



Unhooking the Moon

Gregory Hughes

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Meet the Rat: A dancing, football-playing gangster-baiting ten-year-old. When she foresaw her father's death, she picked up her football and decided to head for New York.

Meet her older brother Bob: Protector of the Rat, but more often her follower, he is determined to find their uncle in America and discover a new life for them both.

On their adventures across the flatlands of Winnipeg and through the exciting streets of New York, Bob and the Rat make friends with a hilarious con man and a famous rap star, and escape numerous dangers. But is their Uncle a rich business man, or is the word on the street, that he something more sinister, true? And will they ever find him?

Hughes has created a funny, warm, unique world that lives and breathes. Like *I Capture the Castle*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Curious Incident*, Hughes' story and characters will resonate for many and for years to come.

Unhooking the Moon Details

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From Reader Review Unhooking the Moon for online ebook

Jo says

Initial Final Page Thoughts.

I can't deal with this. This was supposed to be my happy place book post- Feed and Deadline. But wow... what a beautiful book.

High Point.

The fact that no one that I know has read it so it's MINE ALL MINE. The Rat = possibly the cutest kid in the entire world. I want her to be my best friend and we can talk in accents together and sing Frank Sinatra and drink Mocha even though I don't like coffee. Bob= the second cutest kid in the entire world and the best big brother EVER. We are family. Childhood innocence. Road trip= Canada to New York on a bicycle. Sorry Deadline... the new Best Supporting Cast Academy Award now goes to these guys. It's up to you NEW YORK. Snort-inducing funnies. Originality. Vigilante justice. Unexpected gut-wrenching sadness that really knocked the wind out of me. I know that doesn't sound like a high point... but I love books that make me stay like :-O < that for about five hours after I put the book down.

Low Point.

I honestly can't think of one. I don't even remember where I found out this book existed but I am SO glad I did. I just wish it was longer and I wish that The Rat and Bob never had to grow up and find out the world is a terrible, terrible place to live.

Heroine/Hero.

This book is narrated by Bob, twelve (nearly thirteen!) year old boy who lives in Winnipeg. Even though he is the narrator and we see this adventure from his eyes... I need to start with The Rat who made my thoughts of this book go from 'Wow, this book is really cute and original and Bob is a great character' to 'MOVE OVER BOB, THE RAT IS BACK'.

Marie Claire Wazhashnoons DeBillier is a soccer playing, rap-music loving, "beeping" (because her Dad doesn't like swearing), drama queenening ("*The Rat always spoke French when she was angry, she thought it was more dramatic*"), paedophile-hating, dark sunglass donning, mocha-drinking, black & white film loving, master of every accent (except Jamaican) ten-year old with psychic tendencies and some of the funniest one-liners I have ever. She's sweet, feisty, innocent, colourful but so wise beyond her years it's ridiculous. Seriously, she has a better grasp on the way the world works than I do!

If it was possible to adopt a fictional child... I honestly would adopt The Rat and high five her all the time. Bob, The Rat's older brother and our narrator, is the perfect story teller of this magical tale. He has such a mature (if not slightly cynical) outlook on life and because of the things that happen to him and his sister, he is forced to grow up quickly so he can look after them both. Bob really comes into his element when he and The Rat are forced to travel from their home in Winnipeg to New York to find their drug dealing uncle. Hughes perfectly depicted the dichotomy of Bob's struggle to deal with all the responsibility he is suddenly presented with and the contagious excitement that twelve year old boy who finds himself in New York with his little sister would feel.

When I first read that this book was told from the perspective of a twelve year old boy, I was a bit wary thinking that it was going to be really saccharine and clichéd. But, Bob is the coolest twelve year old kid ever, one of the most original and captivating narrators I've met and he has such an insightful perspective on things. By having Bob as a narrator, Hughes creates a magic out of the ordinary and scary things in life and I loved watching the adventure unfold through his eyes.

However, my favourite parts of Bob's narration are his observations when it comes to his sister. He has such

a dry sense of humour, but it is his off-hand comments about her and her eccentric and delightful ways that made this book for me. (*“Don’t be shy!” she said like a seventies pimp. Then she turned into Little Lord Fauntleroy’s sister” / “I mean, there’s no doubt the Rat was a closet shoplifter and I’m sure she’ll be convicted of something someday.”*)

I learnt the hard way not to read this book in public... too many strange looks as I chortled to myself.

