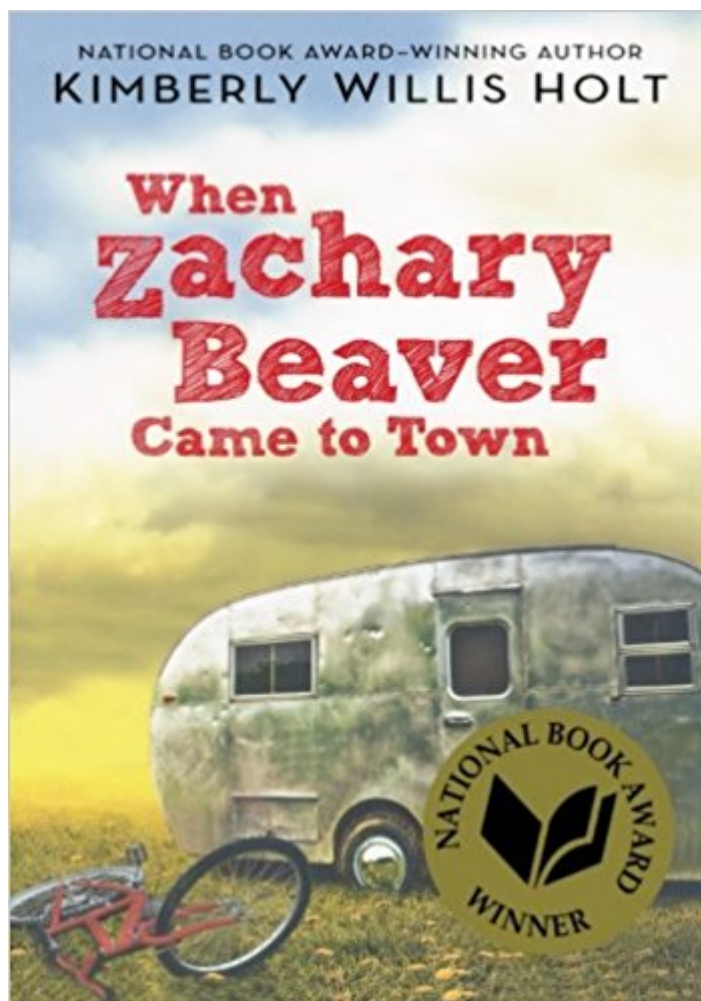


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# When Zachary Beaver Came To Town



## Synopsis

National Book Award Winner  
The red words painted on the trailer caused quite a buzz around town and before an hour was up, half of Antler was standing in line with two dollars clutched in hand to see the fattest boy in the world. Toby Wilson is having the toughest summer of his life. It's the summer his mother leaves for good; the summer his best friend's brother returns from Vietnam in a coffin. And the summer that Zachary Beaver, the fattest boy in the world, arrives in their sleepy Texas town. While it's a summer filled with heartache of every kind, it's also a summer of new friendships gained and old friendships renewed. And it's Zachary Beaver who turns the town of Antler upside down and leaves everyone, especially Toby, changed forever. With understated elegance, Kimberly Willis Holt tells a compelling coming-of-age story about a thirteen-year-old boy struggling to find himself in an imperfect world. At turns passionate and humorous, this extraordinary novel deals sensitively and candidly with obesity, war, and the true power of friendship. When Zachary Beaver Came to Town is the winner of the 1999 National Book Award for Young People's Literature. This title has Common Core connections.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 4 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Summer in the tiny Texas town of Antler is traditionally a time for enjoying Wylie Womack's Bahama Mama snow cones and racking up the pins at Kelly's Bowl-a-Rama, but this year it's not going well for Toby Wilson. His 13-year-old heart has been broken twice: once by his mother, who left him and

