



# Better Nate Than Ever

*Tim Federle*

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## **Better Nate Than Ever** Tim Federle

Nate Foster has big dreams. His whole life, he's wanted to star in a Broadway show. (Heck, he'd settle for \*seeing\* a Broadway show.) But how is Nate supposed to make his dreams come true when he's stuck in Jankburg, Pennsylvania, where no one (except his best pal Libby) appreciates a good show tune? With Libby's help, Nate plans a daring overnight escape to New York. There's an open casting call for E.T.: The Musical, and Nate knows this could be the difference between small-town blues and big-time stardom.

## **Better Nate Than Ever Details**

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Author : Tim Federle

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# From Reader Review **Better Nate Than Ever** for online ebook

## Aleksandra says

Adventures! Adventures of 13 year old boy who runs away to NYC for musical audition!

This is an honest, funny and charming story. Got a few twists and turns that surprised. I love the atmosphere of the book. Naïveté, optimism and determination Nate has are admirable (I love the kid so much).

Nate is a wonderful protagonist, it was such a pleasure to read the book from his pov. Secondary characters are multi-dimensional and realistic; the family dynamic was fascinating, too. Kudos to Nate and Libby friendship btw.

New York was like the other character and looking at the city from Nate's pov was wonderful experience.

I can't believe this is Tim Federle debut. He's so talented and I'm definitely reading more of his books.

**Better Nate Than Ever** is charming exciting inspiring book, it's a quick and enjoyable read. I laughed, I teared up, I had such a great time reading the book, it's definitely worth checking out. (the target audience is middle grade and I'm long not, but I still loved the book, great middle grade books are my thing)

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## Aeicha says

***Better Nate Than Ever*** was such a complete joy to read (devour, really)! This book sparkles and shines as bright as the lights of Broadway, and is as heartwarming as it is hilarious. Debut author Tim Federle has delivered a smash hit and has done so with addicting charm and flair.

In ***Better Nate Than Ever*** we follow Nate Foster as he sets out on a big journey to make his dreams come true. Nate dreams of starring in a Broadway show and with the ingenious help of his BFF Libby, he concocts an exciting plan. When his parents go on a weekend trip and leave Nate in the care of his teenage brother, Nate and Libby put their plan in motion and Nate finds himself on an overnight bus trip to NYC and to an audition for E.T.: The Musical. Nate is dazzled by the city, but soon finds that navigating the streets (and people) of the big city isn't as easy as he hoped. And auditioning for a Broadway show is nothing like Nate imagined. But with a little help from a long lost relative and Libby back home, and a lot of courage and heart, Nate has one heck of an adventure and may just see his dreams come home.

***Better Nate Than Ever*** is wildly entertaining, laugh-out-loud funny, surprisingly poignant, and dazzling all over. I simply fell in love with Federle's story, characters, and voice.

Federle brings Nate's story to life with a pitch-perfect and captivating middle-grade voice. Federle captures the often confusing, painful, and cringe-worthy middle-grade years in a way that young readers will relate to and older readers will appreciate. Federle is a fantastic storyteller with buckets of writing talent. Nate's world isn't a perfect one, in fact, it's pretty far from perfect. His love of singing and Broadway musicals hasn't made him popular among his peers and often leads to much teasing by classmates and his own brother, his home-life is rocky with parents that have an unstable marriage and don't relate well to Nate, and Nate feels like an outcast in his school, home, and small town...all of which Federle explores with such unabashed honesty, humor, and heart, and Federle holds nothing back.

Nate's journey to NYC and Broadway fame is an addicting, and awesomely unpredictable, one! Nate encounter's many different people and has many different experiences along the way: some that will leave you giggling, some that will leave you thoughtful, all super entertaining. I loved getting a first-hand look at the exciting, fast-paced, and, at times, utterly scary and competitive world of Broadway auditions! Federle clearly knows this world inside-out, and his knowledge and experience add wonderful and believable layers to Nate's story. Nate's audition process is equal parts disastrous, miraculous, and inspiring.

***Better Nate Than Ever*** has a brilliant cast of characters! Nate is a completely endearing, witty, and thoughtful main character. Readers will easily relate to Nate and will root and cheer for him the entire way. Libby is now one of my favorite MG heroines ever! This clever, fearless, funny, plucky, and loyal girl is an absolute gem of a character. And Libby and Nate have such a sweet, lovable friendship.

