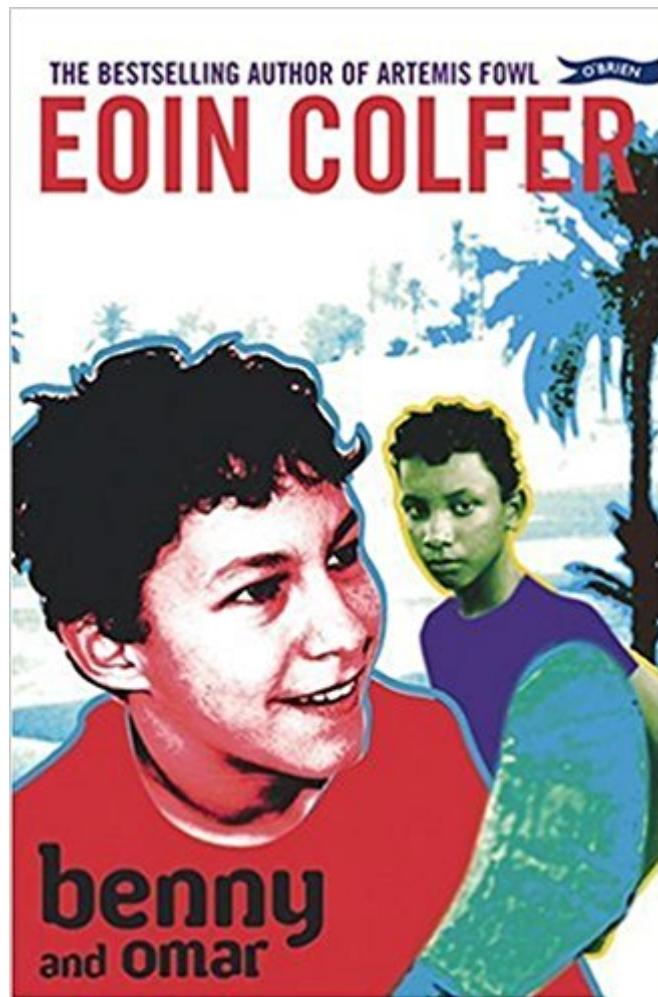


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Benny And Omar



Synopsis

A comic novel in which hurling fanatic Benny is suddenly landed in Tunisia, where life becomes hectic when he meets Omar. The two boys beat the language problem in their own unique way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fans of Irish author Colfer's Artemis Fowl will find this contemporary novel a real change of pace. Benny Shaw's passion is hurling (an Irish version of field hockey), and he's crushed when his father's job takes the family to North Africa for a year. Not only will he miss watching the All-Ireland Hurling Final, but he also has to deal with culture shock, from Tunisia's fierce heat to scorpions to a classroom run by a pair of aging hippies named Harmony and Bob (who say things like "remember, positive emotions only" and delight in group hugs). Benny slips over the wall of the company's gated compound one day and strikes up a friendship with Omar, an orphan whose only English comes from watching pirated TV (e.g., "Night, John Boy"). The two bounce from one scrape to the next, and Benny learns a lesson about family loyalty when his friend's devotion to his institutionalized sister sparks a climactic finale, with the two on the lam from the law. Colfer smoothly layers adventure, moments of poignancy and subtle social commentary, and his comic timing is pitch-perfect (at the airport, "Georgie was sad wishing his Grandad farewell, Benny distraught over losing a steady source of fivers"). He studs the prose with Irish slang ("eejit," "the dole," "that yoke"). Readers will hope that the story's sequel, Benny and Babe, will cross the Atlantic soon. Ages 10-up.

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Gr 5-9-As the hurling champion at Saint Jerome's school, Benny Shaw thinks he has a perfect life-until his parents move the family all the way to North Africa, a lifetime away from Ireland. They've never even heard of hurling in Tunisia. The village school is taught by feel-good hippies and filled with students actually bent on learning. There's no place for a sarcastic, self-centered kid like Benny. Then he meets Omar, a cheerful, scrappy boy surviving on his wits, and the two become fast friends, creating havoc and terrorizing everybody. But when Benny meets Omar's little sister, a drugged resident of the local mental farm, he realizes that his friend's life is more tragic than he had thought and realizes that he must help Omar rescue his sister. Suddenly Benny has to think of someone beside himself, and his ultimate change and personal growth make for a memorable story. At first it's hard to like Benny, even when he's trying to be decent, but Colfer does such a masterful job of mixing humor and tragedy with Benny's smart-alecky remarks that youngsters will like him in spite of themselves. This is a funny, fast-paced read, despite the Irish slang, that provides a wonderful glimpse into some very non-American worlds. -Linda Bindner, formerly at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO

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I enjoyed the Artemis Fowl series immensely, finding them original and quirky. I located this one on the Kindle store and thought that I might as well try it. I understand that Eoin Colfer wrote this in his early days of writing. It has some funny parts, and being Irish myself, it's nice to see the references to hurling, which wouldn't be found in other books. What I didn't really like about it is the fact that the climax fell flat. I had to read over it three times to figure out what was going on. Action scenes aren't Eoin's strong point, even sometimes in the Artemis Fowl books, but the mistakes were really apparent here. The tension was all over the place, dropping the suspense like a stone. The prose was confusing in places and I didn't enjoy it at all. What could've been an amazing scene just... wasn't. The plot was also quite light, with a lot of filler. Simple enough story, done a few times: boy goes to foreign country, hates it there, then meets an oddball character on the wrong side of the law. It had a lot of padding, namely some comical scenes, that I did enjoy but they felt like they were dragging the plot down a little. All in all, it was quick to read and had some good moments, but the writing and fluffy plot let it down. I love Eoin Colfer's later books though, (I absolutely recommend the Artemis Fowl series) and hope he keeps writing.

This is a great book for young boys. Eoin Colfer is amazing as usual with his mastery of story-telling, realism, fun and wit, and a tinge of sadness. Good for adolescents facing a possible

change of cultures as families move because of work transfers.

Regardless of whether you are an adult or a child (or looking to purchase something for one or the other), this book is a good read. Eoin Colfer is a transformational author being able to easily write sci-fi to reality. Good story!

It's....pretty dang obvious that this is one of Colfer's first works. Not BAD, but just barely adequate for publishing. Honestly, I'm surprised this one got an audiobook recording at all. It's just...very mediocre. While there's something to be said about Colfer's look at a country I've never seen referenced in literature (except...Colfer's own, in the second Artemis Fowl book....), there are a few points where things feel a bit wrong. I was shocked when the mother of the family referred to Tunisia as "some uncivilized pit, with diseased water and mosquitoes and foreigners," going on to claim that "the only culture they have belonged to the Romans." This is very early in the book, but we never really get a refutation of these pretty prejudice words. In fact, adoption of European culture is a pretty big plot point, with Omar only able to communicate with Benny using television quotes. (And how...would he understand what those quotes meant? No clue.) Still, Benny is shown as a very open-minded character, doing his best to balance demands from his family and the struggles of Omar. And, when the big test comes, Benny opts to ruin his own chances at an easy life at home so that Omar might have a far, far better improvement in his own life. Colfer's writing returns repeatedly to Tunisia, where he did missionary work in his younger days, and he is likely to write about it again. Hopefully with a bit more interesting plots and a fewer prejudice statements from prominent characters.

This was a nifty little book about a sort of selfish, sheltered kid having to leave his happy life as a hurling player in Ireland to move with his family to Tunisia because of his dad's job. I really liked that it showed how his family (and the other people from white-majority/industrialized nations) was having a very different experience of Africa than do the native Tunisians, and the way Benny acted out and talked back to teachers and other students to establish himself as NOT a victim was pretty intriguing. I also did like his relationship with Omar. What I didn't like (or really believe) was the way the two communicated. Sometimes I couldn't actually even follow it, and other times I just thought it was improbable that Omar would be able to communicate in catch phrases from television if they were literally the only English he knew. (If he didn't know those words outside of the catch phrases, I don't know why he knew when to use them. I could buy a few of them, like singing a Pepsi jingle to

explain that you want a soda, but other than that it seemed really unlikely.) I thought it was interesting how the story could also get you sort of invested in what was going on with hurling even if you had no personal knowledge or interest in the sport. I was kinda expecting hurling to become more central to the plot as it went on, and it became less and less important. I didn't like some of the condescending, emasculating names Benny called his brother and the comparison of his supposed femininity with weakness, and I didn't like that there was some really weird mentally-ill-fat-character stuff that was kind of embarrassing to read (they basically made this one intellectually disabled kid an overenthusiastic fat joke, requiring the other characters to stop him from causing the protagonist bodily harm by bribing him with candy). There were just some weird choices made by the way the story was told, not the way the characters showed their values. I thought some of the character growth for Benny was well handled, and I did enjoy reading it most of the time, but kinda just like hurling, it wasn't the kind of thing that really gets me going.

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