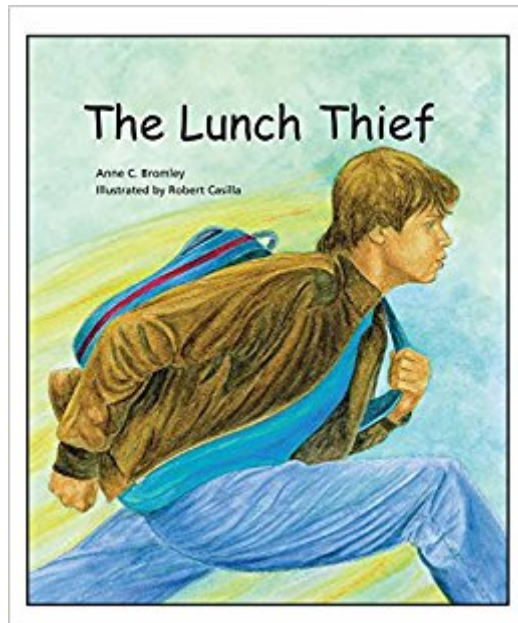




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The Lunch Thief



Synopsis

Skipping Stones Honor Award Rafael is hungry because someone stole his lunch. The Lunch Thief can be used for curriculum centered on nonviolence and peacemaking. Discussions might include: How to turn an enemy into a friend Nonviolent communication skills Looks can be deceiving Wildfires and ecology Disaster relief Hunger in our own country Homelessness Food Insecurity Kindness/Bullying His mom had packed his lunch bag with two burritos, a bag of corn chips, some carrots, and an apple. Once a week she tucks in a slice of her special lemon pound cake. Rafael saw Kevin, a new kid in his class, sneak his lunch bag from underneath his desk and tuck it in his backpack. But how can he do something about the theft without picking a fight? Inspired by his mother's advice to "Use your mouth before your fists," Rafael bides his time, but other kids' lunches are disappearing, too. On an errand with his mom, Rafael sees Kevin carrying a bundle of laundry into a motel room, and his mom tells him Kevin's family might be one of the families who lost their homes in the recent wildfires. Rafael rethinks his anger. The next day, instead of accusing Kevin, Rafael invites him to share his lunch, letting Kevin know he's been caught, but offering friendship as well as lunch. Color throughout

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 2-4 Rafael, a slightly pudgy boy whose favorite activities are pitching baseball and eating, catches Kevin, a new classmate, stealing lunches from him and his friends. Refraining from picking a fight ("Mama says fighting is for cowards"), Rafael is nonetheless annoyed by Kevin's actions and decides to find out more about this furtive, troubled boy. He learns from

Kevin that his family lost their house in a recent southern California wildfire and then catches a glimpse of him carrying his laundry to a cheap motel. Thinking the situation through (and considering that his baseball coach has suggested he lose some weight), Rafael decides to offer Kevin not only his extra daily burrito, but also the weekly slice of his mother's famous lemon pound cake, thus defusing a potentially explosive situation. Full-color illustrations realistically portray the cast of characters and the boys' multicultural school. With a few well-placed remarks by Rafael's hardworking mother and no preachy overtones, this entirely credible story of how a thoughtful boy elects to "light one candle" in response to the larger problem of homelessness and hunger would make an excellent touchstone for class discussion. —Kathleen Finn, St. Francis Xavier School, Winooski, VT (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

"The boy in *The Lunch Thief* has a real problem. He is homeless and lunchless where others have plenty. This is a story of sharing and caring and Anne C. Bromley and illustrator Robert Casilla handle it with understanding and sympathy." —Eve Bunting, author of *Fly Away Home*, December, and many other children's books "Faced with a challenging situation when his lunch was stolen, Rafael listens to his instincts and follows his mother's valuable advice that "fighting is for cowards" and "use your mouth before your fists." *The Lunch Thief*, by Anne C. Bromley, is a moving and thoughtful real-life story of how Rafael chose not to respond impulsively, but took the time to think through his actions in order to resolve the problem in a nonjudgmental way. It's a heartwarming book that helps children see the other side of every story." —Thom Ronk, *Teaching Tolerance* "Hunger is hidden. Most of us don't see it, don't hear about it, don't think about it because it's such a shameful thing for those experiencing it. But hunger is growing in America, and its worst victims are the children who must go without food every day, or who are fed empty, sweet calories instead of a nutritious meal because those calories are cheaper than good food. *The Lunch Thief* brings us a gentle reminder of what hunger can drive even children to do—and of the kindness and mercy that must be our response." —Naomi Schalit, author of the award-winning newspaper series "For I Was Hungry"

The Lunch Thief is a moving story told from the point of view of the main character, Rafael. Anne C. Bromley delicately presents a modern day situation that is prevalent in our society. Should be a "must read" for all children. —Emma L. Price, author of *Portia's Incredible Journey*