Nate's quest for Broadway fame is a bumpy, moving, hilarious, and satisfying one. *Better Nate Than Ever* ends on a perfect note without being cheesy and unrealistic, which I appreciated.

MY FINAL THOUGHTS: Tim Federle has crafted a story worthy of big musical numbers with sparkling lights, jazz hands, and all. With its humor, heart, honesty, and awesome characters, ***Better Nate Than Ever*** captured, amused, and delighted me from beginning to end. This is a MUST read for anyone who has ever dreamed big then dared to dream even bigger!

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## Margaret says

*Better Nate Than Ever* is an enjoyable and humorous confection of a book, Federle's first aimed at the 9-13 year-old reader. Its protagonist, Nate, is an undertall, overweight, unathletic eighth-grader whose consuming passion is Broadway musicals. His older brother Anthony is, on the other hand, an accomplished high school athlete. They live in western Pennsylvania in a town outside Pittsburgh where athletic prowess matters and a love for musicals marks a boy as somewhat less than masculine.

On the weekend that Anthony has a major track meet, the boys' parents go out of town, leaving Anthony in charge. Nate talks Anthony into letting him stay overnight at his best friend Libby's house. Anthony is only too happy not to have to keep track of his younger brother and agrees. But the overnight at Libby's is a ruse; Nate's real plan is to take the bus to NYC where he will try out for a part in *ET: The Musical*, which is to open on Broadway. The bulk of the book takes place in NYC recounting Nate's experiences in the Big Apple. Federle, as it turns out, has his own story of trying out for shows on Broadway and knows the scene there quite well. The array of young performers trying out for Broadway parts and their various parents and guardians are a fascinating bunch.

The book does not hide from the abuse that boys like Nate receive from others. He is called all sorts of names as he is suspected to be a homosexual by his peers, including his brother Anthony, who constantly uses various insults to attack his brother. For his part, Nate claims to be neither straight nor gay but pre-sexual, a claim that is true; at the same time, he is much relieved to meet adult male homosexuals in NYC and to see that they have "normal" lives. So the book does deal with homosexuality, but indirectly and oh, so gently. Still, there are young readers out there who need to see such a character as Nate presented as a boy who succeeds in finding his way. For those kids this book is a life-saver; for everyone else, it's a good read. Lots of laughs all the way through.

My only caveat is that this book is the first of a series. Readers are left somewhat hanging at the end. Even

so, the book is a satisfying read on its own. The sequel *Four, Five, Six* is due out in January 2014.

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## **Hannah Greendale says**

Nate Foster dreams of starring in a Broadway show. When auditions are held in New York for *E.T.: The Musical*, Nate sees his chance to break free of his small town and launch a career in the big city. With the help of his best friend Libby, he embarks on a daring escape to New York, where one simple audition unravels into a night of unanticipated adventure.

There's a delightful sprinkling of humor in this book, emphasized by Nate's love of Broadway flops and his honesty about being an awkward, bullied teenager:

*"There's nothing to be scared of, Nate. You're small and scrappy and can get out of any situation the world throws at you."*

*Just this past week, I'd been stuffed into a locker by a seventh-grade nose picker who is shorter than I am.*

Nate's journey has as much to do with starring in a Broadway play as it has to do with him figuring out who he wants to be in life:

*My sexuality, by the way, is off-topic and unrelated. I am undecided. I am a freshman at the College of Sexuality and I have undecided my major, and frankly, don't want to declare anything other than "Hey jerks, I'm thirteen, leave me alone. Macaroni and cheese is still my favorite food - how would I know who I want to hook up with?"*

It's Nate's narrative voice that makes this book a joy to read. He's plucky and sweet with an endearing sense of humor:

*"Come on!" she shouts, and pulls me into a cab, announcing, "Eight Avenue at Thirty-sixth." Which I love, which sounds like a real spy-thing to say. I would've gotten in and said, "Take me to the place where children's dreams come true if they aren't eliminated for being too pear shaped and not being able to juggle."*

Though the fundamental messages are important and the protagonist is adorable, very little transpires over the course of this book and, after almost three hundred pages, an abrupt ending leaves the reader feeling shortchanged. Perhaps the author intended to make a statement to readers about what's truly important, but it felt like the story ended without proper closure.

