

Winger

By Andrew Smith

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Ryan Dean manages to survive life’s complications with the help of his sense of humor, rugby buddies, and his penchant for doodling comics. But when the unthinkable happens, he has to figure out how to hold on to what’s important, even when it feels like everything has fallen apart.

Filled with hand-drawn infographics and illustrations and told in a pitch-perfect voice, this realistic depiction of a teen’s experience strikes an exceptional balance of hilarious and heartbreaking.

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Winger By Andrew Smith Bibliography

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- Published on: 2013-05-14
- Released on: 2013-05-14
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal
Gr 9 Up—Ryan Dean West is the smartest student in the junior class at Pine Mountain boarding school, a starter on the rugby team, and two years younger than the rest of his classmates. He is also hopelessly in love with his best friend, Annie, who sees him as just a little kid. When Ryan Dean moves into Opportunity Hall, the dorm for misbehaving students (owing to an illegal cell phone encounter the previous year), he finds himself at odds with his roommate, the meanest member of their rugby team. Mark Boyett does a wonderful job narrating, especially Ryan Dean's voice, which reveals his wild imagination, full-blown adolescent hormones, and self-deprecating humor. Other characters' voices are equally believable. Friend Seanny is rendered with a deadpan monotone, while Screaming Ned, an old man the boys offer a ride to, is cantankerous, confused, and done with a high-pitched, scratchy cackle. Ryan Dean's cartoons, doodles, and charts, which add such charm to the print version, are described so that the listener doesn't miss anything. The resulting audiobook is laugh-out-loud-funny at times and heartbreakingly serious at others. This is a terrific recording of an unforgettable book.—Julie Paladino, East Chapel Hill High School, Chapel Hill, NC

From Booklist
Starred Review After he opened a vein in YA lit with The Marbury Lens (2010) and then went completely nutso in Passenger (2012), about the only thing that Smith could do to surprise would be a hornball boarding-school romantic romp. Surprise! Well, sort of. At 14, Ryan Dean West is a couple years younger (and scrawnier) than the rest of the juniors at Pine Mountain. He is a plucky kid—despite a tendency to punctuate his every thought with “I am such a loser”—who stars in the rugby team due to his speed and tenacity. The rail ties of his single-track mind, though, are his exploits (or lack thereof) with the opposite sex, particularly his best friend Annie, who thinks he is “adorable.” In short, Ryan Dean is a slightly pervy but likable teen. He rates the hotness of every female in sight but also drops surprising bombs of personal depth on a friend’s homosexuality, the poisonous rivalries that can ruin friendships, and his own highly unstable mix of insecurity and evolving self-confidence. Much of the story seems preoccupied with the base-level joys and torments of being a teenager, content to float along with occasional bursts of levity from some nonessential but fun minicomics by Bosma. But at its heart, it is more in line with Dead Poets Society, and by the end this deceptively lightweight novel packs an unexpectedly ferocious punch. Grades 9-12. --Ian Chipman

Review
"*Winger* broke my heart, like any great book should. Andrew Smith is a brave and talented storyteller who blows me away every time. Readers will love Ryan Dean West. This book is powerful, sweet and heart-wrenching." (A. S. King, Printz Honor-winning author of Please Excuse Vera Dietz)

"*Winger* is one of the most honest and beautifully raw novels I've read in a long time. Ryan Dean is a true original." (Matt de la Peña, author of Mexican WhiteBoy and We Were Here)

Winger

By Andrew Smith

(SSBFYR; ISBN 9781442444928; May 2013; Summer Catalog)

This brutally honest coming-of-age novel from Smith (Passenger) unfolds through the eyes of Ryan Dean

West, a 14-year-old, rugby-playing junior at the exclusive Pine Mountain school. He's two years younger than his classmates, hopelessly in love with his best friend Annie, and stuck in Opportunity Hall, the residence reserved for the worst rule-breakers. As Ryan Dean struggles with football-team bullies, late-night escapades, academic pressures, and girl troubles, he also discovers his own strengths. Like puberty itself, this tale is alternately hilarious and painful, awkward and enlightening; Bosma's occasional comics add another layer of whimsy and emotion, representing Ryan Dean's own artistic bent. The characters and situations are profane and crass, reveling in talk of bodily functions and sexual innuendo, and the story is a cross between the films *Lucas* and *Porky's*, with all the charm and gross-out moments that dichotomy suggests. That's what makes the tragedy near the very end all the more shocking and sudden, changing the entire mood and impact of Ryan Dean's journey. The last-minute twist may leave readers confused, angry, and heartbroken, but this remains an excellent, challenging read. (Publishers Weekly)

***** "[A] brutally honest coming-of-age novel...Like puberty itself, this tale is alternately hilarious and painful, awkward and enlightening...an excellent, challenging read." (Publishers Weekly, starred review)

