

Ezra Exposed

Amy E. Feldman

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In Amy E. Feldman's middle grade novel *Ezra Exposed*, a boy jockeys for popularity via Instagram likes and finds that the internet is a bit more complex, and dangerous, than he ever imagined.

Finally in the double digits, Ezra is the last in his class to get his phone. He takes to it with the fervor of the newly converted. A curvaceous peach at lunch gives him the idea to post pictures of things that look like butts, a sure crowd pleaser for fifth graders everywhere. As his likes begin to climb, so does his social profile and with it, the pressures of popularity and its maintenance. Unfortunately, the dangers of the internet are not immediately apparent to the untutored: Ezra makes a huge mistake, one that might destroy the end of his school year or more.

The book nails middle school humor with its delight in matters of the body as well as the unending quest for popularity and its evolution with social media. Ezra struggles with friendships and their occasional morphing into romantic relationships while also wanting to be a kid who gets cool presents from his grandparents. With charm, the book exemplifies the pull between childhood and the impending teenage years that typifies the life of a tween.

The rigors of end-of-year graduation and the pull of summer provide a great backdrop for the churning unrest of ten-year-olds searching for the next thing to catch their interest, so the plot surges forward. The book also integrates important information about internet safety without sacrificing the story or becoming didactic.

Smart and funny, *Ezra Exposed* illustrates just how dangerous the push for popularity can be—particularly when it is paired with the internet and butts.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (November / December 2022)

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