Nonetheless, *Better Nate Than Ever* is a charming read about family, theater, and learning to be the best version of yourself.

*All of this, all of this adventure and novelty, it would be nothing without somebody to share it with.*

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## **Adam Silvera says**

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON SHELF AWARENESS

Former Broadway performer and debut author Tim Federle takes readers behind the curtains of a boy's journey to make a name for himself in the big city.

Thirteen-year-old Nate Foster is fleeing Jankburg, Pa., for New York City so he can audition for the role of Elliot in *E.T.: The Broadway Musical Version*. Nate's parents are away, celebrating their 17th wedding anniversary, and his "girl-addicted" 16-year-old brother, Anthony, encourages him to stay over at his best friend Libby's house. Instead, Nate leaves for New York City with \$50, his brother's fake I.D, knowledge from the Internet on "things that annoy New Yorkers" and a big dream to chase.

It's a joy watching Nate marvel at Manhattan for the first time, such as the rush of Port Authority, but it's not nearly as dreamy as Nate finding hope in the audition process when all the odds seem to be stacked against him. Federle admirably rolls out themes of adolescent sexuality onto the stage to tie into Nate's dreams of escaping to a place where he doesn't have to change anything about himself to fit in. (Nate says of his sexuality, "I am undecided... and frankly don't want to declare anything other than 'Hey, jerks. I'm thirteen. Leave me alone.'")

*Better Nate Than Ever* is an open call for any reader looking for a little book with big star quality.

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### **Richard Kramer says**

*BETTER NATE THAN EVER*, Tim Federle's new novel, is about different kinds of flight ... the flight its title character, the undersized 13 year old Nate Foster, makes from misery in his hometown of Jankburg PA - to a Broadway audition for a musical version of *ET* (which is actually a great idea).

It's about another kind of flight, too, that of the imagination that lifts Nate up beyond the range of the taunts aimed at him by the school bullies who think they know who he is and want to force him to accept that knowledge.

And it's a book about the flight on the way to becoming, about a boy whose wings are still powered by innocence; he isn't yet all the things he's going to be, but he'll be there soon; the novel picks Nate up and deposits him on a road where he can see the towers of Emerald City start to gleam, just for him, welcoming him. And maybe, someday – if he's really lucky – he'll even see *WICKED*.

*BETTER NATE THAN EVER* delighted me, and touched me, and made me want to write a book exactly like it. Unfortunately, Mr. Federle has already done that job. He's a performer on Broadway, too. I've never heard him sing, but I've heard him write, and his is one of the freshest voices I've come across in a long time, innocent and experienced at the same moment, winning and sweet but not without its own original hints of darkness. The book is written for young readers, but this ancient one liked it so much he read it twice, with gratitude and envy.

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### **Kerry Kenney says**

First of all, I'm an adult, so the book wasn't written for me. I read a review of this book in *Entertainment Weekly* and learned the author used to dance in Broadway shows. I thought it would be wonderful to read a

book written by someone with such an unusual viewpoint for a middle grade reader.

The book is funny, Nate's voice is authentic.

My low rate is for two reasons. One, the book used the word "f-g" multiple times.

When I was growing up, this unfortunate word was used constantly on playgrounds and school buses and by my peers. I work in a grade school as a school librarian, I've not heard kids use that word in school, but I work with kids 4th grade and under primarily. They read books exactly like this one, so I felt at first like this book would likely introduce the word to kids and that made me sad.

For my children, I won't recommend this book or pass it on to a friend because kids today are growing up in world where they can say something online and it changes their day, week, month, life. When we were kids and we were ignorant and childish or hateful, or had regrettable behavior, it did not haunt us.

I understand that Nate is from a small PA town and he's repeating his experience of intolerance. However in the comic plot of the book, the thin development of Nate, I don't think the bullying words bring a dimension to Nate. I think it is like a land mine in otherwise harmless story. Lots of children love to read above their maturity level and I can see a 3rd grader picking up this book and thinking it's a rebranded (with different cover art) Nate the Great book, and then reading f-g, f-g, f-g and thinking that's an okay word because it was in one of his books. It's just not cool.