his father to become a country singer in Nashville, and then again by his crush Scarlett Stalling, the town beauty who barely acknowledges Toby's existence. But when Zachary Beaver, "The World's Fattest Boy," comes to Antler as part of a traveling sideshow, Toby begins to realize that there might just be people who have it worse than him. By reaching out to Zachary in small ways--such as helping him realize his lifelong dream of being baptized--Toby is better able to put his own problems into perspective. At the baptism, Toby finally feels at peace: "Zachary smiles and I wonder if he's feeling different. Because standing here waist deep in Gossimer's Lake... I'm feeling different--light and good and maybe even holy." By summer's end, Toby's friendship with Zachary has provided him with the emotional stamina to begin dealing with his mother's decision and to gracefully accept the fact that Scarlett will forever be just beyond his reach. With Zachary Beaver, Kimberly Willis Holt, author of the award-winning *My Louisiana Sky*, further explores southern-flavored small town life. Toby's quirky, yet ultimately rewarding coming of age story will serve as a gentle reminder to teens that sometimes the best way to work through your problems is by helping others with theirs. (Ages 11 to 15) --Jennifer Hubert --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Holt (*My Louisiana Sky*) sets her heartwarming and carefully crafted novel during 1971, but her message of tolerance is one that contemporary readers will appreciate. The moment Zachary Beaver, "the fattest boy in the world," rolls into Antler, Tex., in a trailer, 13-year-old Toby Wilson stands in line with his \$2 in hand, waiting for a peek. Toby can't imagine what life is like inside the cramped trailer for the 643-pound boy. When Zachary's guardian suddenly takes off, leaving him and the trailer in the Dairy Maid parking lot, Toby and his best friend, Cal, become his caretakers of sorts, and eventually, his friend. Through this friendship, Toby learns sympathy and respect not just for the misfit boy but for his own recently estranged parents and a string of other quirky characters who struggle with personal tragedies. While a few of the plot points feel predictable, the well-developed characters, all fantastic and flawed in their own ways, add plenty of spice. There's Toby's mother who aspires to be the next Tammy Wynette; Scarlett, the pouty-lipped teen dream, who hopes to escape Antler by becoming a model; and Miss Myrtie Mae, the town librarian who sacrificed her one chance at love to care for her brother. Picturesque images such as Zachary's baptism in a man-made lake and the novel's culminating scene drive home the point that everyday life is studded with memorable moments. Ages 10-15. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I bought this book for my daughter. It was on a recommended reading list for 7th grade. She never

got around to reading it, which is a shame, as it's a wonderful book. It has a variety of themes, such as loss, death, loneliness, love, hope, compassion, and forgiveness. I love how the characters evolved. I bought a set of 4 for the 6th grade reading teacher at school.

This book really tries to be just like the beloved "To Kill A Mocking Bird", but fails clearly missing some of the most important messages that the other book had to offer. This book was disappointing because it had potential in the beginning. Perhaps its strength was not in the writing, but the story itself could have gone to explore some important and interesting issues. It introduces Zachary Beaver as one of the most important characters in the book: he is the fattest boy in the world and enters Anthlers, Texas in a trailer as the main act in the freak show. The town lines up to see Zachary in his trailer and pays 2 bucks to do so. Some of the local boys later take pity on Zachary and try to befriend him by leaving him extra groceries and visiting him in his trailer. One of the boys, Toby, actually ends up being more of the main character in the book than Zachary, which is fine in itself but is a bit confusing since we expect the book will be more about Zachary. We learn that Toby's mom is a talented singer who leaves Toby and his father to travel to Nashville and to try and make it as a country musician there. I loved that detail about Toby's mother, but unfortunately her character was not developed enough. I did not get much of a sense of what kind of music she sang and what kinds of songs she made up. We learn some about Zachary's life, but the main theme in the book becomes his baptism. That is probably where I thought the book took the most wrong turn it could have made. Toby and his friend Cal decide that Zachary needs to be baptized and eventually predictably they carry their baptism plans out at the end of the book. Why would they force this poor boy to undergo baptism is beyond my understanding. I would have been mad if I was Zachary, unless I was so depressed I completely didn't care. Toby ends up looking incredibly controlling and self-righteous in the end. The book is also emotionally very flat- as when Toby's mom leaves, his feelings aren't as strong about that as they probably should have been in reality. The ending seems rushed.... Zachary leaves this town baptized and as if he had some friends, but he really didn't in my opinion. People that love you for real do not force spiritual beliefs upon you.

I listened to this book on an audio book and fell in love with the story. I had to order both the book and the movie. The author is able to bring you in to a teenager's life and the strange summer he had. I loved how Zachary Beaver became friends with the other teens and they learned how it isn't always how a person looks that makes a person special.

Enjoyed the 70's connection historical references, the song lyrics, clothing. Loved the inspirational aspect. Would recommend for all age levels.

I like this because it has an ordinary person and story to it. It has different parts for different people to relate to , which I think is really neat and awesome how the author fit that in! At first I got confused with the title and now I totally get it, the book has a really neat twist to it! And I love the whole book!!!!!!!

I started a book club for pre-teens and this was one of the first books had the group read. It was a moderately easy book to read and the girls loved it. There was one girl in the group who had issues with reading however shortly after I started group the mom reported that he reading had improved. This book is recommended I hope you will enjoy. Peace

our english and ligature teacher at school gives middle school a summer reading project every year. zachary beaver, and one other book. at first, I thought this book was going to be boring. as I read, I enjoyed the book more and more. I gave it this rate because it was a good book, and my forth favorite book.

love it summer reading the boy not so much :)

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