This book will definitely become part of my school counseling curriculum. When I first get a new book, I usually skim the synopsis to see what I'm getting into. Based on the title I thought *The Lunch Thief* was going to be about stealing and maybe bullying - so I started to read and went on an unexpected journey. It's the type of picture book I relish reading to students. Never judge a book by its title. *The Lunch Thief* is not about a thief, it's about a hungry boy named Kevin living in a motel. And yes, the kids know it's not okay to steal. But why would someone steal? We are a community and need to understand one another. Rafael does this for Kevin. The kids started to make a connection right away that this wasn't a story about bullying or *Thou Shall Not Steal*. Hands started flying up as I asked questions about what might be going on in Kevin's life that he is taking others' food. Kevin is not mean, not a bully, and not trying to hurt kids on purpose. He's trying to survive. The last page proves this as he offers a quarter to Rafael as payment for his lunch. One student commented, "Kevin never wanted to steal in the first place." Bingo! (great book for inference) I felt really connected to the students as we figured these things out together. *The Lunch Thief* teaches empathy, understanding, and helping one another. And gosh do we need more of that within our communities. Bravo for this book.

The Lunch Thief is an important piece of children's literature which addresses the very topical issue of "bullying" with a believable story. Rafael becomes the victim of the new kid, Kevin, who continually steals the lunch carefully made, each day, by his mother. Rafael reacts in a thoughtful way, to the problem, reflecting upon his mother's advice to "Use your mouth before your fists." The role modeling provided by the character, Rafael, provides a positive example of how students should react in this situation. He not only uses his mother's wise advice, but portrays thoughtful problem-solving when he offers part of his lunch to the hungry Kevin, who recently lost his home in the area wildfires. The sensitive and realistic artwork adds to the credibility of the story. Students will gain a great deal from this thought-provoking book and teachers will be able to use it as the basis for discussion and writing in many ways. Prediction, inference, and characterization are literary topics which are presented in this book in addition to the "bullying" issue. This book is a "must" for all school libraries and a great read for intermediate grades! It presents LOTS of possibilities! Sandy Gonnerman, County Schools Librarian, San Diego County Office of Education

Other good books on homelessness
Grades K-5 *Changing Places: A Kid's View of Shelter Living*, Judy Wallace
K-6 *Fly Away Home*, Eve Bunting
Someplace to Go, Maria Testa
K-7 *Homeless*, B.

Wolf4-8How to Steal a Dog, Barbara O'Connor7-12Runaway, Wendelin van Draanen8-12My Abandonment, Peter RockBreaking Night: From Homeless to Harvard, Liz Murray

The Lunch Thief is an excellent way to teach empathy and to look at things from another person's point of view. Rafael is hungry because someone has stolen his lunch. When Rafael spies Kevin, the new kid in his class, sneaking his lunch Raphael must decide what to do. But how can he do something about the theft without picking a fight? Inspired by his mother's advice to use his mouth before his fists, Rafael bides his time, but other kids' lunches are disappearing, too. On an errand with his mom, Rafael sees Kevin carrying a bundle of laundry into a motel room, and his mom tells him Kevin's family might be one of the families who lost their homes in the recent wildfires. Rafael rethinks his anger. The next day, instead of accusing Kevin, Rafael invites him to share his lunch, letting him know he's been caught, but offering friendship as well as a good meal. This would be a great addition to a classroom or school library especially for older children. I can see many lesson plans that can emerge from reading this book. The watercolor illustrations are beautifully rendered and add to the feeling of the story. A truly delightful and inspiring book.

'The Lunch Thief' by Anne Bromley. As a teacher for more than 25 yrs. I have read innumerable children's books. In deep sincerity, I found this book to be one of the best I have ever read. I've noticed that when I have read an outstanding book my students become rapt in their attention. As I read The Lunch Thief I found that my present students became so engaged that all movement stopped and I had their total attention - this rarely happens. It has the feel of a Disney classic in that besides being very entertaining there is a profound universal message about thinking of others in it. I cried at the end of the book - it was extremely touching. I highly recommend this book to all educators as well as parents. Richard Levine - 2nd Grade Teacher, San Diego, CA

As the other reviewers mention, this is a great book to introduce upper-elementary kids to concepts of empathy and caring. However, at first I was confused by the format of The Lunch Thief. It is a picture book, yet the drawings show kids who are about 11 or 12. The book is written for kids ages 8-12. I thought, do kids of that age read picture books? Well, apparently there is a place for picture books in upper elementary grades. A page called "Teaching with Picture Books" that I found online suggests that picture books can be appropriate for upper elementary grades as a way to quickly introduce concepts in a non-threatening way, and to create a focus for learning. I have included this book in my online Gender Equality Bookstore.

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Thief in the Myst: The Master Thief, Book 2
A Thief in Time (Thief in Time Series Book 1)
The Thief Taker (The Thief Taker Series Book 1)
The Thief (The Queen's Thief, Book 1)
The Lunch Thief
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Lunch Lady and the Picture Day Peril: Lunch Lady #8
Lunch Lady and the Bake Sale Bandit: Lunch Lady #5
Lunch Lady and the Field Trip Fiasco: Lunch Lady #6
Lunch Lady and the Schoolwide Scuffle: Lunch Lady and the Schoolwide Scuffle
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