Besides the language, the book actually lost me because I expected some resolution about his tryout for ET. Instead, the book endlessly bogs on this weird time warpy stretch where he walks six blocks in NYC, he finds the audition, he runs in and out stores buying outfits, he has money, he spends money, he eats doughnuts, he lies about his name, age, money...it didn't follow. I mean, how can you leave an audition, walk out of a building, go to Old Navy, find an outfit, try it on, pay for it and then come back and the first thing you hear is people calling your name? And you did it all in 20 minutes? And Nate's plastic bag of cash that's paying for pizza (\$2.50 for two slices and a soda? What year is this?) and cabs? And clothing? Aunt Heidi calls his sideways cap and oversized shirt "thug" like, but I guess that's okay? Yuck.

I know a child won't notice that, but a child will think it's boring all the fretting about an outfit and talks with Aunt Heidi and way too much focus on home and not very much about Broadway or dancing or theater.

I ended up skimming the last four chapters because it was not good. I wanted to get to a point. Did he get on the show?

I'm not even giving this book to anyone I know, I'm giving it to Goodwill. Sorry Mr. Federle, I wanted to like your book.

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## **Sam says**

I know this may sound like a bit of an over exaggeration, but I think Better Nate Than Ever may be one of my favorite books I've read.

Just like the protagonist, Nate, this book just oozes a sort of charm and hilarious innocence that is impossible not to love. Readers of all ages (I'm 24 and loved it) will find something that they can relate to in this

hilarious tale of innocence, dreams, and family.

There's just something about Nate that readers of all ages and sexes will love. He's innocent, funny, kind but not perfect, and through his eyes you'll see New York, not as dirty expensive place people sometimes grumble about, but as the most magical place on earth. Nate is awed at the simplest things, from an enormous Applebee's, to \$1 pizza being sold on the street, to the Duane Reeds and Cupcake shops on every corner. He'll simultaneously make you crack up with the knowledge of what's actually going on around him, and make you feel appreciative and lucky for the things you do have.

Of course, the author, Tim Federle, takes it one step further. He makes this into a book about love and lost, family and forgiveness, and about discovering the best version of yourself. But he does all of this without feeling corny or hokey. The story just flows, sweeping readers along, until they can't think of anything else except if Nate will get caught by his parents, or make it to the next level of the audition. I don't know exactly how Federle does it, but he makes all of these lessons, all the hilarity, all of the heart fit into one 288 page book, that readers won't be able to put down.

I know this all might sound like a bit much, but I'm being honest when I say this book was amazing. I fully plan to follow whatever Federle writes next, because if it has even half the heart that *Better Nate Than Ever* has, it'll be one heck of a book. Perfect for all ages.

<http://whatchamacallitreviews.blogspot...>

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## **Ulysses Dietz says**

I resisted Tim Federle's "*Better Nate than Ever*" just because it was so popular and has been getting such incredible press.

But Federle is coming to my local bookstore and I figured I should read it, and go meet him.

Good move. It's a wonderful book. Yes, as one of the lone low-score reviewers said, it might be a book for people who are into Broadway and that whole New York experience - but given that this means millions of potential people across the country, then why is that a criticism? Some people. Yeesh.

This is a Young Adult novel aimed at early teenagers - but written with a sparkling, sharp-edged humor and bracingly fast pace. The author's voice feels like a teen, but has the language skills of an adult. It works - or it worked for me. A lot. It all but careens through Nate Foster's escape from the rural outskirts of Pittsburgh to the gritty reality of what he, adorably, calls Manhattan City.

There is not a single thing about Nate that resembles me or my life at the age of thirteen. And yet I identified with him so fully as I read the book I had to stop and remind myself that I wasn't like this.

I laughed out loud throughout the book - and yet there were several moments, small, incisive bits of very smart writing, that surprised me into tears. Because where Nate and I do intersect is that place where, at thirteen, you realize you're not a "normal" boy, and that you'll never fit into that mold. Never.

And the great triumph of this book is that Nate, in the end, is fine with that. Which makes the whole adventure more than worthwhile - for me, as well.