Supporting characters.

OK, I have no idea where to start. On their journey Bob and The Rat meet such an array of characters so colourful the brightest rainbow in existence would look at them in horror and shuffle off in embarrassment because it felt so inadequate in comparison.

I won’t go into them all because I want you to meet them and fall in love with them like I did but my favourites were Harold, The Rat’s boyfriend who has a dead-centre parting, always wears a shirt and tie and walks around on crutches. (He’s ten as well, by the way! Seriously, where are they getting all these cute kids from?!). Joey, the friendly neighbourhood drug dealer and Iceman, the rapper whose music the The Rat is obsessed with.

Theme Tune.

I have to agree with The Rat when she believes that everything sounds better in French.

Joe Dassin's Aux Champs Elysées (I couldn't find a better video!) is one of my favourite songs and I am happily going to allow it to be used for this book, because there is a verse which sums up what this book meant to me.

(Translation)

I trotted on the avenue my heart opened to the unknowns

I wanted to say hello to no matter whom

No matter whom, it could be you, I'd said anything to you

It was enough to speak to you, just to calm down.

To me anyway, this perfectly depicts the carefree attitude of The Rat, the way she sees the world and the relationship she shares with her brother... which after the of books I’ve read recently... I have to say is refreshingly normal!

Angst Scale.

9/10. The ending of this book made me feel how I imagine it would feel like to run through a glorious field of daffodils with lambs leaping next to me and butterflies dancing around my head only to have someone stick their foot out and trip me up.

That sounds negative but, honestly, it isn’t. It was a great ending, it’s just that it was unexpected and I didn’t want it to end like that. But I always say that I love books that affect me emotionally and this book really did. Throughout the book there are a lot of issues hinted at (the ones that immediately spring to mind when you think of two children walking around the Bronx looking for a drug dealer) and when they come up, it’s really jarring, especially because they are so often juxtaposed with the hilarity of The Rat and Bob. This was such a beautiful book and I’m soo glad I found it.

Recommended for.

EVERYONE. People who have always wanted to go on a cross-country road trip on your bike, a freight train, in the back of a drug dealers car etc. People who love books that feel like there’s something magical within their pages. People who think their friends are awesome... because when you read this book you will realise that they are inferior to these guys. People who like to put on different accents just because they can. People who like to be awoken by their Dad singing Frank Sinatra at them. People who have always been a

little crazy but don't care. People who have always wondered what it would be like to hustle in Times Square.

You can also read the review for this book and others and a whole lot of other exciting stuff on my blog [here](#).

Invernal. says

Wow.. Que puedo decir? Este libro me hizo experimentar de todo... La rata (Uno de los personajes principales) definitivamente se ha convertido en uno de mis personajes preferidos de libros. Es tan.. única. Por un momento me sentí como ella, por otros simplemente quería ser como ella.

Es una historia muy conmovedora de la que jamas me arrepentiría de volver a releer una y mil veces.