WINGER [STARRED REVIEW!]
Author: Andrew Smith

Review Issue Date: April 1, 2013
Online Publish Date: March 13, 2013
Publisher:Simon & Schuster
Pages: 448
Price (Hardcover): $16.99
Publication Date: May 14, 2013
ISBN (Hardcover): 978-1-4424-4492-8
Category: Fiction

A boarding school is the setting for life-changing experiences in this smart, wickedly funny work of realistic fiction from the author of The Marbury Lens (2010).
Self-proclaimed loser Ryan Dean is a 14-year-old junior at Pine Mountain, where he plays wing for the tightknit rugby team. In a magnificently frenetic first-person narration that includes clever short comics, charts and diagrams, he relates the story of the first few months of the school term as he's forced to room with an intimidating senior on the restricted, euphemistic Opportunity Hall, due to transgressions from the previous year. He's completely head over heels for Annie, an older classmate who insists she can't be in love with him due to his age, and lives in fear of the "glacially unhot" teacher Mrs. Singer, who he's certain is a witch responsible for cursing him with a "catastrophic injury to [his] penis," among other ailments. He's also navigating letting go of some old friends and becoming closer to one of his teammates, Joey, who's gay. Smith deftly builds characters—readers will suddenly realize they've effortlessly fallen in love with them—and he laces meaning and poignantly real dialogue into uproariously funny scatological and hormonally charged humor, somehow creating a balance between the two that seems to intensify both extremes.
Bawdily comic but ultimately devastating, this is unforgettable. (Fiction. 14 & up) (Kirkus Reviews)

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Winger

By Andrew Smith and illustrated by Sam Bosma

(SSBFYR; ISBN 9781442444928; May 2013; Summer Catalog)

After he opened a vein in YA lit with *The Marbury Lens* (2010) and then went completely nutso in *Passenger* (2012), about the only thing that Smith could do to surprise would be a hornball boarding school romantic romp. Surprise! Well, sort of. At 14, Ryan Dean West is a couple years younger (and scrawnier) than the rest of the juniors at Pine Mountain. He is a plucky kid—despite a tendency to punctuate his every thought with “I am such a loser”—who stars in the rugby team due to his speed and tenacity. The rail ties of his single-track mind, though, are his exploits (or lack thereof) with the opposite sex, particularly his best friend Annie, who thinks he is “adorable.” In short, Ryan Dean is a slightly pervy but likable teen. He rates the hotness of every female in sight but also drops surprising bombs of personal depth on a friend’s homosexuality, the poisonous rivalries that can ruin friendships, and his own highly unstable mix of insecurity and evolving self-confidence. Much of the story seems preoccupied with the base-level joys and torments of being a teenager, content to float along with occasional bursts of levity from some nonessential but fun minicomics by Bosma. But at its heart, it is more in line with *Dead Poets Society*, and by the end this deceptively lightweight novel packs an unexpectedly ferocious punch.

(Booklist)

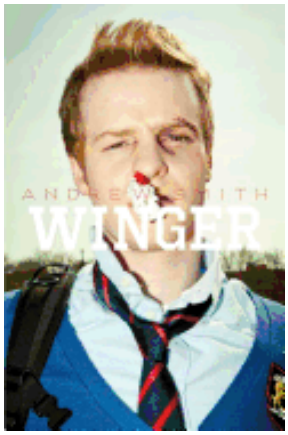
***** "This deceptively lightweight novel packs an unexpectedly ferocious punch." (Booklist, starred review)

"Amusing and touching in a “Looking for Alaska,” meets Rabelais meets “Friday Night Lights” kind of way.” (A. J.Jacobs, New York Times Book Review)

?

Winger

by Andrew Smith, illus. by Sam Bosma



share this

Winger is a classic coming-of-age story; readers will respond to its complete package of teenage hormones, first love and mischief.

Andrew W. Smith (*The Marbury Lens*) creates an appealing narrator: "Nothing could possibly suck worse than being a junior in high school, alone at the top of your class, and fourteen years old all at the same time." Ryan Dean attends the prestigious Pine Mountain school, lives in a dorm called Opportunity Hall with other wrongdoers, and plays rugby with his friends. Occasional black-and-white illustrations by Sam Bosma not only quickly acclimate readers to rugby, but also and more often to Ryan Dean's inner genius. This is Ryan Dean's make-it-or-break-it year to reinvent himself, or at least that's what 16-year-old Annie Altman says. Ryan Dean finds Annie "smoking hot in an alluring and mature, 'naughty babysitter' kind of way." She finds him "adorable." At first, the biggest obstacle in this no-way romance is their two-year age difference. All their incredible chemistry and hilarious banter may not be enough in the long run.