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## Aaron Hartzler says

Featuring the best title of a YA book this calendar year, NATE will make you laugh, yes, but you'll have tears in your eyes while you do. Federle writes humor with a sort of effortless breeze—like he cut his teeth on a remote control watching reruns of I LOVE LUCY—while simultaneously plumbing the depth of feeling found in being seized by a dream that inspires you to risk everything, even when you're not exactly sure why.

This book is a call to action, really; NATE will whisper courage in your ear. It will inspire you to take a long, hard look at the dreams you have, especially the ones you may be trying to ignore. It will also inspire you to push back the furniture in the living room and practice your outside pirouette while singing "Dancing Through Life" from WICKED. (Or maybe that's just me, but you'll love this book.)

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## Alex London says

Holy 'Dance of the Vampires' this book was good! When you're 13, being different can feel like a curse, rather than a blessing. It is for Nate...and yet, he's not going to let that stop him from going for his dream. Somehow, without pulling any punches, Federle has told a story that is moving, joyous, and laugh out loud funny. Better Nate than Ever is the kind of book I wish I had read at 13 and am thrilled I got to read now. You're going to laugh. You're going to cry. You're going to cheer for Nate. This kid deserves a curtain call!

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## Lena♥Ribka says

*A kid who might have found someplace where he doesn't have to change anything about himself, to fit in.*

*(A kid going as himself for Halloween, but the best version, the ultimate.)*

*A better Nate than ever.*

Nate Foster , a 13 years old boy from Pittsburgh, **has a backstory**- he can sing, he loves to sing and he knows EVERY SINGLE MUSICAL on this planet.

And Nate Forster **has a dream**- he wants to star in a Broadway show .

And Nate Forster **has a plan** - to take a bus to New York to audition for a Broadway musical version of E.T., and get back home after the audition BEFORE his parents come back from their seventeen-year anniversary weekend. He has never been anywhere in his life except Pittsburgh.

And Nate Forster **has a little help from his only and the best friend** Libby, who shares his love for musicals. But as we all know from our own experience- not everything in our life works as it should.

No, this book is not exactly *Nate Foster alone in NY*.

Well, in some way maybe. What this book is for sure NOT is a MM-romance. And what this book for sure doesn't have - a sexual tension or sex scenes. This book is a child book. Look at all these awards that *Better Nate Than Ever* was nominated for or won:

- \*\*\* Stonewall Book Award Nominee for Children's & Young Adult Literature (2014)
- \*\*\* Golden Kite Award for Fiction (2014)
- \*\*\* Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award Nominee (2015)
- \*\*\* Lambda Literary Award Nominee for LGBT Children's/Young Adult (2014)
- \*\*\* American Library Association Rainbow List Top 10 (2014)
- \*\*\* ALA Odyssey Honor Book (2014)
- \*\*\* Odyssey Honor (2014)
- \*\*\* YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults (Top Ten) (2014)

It is a wonderful book, a refreshing, a sweet début novel about friendship and family and about our most impossible dreams come true.

If you love musicals, and I mean - if you REALLY have expert knowledge or at least are well-informed about a content of many musicals - you probably will have even more fun reading this book than I had, because Nate compares almost every situation in his life and almost every person he comes across with a scene or a character from musicals.

I thought I would laugh non-stop reading the book, and I really did, in the beginning, but more I read about a boy who was a bit different and therefore he didn't have a lot of friends except Libby, about a boy being bullied at school and called *names*, even if Nate told his story with humour and a warm child charm, even when he tried to find all these episodes in his boyish life comical and witty, my anger against his classmates and my sadness has been grown toward the end.

*After reading about the author, I can imagine that this book was a result of his own experience and probably even a bit autobiographical. He grew up in San Francisco and Pittsburgh before moving to New York to dance on Broadway.*

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## Vitor Martins says

Esse livro é maravilhoso por vários motivos!

*Better Nate Than Ever* conta a história de Nate, um menino que sonha em ser uma estrela da Broadway e foge da sua cidadezinha no interior da Pensylvania para participar de um teste para um musical em Nova York. Quando eu li essa sinopse eu já sabia que ia amar.