Rosie Brocklehurst says

I found this book impressive and much better than many books by established children's authors. I finished it in one reading. Hughes makes you care about the characters in a tale that compresses more harsh realities in its pages than any child should have to experience. After their father dies, the two kids aged ten and twelve, journey from Winnipeg to New York to find a long lost Uncle , their only know relative, despite the fact that they believe he is involved with drugs. The Canadian scenes set the backdrop of their early lives. Hughes uses home life, schoolfriends, teachers, Native Canadians, food and love to set the scene. Dad lives outside of conventional society and raises his kids alone after his wife dies in a car accident when the kids are very young. He gets drunk but always provides and makes wonderful meals. The heart of the book is rooted in a dark reality of street life among the poor and dispossessed of New York. But the kids get to meet shady characters who turn out to have heart, and also their favourite Rapper, the world famous 'Iceman' whose empathy with them comes from his own experience of life which is slowly being expunged by celebrity and riches. The protagonist, a girl child called 'Rat', aged ten is the bravest and feistiest character I have ever come across in children's fiction or fiction of any kind, and she is marked by psychic abilities, disturbed dreams, fits, which mark her out as not only unusual but a character of transcendant spirit. She meets evil head on. She says and does things that you would want people to say who are rebellious and strong. She defies convention and stands up to wickedness. Anger at injustice and cruelty enables her to shut down fear. This is the true voice of the child who has learned to fight back against personal injury against herself and All children, by shutting down caution, hence her fight against paedophilia which she knows about and is implacably devoted to fight against. She is at one and the same time innocent and without innocence. The voice that Hughes' uses is authentic and flows well and is reminiscent of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, also written from the perspective of a boy telling a story in the first person. The love the boy has for his remarkable courageous and feisty sister (the Rat) seeps through every page. Bob and Rat respond to others and circumstances in a way that thrills. Their story is edgy and dark from the outset but lightened by good characters-some teachers, or characters who are often from the margins of society. Difficult to say what audience Hughes is writing for-he just wrote it knowing that kids understand 'reality' more than a lot of adults would like to admit. The story could have been cut in parts without losing anything-but it is a great book.

thelastword says

Bob is weak. The Rat crazy. She leads, he follows. What you get is a pretty irresponsible journey filled with adoration from Bob for the actions of his (what I saw as) very spoilt sister. We were supposed to love her; everybody loved her, but I couldn't. Because of that I could not anchor myself into the story at all.

Sorry Bob. Glad you love your sister though, that's really nice of you.

Ringo The Cat says

Meet Bob and his sister, the Rat. They are prairie kids from Winnipeg, a land “so flat you can watch your dog run away for three days”. When their father dies (after one of the Rat’s curiously accurate premonitions), the Rat decides they should go to New York, to find their long-lost (drug dealer) uncle Jerome DeBillier. So the two set off on a road trip of sorts to New York. What follows is one of the quirkiest of traveler’s tales, with the two of them meeting conmen, hustlers, rap idols, etc.

Unhooking the Moon is one of those rare novels that just seem to come out of the blue (it is Gregory Hughes’ debut novel). The originality of this little novel comes from 2 distinct points. At first there’s the character of the Rat (Marie Claire). She’s a bit of everything, carefree, witty, wise, fearless..., and even her brother Bob hasn’t quite figured her out: a 10-year-old who loves to play soccer, who puts on different accents, who speaks French and Spanish fluently, who is into Native culture and myth, who literally beeps out her swearwords, who’s not afraid to shoplift, who has strange fits and premonitions, ... the Rat could be quite gorgeous and mysterious at times, yet everyone seemed to fall under her spell as soon as they met her. Second, the point of view and writing style is what makes this novel both different and endearing. I can understand people who say they found this book hard to get into. The style of the novel is fairly magical. In fact, I’d say the entire story reads like a fairy tale, a bit akin to a lot of Neil Gaiman’s award-winning writing. Gregory Hughes himself says: “I thought it would be a great thing to write a book that anyone could read. I never toned down the language, I wrote it on my voice, in just the way I speak. I was taught that you should never try to make the language flowery or show off to impress the reader and I talk kind of basic anyway, I don't use big words so the language I was using, an 11 or 12-year-old would not have to strain themselves to understand it.” The childlike wonder and the innocence in the language and behavior of the characters is definitely present in the novel. And when a grownup reader tries to look with their grownup eyes at the deceptively simple and basic language that Bob – still only a 12-year-old himself – uses and the type of roadside adventures the two end up in, you might feel a bit uncomfortable when you read this book.

However, if you let yourself discover the child within you and you let the words of the book absorb you completely, this is a gem of a novel. Despite this being a “children’s book”, there’s no embellishing of things. From the beginning you know this will not be your typical happy ending fairy tale. Of course, fairy tales in themselves might end well, but they also play on the most basic and primal fears of a society – something that I would argue Gregory Hughes is also doing in Unhooking the Moon. Though a lot of the scenes are incredibly fun, you’re always left to wonder what’s lurking in the shadows.