Smith's masterful narrative of the hormonal yet insightful teenage boy flows smoothly throughout the novel. Whether in service of Ryan Dean's emotional arc as he tries to get the girl, or smaller moments such as pep talks with his gay friend Joey, it's an unforgettable and unflaggingly appealing voice.

An unexpected tragedy awaits the hero, and while this heartbreaking scene may pain readers, they'll close this must-read book with a sense of hope. --Adam Silvera, Paper Lantern Lit marketing assistant and former bookseller

Discover: A classic coming-of-age story that combines humor and heartbreak in just the right amounts. (Shelf Awareness)

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Winger

by Andrew Smith

Ryan Dean West (aka “Winger” aka “West” aka “Asswing”) is a 14-year-old junior in high school and this is his year to remake himself in his own, better image. Not only is he the youngest kid in his class, but also one of the smartest, except when it comes to the opposite sex. Or anyone else for that matter. Regardless, Ryan Dean has a lot to figure out.

"Andrew Smith crafts something in WINGER that will have you thinking about the things you choose to say and those you leave unsaid."

Pine Mountain, his isolated boarding school in the Pacific Northwest, is a place of rules: wear your uniform, lights out at 10 o'clock, no facial hair (for the boys, at least) and so on and so on. And Ryan Dean is exiled to O-Hall, the dormitory for troublemakers, to live with one of the biggest jerks in the school. But for Ryan Dean, the benefits, such as rugby and crushing *hard* on his best friend Annie, outweigh many of the costs. If he could only figure out how to stop being such a huge loser (his word, not mine,) he might just squeeze a bit of fun out of the place.

As the school year ebbs and flows, Ryan Dean navigates his way through the social jungle of high school with a lot of help from his friends, even if he loses a few along the way.

WINGER is a character. The reader is offered an all-access pass into the sometimes-depraved mind of this teenager and while there is a ton to laugh at in his saga, you'll groan just as much as you giggle at this guy's bizarre thoughts and logical leaps. The book is interspersed with drawings created by Ryan Dean, graphing his emotions, illustrating his sexual fantasies with comic book-like flair and adding another layer of personality to what could already be read as a piece of diary fiction. Andrew Smith crafts something in WINGER that will have you thinking about the things you choose to say and those you leave unsaid. While Ryan Dean's simultaneous self-aggrandizement and self-deprecation can be a bit grating at times, the message of this novel should resonate deeply for anyone who sometimes gets trapped in their own head.

(Teenreads.com)

"Andrew Smith crafts something in *Winger* that will have you thinking about the things you choose to say and those you leave unsaid." (TeenReads)

Winger

Andrew Smith. Illustrated by Sam Bosma
Simon & Schuster, $16.99, ages 14+

A self-professed loser, 14 year old Ryan is at an elite boarding school, struggling with his crush on an unattainable girl and his bullying rugby-star roommate in this coming-of-age story.

(Los Angeles Times Summer Reading Guide)

Winger

by Andrew Smith; illus. by Sam Bosma

Fourteen-year-old Ryan Dean West plays wing on the varsity rugby team and is two years younger than all

the other juniors at Pine Mountain, “the best school around for the rich deviants of tomorrow.” He sees himself as a loser whose life is hell; picture him as a semi-articulate teen Dante taking readers on a journey through the various circles of hellish boarding-school life. Ryan Dean’s roommate, Chas Becker, is a “friendless jerk who navigated the seas of high school with his rudder fixed on a steady course of intimidation and cruelty.” Though at first Ryan Dean seems like kind of a nice kid, he ends up holding his own in the company he keeps—getting into fights, making out with Chas’s girlfriend, peeing in people’s drinks. In most stories of such journeys, the protagonist emerges having learned a lesson, but Ryan Dean pretty much realizes he likes the “magnificent shit” of boys’ camaraderie: “You can hate a guy off the pitch who will save your fucking balls on the pitch when you play on the same side. There is nothing more glorious than that.” Whether his increasingly macho swagger suggests unreliable narrator or true wild boy is left up to readers. Either way, jaded high schoolers may enjoy the messed-up vision of a school life even worse than their own.

(Horn Book)

? Smith, Andrew Winger; illus. by Sam Bosma.

