



## Belly Up (Teddy Fitzroy series Book 1)

By *Stuart Gibbs*

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Twelve-year-old Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Fitzroy believes that Henry, the hippopotamus at the brand-new FunJungle, has been murdered. The zoo's top brass claim the hippo went belly up the natural way, but Teddy and his feisty friend Summer McCraken have other ideas. Could the culprit be FunJungle's animal-hating head of operations? Or is it FunJungle's owner—Summer's dad—a man who is much more concerned about money than animal welfare? The deeper Teddy and Summer dig, the more danger they're in—because when it comes to hippo homicide, the truth can't be caged!

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## **Belly Up (Teddy Fitzroy series Book 1) By Stuart Gibbs Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5–8—Teddy Fitzroy, 12, yearns for a little excitement at FunJungle, an animal theme park in Texas where his parents work. When star attraction Henry the Hippo dies under mysterious circumstances, Teddy is convinced that it was murder. Colorful suspects abound, from Large Marge, the security guard, all the way up to J.J. McCracken himself, billionaire owner of FunJungle. Teddy teams up with J.J.'s daughter to ferret out the culprit even as animal-related accidents begin to threaten his safety. A decomposing hippo disaster denouement will fill young minds with equal amounts of horror and glee. Dense with animal trivia, *Belly Up* will suit attentive readers who love mystery and random facts. Teddy's first-person narration allows readers to solve the mystery along with him, but his voice is oddly adult. The content and expression of his thoughts emerge as extraordinarily calm and rational, far from the typical preteen sensibility. His dialogue sounds much more realistic. Gibbs handles issues of animal welfare in a fair way without being preachy, and his motley cast of characters holds its own with quirky personalities and memorable details. Overall, this first novel brings together suspense, wild chase scenes, and enough character development to hold children's attention, despite a few incongruities. Hand it to fans of Gordon Korman's *Swindle* (Scholastic) and Jody Feldman's *The Gollywhopper Games* (HarperCollins, both 2008).—Caitlin Augusta, Stratford Library Association, CT

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From [Booklist](#)

Henry the hippo is dead. Yes, the signature denizen of America's newest and largest zoo has been found belly up in his highly, uh, unsanitary habitat (hippos are extraordinarily regular in their habits, so to speak). But there's worse to come when 12-year-old Teddy begins to suspect it's murder most foul and—in the fine tradition of mysteries for youth—sets out to solve the crime by himself. Well, he does have some help from beautiful Summer, the 13-year-old daughter of the zoo's fantastically wealthy owner. Who could have dunnit? Large Marge, the surly security guard who has a cold spot in her heart for Teddy? Charlie Connor, the midget clown who's hated Henry ever since the testy hippo took a bite out of him? Or could it be a guerrilla act perpetrated by the anti-zoo Animal Liberation Front? First-novelist Gibbs offers no shortage of suspects in his fast-paced story, which deftly mixes humor and suspense. Cleverly plotted—aside from one hippo-sized deus ex machina moment—this book is an auspicious debut that will leave readers clamoring for more. Grades 5-7. --Michael Cart

Review

Twelve-year-old Teddy is a world traveler with a wildlife-photojournalist father and a mother who does gorilla research. Stateside, the family lives at FunJungle, the world's biggest and newest state-of-the-art zoo and theme park, the pet project of a Texas moneybags whose daughter inspired him. Action opens at Hippo River with the death of mascot Henry the Hippo, a beloved creature despite an irascible personality. Teddy sneaks into the autopsy and later strikes up a friendship with Summer, the daughter of the billionaire owner, in his efforts to solve the mystery of who killed Henry. Not a typical child, Teddy has amassed a considerable knowledge of arcane facts of human nature as well as animal behavior in his travels. Overall, the story is great fun, despite a sometimes plodding approach to the narrative that is too reminiscent of a report. In his authorial debut, screenwriter Gibbs combines details of the inner workings of zoos with some over-the-top action for an entertaining read. -- **KIRKUS, April 15, 2010**

Teddy Fitzroy, 12, yearns for a little excitement at FunJungle, an animal theme park in Texas where his

parents work. When star attraction Henry the Hippo dies under mysterious circumstances, Teddy is convinced that it was murder. Colorful suspects abound, from Large Marge, the security guard, all the way up to J.J. McCracken himself, billionaire owner of FunJungle. Teddy teams up with J.J.'s daughter to ferret out the culprit even as animal-related accidents begin to threaten his safety. A decomposing hippo disaster denouement will fill young minds with equal amounts of horror and glee. Dense with animal trivia, Belly Up will suit attentive readers who love mystery and random facts. Teddy's first-person narration allows readers to solve the mystery along with him, but his voice is oddly adult. The content and expression of his thoughts emerge as extraordinarily calm and rational, far from the typical preteen sensibility. His dialogue sounds much more realistic. Gibbs handles issues of animal welfare in a fair way without being preachy, and his motley cast of characters holds its own with quirky personalities and memorable details. Overall, this first novel brings together suspense, wild chase scenes, and enough character development to hold children's attention, despite a few incongruities. Hand it to fans of Gordon Korman's *Swindle* (Scholastic) and Jody Feldman's *The Gollywhopper Games* (HarperCollins, both 2008).—*SLJ, May 2010*

"Great fun....In his authorial debut, screenwriter Gibbs combines details of the inner workings of zoos with some over-the-top action for an entertaining read." (Kirkus Reviews)

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