Unhooking the Moon won the 2010 Booktrust Teenage prize, a prize which has a bit of history of celebrating truly original and creative writing. Well, they’re truly original and creative books to me in any case, and definitely books with an appeal to more than their so-called target audience: Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book*, and my absolute favorite in their list of winners Patrick Ness’ *The Knife of Never Letting Go*... Unhooking the Moon is not so much a book

that you have to read, but experience.

Meet Bob and The Rat. The Rat could be full of surprises sometimes.

Michele says

Star parts: OK where to start. Well for a start the book made me laugh out loud. And what were the bits that made me laugh the most, well probably the bits that should have had you crying such as the funeral scene. And the climax, which involves some pretty awful people, and is totally exciting, and still hysterically funny.

The characterisation is great, the Rat and Bob really come alive, their voices are authentic and they way Bob deals with his sister is, in my mind, really realistic.

The story also carries you away. You want the kids to succeed and you want everything to turn out alright for them, even though I knew that at every turn things could go so dreadfully wrong. Each time they pull through something completely ridiculous happens, yet the story is so well written that it doesn't matter what Hughes comes up with next.

Black clouds:: The thing is, that it's not a black cloud. There are no faults with the book, it's just that it didn't end the way I wanted it to end. In the end despite the far out situations these kids go through, the ending isn't Disney saccharine sweet, it's realistic. I'm not saying I like Disney endings, I just grew to love these characters all of them, the Rat, Bob, the con man, the rap star, the Italian. I just wanted them all to be alright and in real life, that doesn't always work out, does it?

Do I recommend it:: Well first of all, a little back story. I read this to see if it was suitable for a 5th grade class. The Rat is always going on about 'goddamn pedophiles', and the books deals with some pretty hardcore issues, so I sent the book along to the high school library as it seemed very YA to me. Now if you find it in the high school library read it, because it's brilliant. And if you don't have access to our library, just get hold of it and read it anyway.

Erzsi Deak says

Cannot say enough about this book -- loved it. But here's the publisher's blurb:

Meet the Rat: A dancing, football-playing gangster-baiting ten-year-old. When she foresaw her father's death, she picked up her football and decided to head for New York. Meet her older brother Bob: Protector of the Rat, but more often her follower, he is determined to find their uncle in America and discover a new life for them both. On their adventures across the flatlands of Winnipeg and through the exciting streets of New York, Bob and the Rat make friends with a hilarious con man and a famous rap star, and escape numerous dangers. But is their Uncle a rich business man, or is the word on the street, that he something more sinister, true? And will they ever find him? Hughes has created a funny, warm, unique world that lives and breathes. Like I Capture the Castle, Breakfast at Tiffany's, The Curious Incident, Hughes' story and characters will resonate for many and for years to come.

Camille says

Acabo de terminar este libro y recién lo estoy digiriendo.

¿Qué decir? ¿Por dónde empezar? Tengo muchos sentimientos revoloteando dentro de mi pecho, y es que este libro me hizo experimentar un montón de sensaciones; felicidad, adrenalina, alegría, desilusión, tristeza, impotencia... ¡uf! tantas sensaciones juntas...

La historia es narrada por Bob, quien, junto a Marie Claire (la Rata), protagonizan el libro.

Bob y la Rata son dos hermanos que vivían felices y tranquilos junto con su padre en una pradera a las afueras de la ciudad de Winnipeg (Canadá). Un día, los hermanos encuentran a su padre muerto en el suelo de la cocina y es a partir de aquí en que sus vidas dan un giro de 180°. Bob y la Rata no quieren que la policía se de por enterada de su situación porque, de hacerlo, podrían llevarlos a un orfanato, lugar al que la Rata se niega a ir. Es entonces cuando averiguan que tienen un tío adinerado (Jerome) que vive en Nueva York, y deciden ir solos en busca de quien sería su única salvación.

Con ayuda de sus amigos, Bob y la Rata emprenden su viaje hacia Estados Unidos. A lo largo del recorrido se encuentran con diversos personajes que actuarán como obstáculos y otros tantos que se dispondrán a ayudarlos en su búsqueda. Tal es el caso de sus nuevos extraños amigos, Joey -un contrabandista de droga-, Ice -un rapero reconocido, ídolo de la Rata- y Tommy -un ex abogado que está en la ruina-. Juntos, revolverán todo Nueva York para cumplir el objetivo de los hermanos y hallar de una vez por todas al Tío Jerome.

