



The U-nique Lou Fox

Jodi Carmichael

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In Jodi Carmichael's novel *The U-nique Lou Fox*, a young playwright learns lessons in creativity and perseverance.

Lou knows that she is destined to be a famous playwright. In the meantime, though, she is stuck navigating the fifth grade. Her ADHD and dyslexia don't make life easy, and Lou feels like her teacher is out to get her. When Lou's family faces big changes, she learns to lean on her friends—and her creativity—to find her way through.

Lou is delightful, full of spunk and wit. Even though spelling is hard for her, she adores big words (which are bolded in the text) and witty repartee, and she is always dreaming up new dialogue. Her enthusiasm sometimes turns to bossiness, however: she learns that part of being a good friend is listening to others' suggestions.

The narrative shifts between levity, as when Lou's friends pretend to be giant ants, and serious moments: Lou has an outburst with Mrs. Synder; she worries that she is responsible for bad things happening. But both highs and lows are normalized. The novel emphasizes healthy coping mechanisms, too, like talking through one's feelings with trusted adults.

The book also strikes an excellent balance between acknowledging the hardships that disabilities bring and making it clear that disabilities do not define people—they can even be strengths. Though Lou has trouble concentrating in school, her active mind means she can balance the intricacies of complex plots. Her struggles encourage others to learn more about dyslexia and ADHD. In the book's sweet ending, Lou dedicates her play to someone who she's come to understand is not so bad after all.

Both humorous and melancholy, *The U-nique Lou Fox* is a touching novel about a young playwright's self-discovery and creative triumphs.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (July / August 2022)

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