O Nate tem 13 anos e ele pensa, age e fala como um garoto de 13 anos. Cada esquina que ele virava em NY e ficava maravilhado com as coisas que conhecia (lojas que vendem APENAS cupcakes!!!! iPhones para todo mundo!!!! Pizza por 1 dólar!!!!!!) eu ia ficando mais empolgado com o rumo da história.

Eu amei a percepção inocente e ao mesmo tempo inteligente que o Nate tem do mundo e dos adultos. Mas, acima de tudo, eu amei a percepção dele sobre a própria sexualidade. Em nenhum momento fica claro que Nate é gay. Muito pelo contrário, no começo da história ele já avisa que sua sexualidade ainda está em aberto porque ele tem 13 anos ainda e não faz ideia de quem ele quer beijar. Mas aos poucos a gente vai entrando na mente desse personagem e vivendo as experiências junto com ele (como a primeira vez que ele vê dois caras se beijando, e eu inclusive chorei no ônibus lendo isso???).

*“So what do you like about New York so much? That you would venture all the way here and not tell anyone?”*

*“Two boys were dancing together in a club,” I want to say, “and nobody stopped them.”*

A relação de Nate com sua família é muito complicada. É aquela coisa de "amo vocês mas não aguento mais" que fez com que eu me identificasse imediatamente com o personagem. O tempo todo eu só queria ser o melhor amigo dele. Apesar de que Libby, a melhor amiga de Nate, já está fazendo um ótimo trabalho. Libby é a amiga que todo mundo precisa ter <3

Assim como em *The Great American Whatever*, o Tim Federle tem uma narrativa muito bem humorada, que me fez rir alto várias vezes. As referências à musicais da Broadway são maravilhosas e se você gosta de teatro musical esse livro vai te ganhar rapidinho.

Esse é um livro infanto juvenil mas isso não faz com que a história seja menor, ou menos importante, ou menos digna de ser lida. Recomendo demais <3

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## **Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says**

Better Nate Than Ever was absolutely terrible for my reading schedule. It totally made me not want to read . . . anything else, that is. Seriously, it's a good thing this was a short audiobook or I would probably still have put off my other books to finish this one. I just kept inventing reasons that I needed to listen to more, tasks to do so I could listen rather than read my print books, which is a good sign.

### **Why Did I Read This Book?**

Well, Better Nate Than Ever was already on my radar, because I do love stories with glbtq themes. However, the wanting turned to needing because my friend MG read it, and said it was completely wondrous. Thus, when I had the chance to get the audio, I went for it the way Nate Foster goes for donuts.

### **What's the Story Here?**

Nate Foster is a kid with big dreams. He's flamboyant, hungry all the time, and possessed of a fantastic best friend who will egg him on to try his hardest in everything. Libby, his bestie, tells him about an audition for the Broadway musical of E.T., and helps him plan a day trip to New York City, so that he can try out for the show. Bad idea bears, right, guys? A thirteen year old off to the city by himself, and it's not like Nate's possessed of a lot of street smarts. Anyway, shenanigans and tomfoolery will be had. Snooty mothers and

pompous smirkers will be faced. Hopes and dreams will be attempted with everything Nate's got.

How are the Characters?

Nate and Libby are sympathetic, because they're the outcasts (and because they use flopped Broadway plays as epithets, which is hilarious and clever). However, they're definitely not idealized or anything, because they can be just as mean as the others. Well, okay, not just as mean, but they are pretty judgmental too. Both of them are teased really severely, for being fat and, in Nate's case, for being gay. I liked that Nate is very obviously flawed, but that you cannot help but root for this crazy kid. I cringed for him when he committed egregious errors, and rooted for him to go home without his aspirations smashed into little pieces along the New York City sidewalk. Also, Federle does dive into some larger family issues on top of the overarching comedic plot, which I thought was pretty fantastic, since the tone remains light but serious issues are covered.

And the GLBTQ Themes?

