was quite fun, I loved how they tried to get Jensen to join a bit, even if it was with menial jobs. Though I do wonder if they did it to help him, because they wanted him in the group, or because they were just interested in interviewing him. Though I have to say I didn't always like the girls there. Jenny... I didn't quite like her that much. At times she kicked serious butt, but at times I was frustrated with her attitude and how easily she was pissed off. Plus she has a big case of bossiness, a character trait I absolutely don't like. She kept controlling all sorts of things, and I was quite startled that Akilah was still friends with her. If my friend kept pushing me, rejecting my ideas, and being so bossy? I wouldn't be friends with her, even if we had a few good moments. Jorge? He was instantly a favourite character. I just knew the type when we saw him the first time in this book. I just knew he was a giant sweetheart. Sorry, I have read too many books/manga/comics/graphic novels with this kind of character. :P The art style is still amazing, and I love it so much. I do hope we will have many more books coming in this series. Maybe next time we could have Jorge? Awww, please? I would recommend this book to everyone.

My 11yo 6th grader is an avid reader. Here is her review:--- "Jensen is an ordinary teenager who is ready for anything -- well, except maybe the worst catastrophe ever: Middle School! He barely makes the grade in most classes, and fails in two major areas: math and social life. His parents are rarely around, and he's bullied even though he doesn't realize it. But it takes some new friends ( Jenny, Akilah, and Felipe, aka the Newspaper Club and the owners of the popular 'Berry Scoop' blog) to help him end the bullying. This is a great graphic novel about having courage. All the

characters are funny, and Jensen's view on middle school is HILARIOUS! At different parts in the comic, it would turn into an old arcade game picture, with monsters that had the same hairstyles or features of the bullies! I also loved Jensen's friend Felicity's Sailor Moon character, Sailor Sunburst. She was EPIC! But if I had to pick a favorite character, it would be Akilah because of how sweet she is. I'd recommend this to all graphic novel fans, and especially to middle schoolers. I haven't read Svetlana Chmakova's "Awkward" yet, but had my mom order it right away!"

Svetlana Chmakova's "Brave" follows Jensen as he maneuvers middle school. Whether it was recent or far away, middle school is a weird time and "Brave" captures that vibe well. Jensen is a daydreamer and a bit of a timid guy. He is a little different but not unusually so. In him, the reader gets a good feel for the social world and whirl of Berrybrook Middle School. The drama of being picked for a group project; of failing math and needing to see a tutor; of being pulled into the good and not so good interactions. And then, of course, pondering what it means to be brave. Chmakova's artwork has always been good and I like how she has given her cast unique and distinguishable characteristics so they don't all look the same. Her writing has always been solid as well and it is well represented in "Brave." Jensen's middle school life feels authentic and recognizable. He's a main character that is easy to empathize with. There are a lot of lively characters yet Jorge, in his quiet steadiness, stands out. Overall, a well done presentation by Chmakova with good artwork, easy on the eyes lettering, and a solid story with a likable cast of characters.

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