



The Boxer and the Spy

By Robert B. Parker

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When a shy high school student's body is found washed up on the shore of a quiet beach town - an apparent suicide - Terry Novak doesn't know what to think. He decides to do some investigating with the help of his best friend, Abby. Before long, they learn that asking questions puts them in grave danger. Fortunately, Terry has been learning about fighting, thanks to a retired boxer, who teaches him to use his head and keep his feet set beneath him - lessons Terry takes to heart in more ways than one. Robert B. Parker delivers a taut, empowering mystery for teen readers.

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The Boxer and the Spy By Robert B. Parker Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 9–11—Parker makes his second foray into YA literature with this tale of a 15-year-old aspiring boxer trying to solve the murder of one of his classmates, deemed a suicide by the authorities. As in his adult "Spenser" books, the question is not so much who committed the crime as how the protagonist will catch him (it is apparent pretty early on who the bad guys are). Terry Novak battles a group of powerful, evil individuals with only his wits, toughness, and a few loyal friends to help him. He has a personal code that requires him to avenge wrongdoing against innocents and will use violence only when forced to. In many ways it is Terry himself rather than the solving of the crime that is the main focus of the novel: haltingly, and often inarticulately, he begins to explore what it means to live honorably, with moral purpose. In this he is aided by George, the wise, elderly black man who is teaching him to fight, and by Abby, the sassy beauty whom Terry hopes to make his girlfriend. As in any Parker novel, the dialogue is delightful. Character is revealed in a word, a phrase, or sometimes even a gesture. (Has any writer ever conveyed more meaning through a shrug?) While some may object that the fight scenes are a little too graphic or the resolution a little too neat, few could question either the quality of the writing or the book's undeniable appeal to teen readers.—*Richard Luzer, Fair Haven Union High School, VT*

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From [Booklist](#)

Parker's second foray into the YA mystery field (after *Edenville Owls*, 2007), finds 15-year-old Terry Novak learning the ropes of boxing from a wizened ex-fighter, who is classic Parker—gruff but keenly understanding. At the same time, Terry's best friend, Abby, is dizzyingly becoming something closer to a girlfriend, though neither really know what to make of the evolving relationship. When a quiet, nerdy kid is found dead of an apparent suicide, murkily involving steroids, the duo make it their business to figure out what really happened. Although Parker leans on the boxing-as-life metaphor pretty heavily, it works; and witnessing a tough-but-sensitive guy on the make figure out when to play nice and when to get mean is classic coming-of-age stuff. What drives the story home, however, is how well Parker is able to demonstrate adolescent uncertainty about the world and then capture those moments when uncertainty shifts seamlessly into confidence. Add Parker's deft touch with dialogue and quick action scenes, and you've got a lean, welterweight contender of a mystery. Grades 8-11. --Ian Chipman

Review

[U]ndeniable appeal to teen readers. *School Library Journal*

Users Review

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