What I love here is that romance really isn't a plot line. In fact, Nate isn't gay. He probably is, based on a couple of hints, but he's still in the questioning stage of life. He hasn't reached a firm decision about who he is yet. *Better Nate Than Ever* is written in a style that addresses the reader, like Nate has just sat down to enact this whole scenario for you in a one man show, which he would **TOTALLY** do, and Nate straight out says that he's undecided, because he's just thirteen. I love that, because, sure, some people know right away, but just because he loves musicals and fits the stereotype of a gay guy, that doesn't mean he is. There were also some undercurrents of shame in his thoughts, though, so I hope that if he is gay, he can find strength with himself to see that as the positive thing it is, and not something shameful and secretive. All of his feelings felt very real to him, and conveyed how confused he is overall and not ready for all the romance stuff.

How was the Narration?

Tim Federle was the perfect choice to narrate this. I mean, I do love when authors narrate their own work, because there's something so personal and touching in that. Of course, not every author has a voice for narration, but Federle is fantastic. He does Nate so well, and reads with scads of emotion. Basically, I loved everything about the way he narrated this, and everything about *Better Nate Than Ever* just made me smile and compulsively keep listening.

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**Mary Catherine says**

**5 out of 5 stars on Ordinary People, Extraordinary Works**

Okay, so I had made this (somewhat strange) decision that I was going to stop reviewing books, save the random thoughts on GoodReads. And for a while - a long while - I was awesome about it. Sure, that had to do with lack of time and reading manuscripts instead of books, but that is not the point here. The **point here** is actually that I have to throw away the idea that I'm not reviewing on this site because I found **the most awesome middle grade book ever**.

So let's get the awkwardness out of the way first - Tim Federle was on Broadway and I most likely saw him in *Gypsy* with Bernadette Peters though I really would not have known since I was in the last row of the god-forsaken theater that made me feel like I had vertigo. I probably also saw his work in *Billy Elliot* but we

won't talk about that. We all know I loved the dancing but that was about it. Oops.

I digress.

That being said, I'm pretty sure Tim is going to be the biggest star once this book hits shelves. I'm talking *big star like the important one in The Princess and the Frog*:

In **BETTER NATE THAN EVER**, Nate Foster lives in Jankburg, PA, which is about as far from the spotlights of Broadway as you can get - at least for this 13-year-old. What's important to note here is that Nate is *that* kid - the one I love, the one who lives and breathes showtunes, the one who may ~~or may not~~ start snapping his fingers when he finds himself on an empty street with *West Side Story* playing in the background. So when his best friend/vocal teacher/everything under the sun, Libby, hears about an open casting call for *E.T.: The Musical*, they both know Nate has to go for it - even if the auditions are in New York City.

I know what you're all thinking - "Mary, of course you loved this. It's all about Broadway musicals. You're *obsessed* with that."

**Wait, come back! Don't go!**

Are you back? Good, because **BETTER NATE** is so much more than a Broadway-infused book. Not only is this one of the funniest books I've read this year - and I'm talking nearly falling off my bed the first time Nate "curses" because that's how hard I was laughing - it's also one of the most heartfelt and emotionally-packed reads of my year. Tim somehow manages to write moments that made me think "did that really just happen?" the way Spring Awakening once did with "My Junk is You." Nate is a go-getter but in the naive way that most kids are. And that's one of the best parts of this book - Nate is a kid. He's 13 and he sounds like it. He's got a bit of that sass that most kids do but Tim writes him like an actual boy his age. This isn't *Dawson's Creek*, people.

There were also moments that made me sniffle and run the back of my hand over my cheeks to make sure I wasn't *actually* crying - something which you'll never actually know. But to put it in retrospect, some parts of this book made me want to uglycry - the way I did when Hunter Parrish left *Godspell*, the way I always do

when *Armageddon* is on TV and it's that stupid moment when Liv Tyler holds her hand up to the monitor of white noise because her dad's about to give up his life for the world (oops, was that a spoiler?). In fact, I felt so deeply for Nate that sometimes I actually wanted to uglycry the way I did (and still do) at the end of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 2.

I have so much love for this novel - this fantastic marketed-to-the-middle-grade-age novel - because it's hilarious and riveting. Here's a boy with big dreams who has a best friend with whom he concocts crazy schemes with -- and it's all to follow his dreams.

We all had dreams as children. We *still* have dreams as adults.

I dare any of you (and myself, for that matter) to go for your dreams the way Nate does in this book.

Who knows... You may surprise yourself.

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