



## TEEN SERVICES COMMUNITY SERVICE TEEN BOOK REVIEW

### *Six Kids And A Stuffed Cat* By Gary Paulsen Reviewed by Kelsey Shapiro

**Name:** Kelsey Shapiro

**Grade:** 11

**Book Title:** Six Kids and a Stuffed Cat

**Author:** Gary Paulsen

**Number of Pages:** 138

**Rating (on a scale of 1-5):** 4/5

#### **Character List:**

- **Jordan** – Jordan is a 14-year-old boy who uses jokes and wit to deflect attention off of himself because he has social anxiety. His anxiety causes him to have frequent nosebleeds, and the jokes he uses to mask this anxiety often lead to teachers sending him to after-school detention.
- **Avery** – Avery is the new kid in school. Like Jordan, he also has some sort of anxiety problem, which is why he brought his stuffed cat to school, hiding it in his backpack. He slept through his first day at his new school, behind the school's stage underneath a costume rack. He's a vegan and is an advocate for animal rights.
- **Mason** – Mason is extremely smart, and he knows it. Because he considers himself to be above the intellect level of the other kids in his grade, he doesn't have many friends. He tutors Taylor and often makes fun of him for not being very smart.
- **Regan** – Regan is an athlete, an active member of the student government, edits the school yearbook and newspaper, takes part in the school plays, and basically any other school or community committee. He is also very popular. He has everything planned out for his life, and follows a strict schedule.
- **Taylor** – Taylor is very sullen and slightly aggressive. He is being tutored by Mason and is often at the brunt of jokes made by the boys about not being very smart. He's known for pushing Mason's buttons.

#### **Review:**

After a normal school day, six boys are forced to hide out from a "dangerous storm" in the school's second story bathroom. Their overly-cautious school administration made everyone left in the building take cover from a potentially threatening storm that all of the boys knew would actually pose no threat to them. The six boys, Jordan, Avery, Devon, Taylor, Mason and Regan, all have very different personalities, but they find themselves stuck with each other in a tiny, smelly bathroom. Avery is new to the school, and on his first day he accidentally slept through it underneath a costume rack. Jordan notices that he's kind of socially awkward, which is something that they have in common, and so Jordan automatically takes a liking to the new kid. Soon the others join them in hiding out in the bathroom, and their quirky personalities are all revealed. During this time, they bond over comforting the new kid, gently teasing one another, and revealing secrets about themselves. Jordan, who often deflects attention off of himself with jokes, finally allows others to talk about his anxiety, and allows Regan to convince him to join a school club. Jordan acknowledges that although he's usually uncomfortable in small groups, he feels completely at ease with these boys in the bathroom. Avery opens

up about himself, and admits that he brought his stuffed cat to school because he was nervous. He had previously told the boys that his younger brother put it in his bag. It's also found out that Taylor was pretending to be stupid because he wanted Mason to tutor him so that they could be friends. By the end of the story, none of the boys want to leave the bathroom, even after they are given the all clear by the school administration. They entered the bathroom as strangers, but left with new friends.

The only flaw in *Six Kids and a Stuffed Cat* was that it wasn't long enough! However, the characters are well developed and it's easy for the reader to actually care about them. Many of the boys in the book come to realizations about themselves, and open up to the others, which is something that they would not have previously done. They discover what it's really like to have friends. Since the characters are in middle school, this would be the ideal age group for people who read this book to be. However, older teens might find this short book a funny and sweet read.