Ryan Dean West is a genius, a fourteen-year-old junior among the kids at his posh boarding school who are socially, physically, and psychologically more advanced than he is. An unfortunate hacking incident has landed him in the dorm where they put chronic troublemakers, and his roommate is a bruiser named Chas who inspires fear in most everyone, though the fact that Chas and Ryan Dean are both on the rugby team means Chas limits himself to basic hazing because of the teammates’ code of honor. Chas does insist that Ryan Dean drink and play midnight poker, however, which puts him in dutch with his crush, Annie, who is trying to resist her feelings for him because he is two years younger than she. The chronicle of Ryan Dean’s junior year, punctuated with witty spot art that replicates the high-school doodles of a budding comics artist, is thus one of hazing, drinking, fights, pranks, misunderstandings, secret make-out sessions, first love, friendships lost, and friendships found, including a particularly strong one with Joey, the openly gay captain of their rugby team. The picture of private-school boyhood is fairly familiar, and the growth trajectory is similarly unsurprising, making this a far cry from the originality of Smith’s The Marbury Lens; the tragic twist at the end, involving the fate of Joey, especially rehearses a tired cliché about gay characters in YA literature, even if it has the credibility of the Matthew Shepard case behind it. Still, coming to terms with senseless cruelty and death is an essential element in the traditional coming-of-age teen novel, and the writing throughout remains sharp, funny, and perceptive about youthful male friendships. Readers who enjoy stylistically interesting stories about underdogs in boy world may therefore still find this witty and entertaining. (Bulletin)

"Sharp, funny, and perceptive about youthful male friendships. Readers who enjoy stylistically interesting stories about underdogs in boy world may therefore still find this witty and entertaining." (BCCB)

Blasting the boarding school blues
Review by Jill Ratzan
A reader looking to pigeonhole Winger into a traditional genre category may be in for a surprise. It’s a laugh-out-loud funny sports story set at a boarding school, but it’s also a serious look at the many different forms of love—and a subtle meta-narrative about the process of telling a story.

Ryan Dean West is an anomaly at his preppy boarding school—he’s 14 and already a junior—when his involvement in a petty crime forces his transfer from the boys’ dorm to Opportunity Hall, a bare-bones, prison-like residence for troublesome students. Despite this inauspicious start, Ryan Dean is determined that this will be the year he reinvents himself. As he gears up for rugby season, dodges an intimidating new

roommate, navigates girl trouble and develops a growing friendship with a gay teammate, Ryan Dean relates his story in a combination of bar graphs, line graphs, cartoon panels and imagined conversations with himself.

But something sinister lurks under the hilarious antics of the rugby team, and when Ryan Dean is finally confronted with a situation he can't laugh about, he finds that nothing in his familiar box of narrative tricks is enough to describe it.

Reminiscent of *Looking for Alaska*, Winger packs a punch that will leave readers rethinking their assumptions about humor, friendship and the nature of storytelling—and about the broad range of emotions of which teenage boys are capable. (BookPage)

"A reader looking to pigeonhole *Winger* into a traditional genre category may be in for a surprise. It's a laugh-out-loud funny sports story set at a boarding school, but it's also a serious look at the many different forms of love—and a subtle meta-narrative about the process of telling a story...Reminiscent of *Looking for Alaska*, *Winger* packs a punch that will leave readers rethinking their assumptions about humor, friendship and the nature of storytelling—and about the broad range of emotions of which teenage boys are capable." (BookPage)

"You're not going to find futuristic fantasies or superpowers in Andrew Smith's young adult novel *Winger*. Fourteen-year-old Ryan Dean West's life at a boarding school for the wealthy is by all accounts ordinary -- he has an unrequited crush on his female best friend, and he has to share a room with his rugby team's biggest bully -- but that's also *Winger"*s appeal. (CNN.com, What to Read This Summer: Top 20 Picks)

Smith, Andrew

Winger

2013. 448pp. $16.99 hc. Simon & Schuster. 978-1-4424-4492-8. Grades 10-12

Fourteen-year-old Ryan Dean West is super-smart, and attends the 11th grade at a posh boarding school. His nickname is Winger because of his position on the school's rugby team. When the book starts, Ryan Dean has been placed in Opportunity Hall, a separate residence for troublemakers. He is paired with the one of the "baddest" dudes on campus and is quickly initiated into a life of drinking, poker games, and other forbidden activities. He survives all the shenanigans and finds his first love. A darker secondary theme involving a gay student, Ryan Dean's best friend, contributes to the explosive ending. This book, which doesn't shy away from the use of foul language, would be of interest to most male readers. The addition of hand-drawn cartoons, drawings, and fake diary entries make it more appealing. **Carol Sasser, Media Coordinator, Albemarle (North Carolina) High School [Editor's Note: Available in e-book format.]**

Recommended (Library Media Connection)

"I am seriously moved beyond words after finishing this beautiful, hilarious, and heart-exploding book. Reading *Winger* is like running down a steep hill--you should probably slow down, but it feels too good to stop. Andrew Smith has written a wildly original, hilarious, and heartbreaking ode to teenage confusion and frustration. You'll devour it and then go back for more." (John Corey Whaley, author of the Printz and Morris winning Where Things Come Back)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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