

The Revealers: Contender or Pretender?

*[In autumn 2006, North Rockford Middle School in North Rockford, Michigan, carried out an all-school read of *The Revealers*. Afterward, the student newspaper, Northern Exposure, carried this thoughtful editorial by Collin Thomas, a seventh-grade member of the paper's staff. Collin's piece is shared here with his permission.]*

By Collin Thomas

We all know the book, some liked it, others shunned it; this book that was assigned for all of us to read at NRMS is *The Revealers* by Doug Wilhelm. The true question is what did NRMS think of "The Project that Saved the School."

From an insider's opinion I really don't think that it was that crucial for us to read this book in the first place. I mean, when I walk around this school I really don't see a lot, if any, of bullying going around here, or at least none that Wilhelm described so intensely. I think the people who intended for us to read *The Revealers* may be too concerned.

Don't get me wrong, I think that *The Revealers* was a very good book and it definitely did not fool around when it came to bullying. All I'm saying is that adults have their own way of thinking about kids and I feel that they think if a bully reads this story they will be emotionally changed within. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. In fact most bullies probably didn't even read the book, they just flipped through the pages until they found an answer to the problem in their packet, not because they're thick or close-minded, because they just think it is dumb and have too much pride to read the book.

Reading a book and taking a test on it sadly won't change a lot when it comes to something like bullying. Some ways to stomp out the flames of maltreatment are to crush it when you visually see it, or give kids something to do that doesn't involve violence or social bashing. NRMS has done a good job at doing that, and what I think is that they should focus on that rather than a book that could actually increase bullying. That's right, increase.

My extreme theory is that this book will actually give the bullies arrogance, like when they hear about Richie punching Russell, like it or not, a bully, in theory, will think, "Yep that's us, beating up the feeble." I fear that is the painful truth.

Even if NRMS did have a huge harassment problem, I don't think something like what the Revealers did with the e-mails and the bully lab would change anything just because of the way we kids think. Most kids would just say, "I doubt that ever happened." Then they would say, "Hmm," and forget about it in about 13 seconds.

But I can't speak for everybody. Maybe *The Revealers* did change you or others, and I say, "Good for you." But personally, when I read the book, I immediately wanted to write this article and I hope some of you agree with me.

Bullying may have been the core idea in *The Revealers*, but it certainly wasn't the only message Wilhelm tried to put across in his book. We can't forget the main characters and what they did so valiantly with their e-mails. As most of us know Elliot, Russell and Catalina were three kids who were fed up with bullies. As a result of their pent up fury they sent kids' bullying stories to everybody in the school to reveal the true awfulness of bullies.

This book is obviously trying to show that even if you are a so called "nobody," you can create something revolutionary, even something like exterminating the "bully" in bullies. I do believe this is true, but realistically I think that Elliot, Russell and Catalina would have to approach the problem much differently than they did in the story. I feel that if the trio were to do

what they did in the book, in real life, it wouldn't have been close to being effective, because of the way real middle-schoolers would've reacted. I know that if I received one of those e-mails that the trio sent out I would've skimmed through it and I would've said to myself, "How do I know this is true," and then I would've deleted it and gone about my business.

Those kids did exactly part of what they needed to do, get proof on video. The Revealers tried very hard to stop bullying, but let's face it—when it all comes down, middle-schoolers will listen to adults better than they will their peers. But the revealers received absolutely no real help from the adults. What the adults needed to do was step in and tell the students that bullying is a terrible thing and that if they saw anyone doing it they would crack the proverbial whip. Instead they let the kids resolve the problem themselves, and as you know it backfired and they almost were sued.

If we middle-schoolers think something isn't "cool" then we sure won't be doing that anymore. In other words, give bullying a bad ego. That is what they would've had to do in real life to stop bullying.