

Book Review

Title: *Nick's Gallery*, London: PublishBritannica, 2004.

Author: James Gill

Publisher: Publish Britannica, London, 2004

Paper, ISBN: 1-4137-2186-9, 149 pages

Cost: \$16.99 USD

Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

James is a former schoolteacher who recently became disabled and turned her attention to writing. *Nick's Gallery* is a novel aimed toward younger readers. The protagonist of the story, Barney, is an overwhelmed, but conscientious teenager, struggling with the obvious decline and imminent death of his best friend, Nick, who has Muscular Dystrophy. Nick is an angry, passionate young man, who wants to make the most of the time he has left. Barney tries to please Nick, his own parents, his swimming coach, bosses at a new job, his teachers, and a new girlfriend. He manages, barely, until the night he misses his friend's trip to the hospital and subsequent death.

We watch Barney alienate everyone around him as he tries to cope with the death of his friend and regain his own equilibrium. Most of his family and friends are understanding, but impatient, as Barney's grieving process takes longer than they want. Barney begins the road to returning to his own life when he discovers the joys and friendships that sailing can bring. This leads him full circle to forgiving himself and Nick for the way their paths parted.

This is an excellent book to explore feelings about death and disability. While I would have liked a little different, and perhaps deeper, look into Nick's life, the book is not about him, but Barney. As such, James does a good job in exploring the feelings of someone whose friend is deteriorating quickly. I would especially recommend this book for high school students.

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