La Rata es una niña de 10 años, muy carismática, aventurera y divertida a la que le gusta jugar al fútbol. Le gusta mucho socializar con las personas, ayudar a los demás y hacer locuras. Nunca dice malas palabras porque su papá nunca se lo permitió, en vez de eso, reemplaza todo insulto por un ¡pip! (esto me hizo reír muchísimo durante todo el libro, jaja). Es adorable y bondadosa, pero odia a los pedófilos desde que uno asesinó a su mejor amiga Felicia. Su mayor sueño es ser una famosa actriz y bailarina de ballet.

Bob es un chico de 12 años cuya debilidad es su hermanita menor. Desde que murió su padre, intenta tomar el papel de hombre valiente, por lo que protege y cuida con su vida a la Rata. Más sabiendo que su hermana tiene una "enfermedad" (aunque los médicos nunca hayan sabido diagnosticar nada) que hace que le den, cada tanto, ataques similares a la epilepsia, y que la podría estar marchitando poco a poco...

Me gustó mucho este libro. Es fácil de leer y muy entretenido. Es una literatura infantil, o eso es lo que todos dicen en sus reseñas, pero la verdad es que yo rescato muchas cosas lindas que pueden gustar sin importar la edad o la maduración. Este libro me hizo soltar carcajadas y creo que hasta al ser más amargado podría hacerle sonreír. Además, tiene ciertas partes que pareciera como si las palabras te atravesaran el pecho y te tocaran el alma y el corazón.

Recomiendo leer esta historia a quien quiera acompañar a Bob y la Rata en su búsqueda, que no sólo los marcará por ser una excitante experiencia, sino que los unirá y les enseñará a mantenerse unidos a pesar de las circunstancias.

¿Estás dispuesto a acompañar a los hermanos en este viaje?

Frases que me gustaron del libro:

"Si todos miraran las estrellas con mayor frecuencia, comprenderían qué inmenso es el universo y qué pequeños somos en él, y entonces sus problemas no les parecerían tan grandes".

"No me importa para nada si estoy loca -dijo la Rata-. Porque soy feliz. Y es preferible ser feliz y loca que loca y desdichada".

"Aférrate a los sueños, pues si los sueños mueren, la vida es un ave de alas rotas que no puede volar":

"Así es la vida. Andamos dando vueltas como ratones ciegos en busca de aquello que queremos encontrar. De ratones a hombres tristes, de la poesía de nuestra infancia a las tinieblas de la maldita muerte, jamás dejamos de buscar. ¿Por qué no nos limitamos a existir?"

Katerina says

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<https://knijnikrile.wordpress.com/201...>

Catie says

This is a very engaging and sweet story that will carry you right along with its madcap, almost surreal adventures. I really enjoyed reading it, but I just never quite connected to it all the way. I kept feeling swept forward, without anything firm to hold onto.

The story is narrated by a sixteen year old Bob, as he recalls the fateful summer when he was twelve, and he and his ten year old sister Marie Claire “The Rat” Debilliers traveled (by bicycle and other unreliable means) from Winnipeg to New York City. The Rat is plagued by fits, which are often accompanied by visions of the future, and she seems to be able to discern “good souls” from “bad souls” on sight. She’s fluent in several languages, picks up accents within minutes, hustles like a pro, and has a seemingly never-ending store of good cheer. Oh, and she hates pedophiles.

Bob is her protector and ally, and he tends to go along with even the craziest of her schemes. But is The Rat really a hyper-perceptive child prophet of some kind, or is she just crazy?

I really struggled with that question. I wanted the author to go one way or another; to settle it for me. But

then I realized...does it really matter? In the end, this story isn't really about Marie Claire's mental state; it's about the absolute strength of the relationship between Marie Claire and Bob.

But I still found myself wanting more. There are very brief half-glimpses of the horrible direness of Bob and Marie Claire's situation, but that's never fully displayed. Bob, as a narrator, is very couched in his sister's confidently bright view of the world; he's very trusting. That's intriguing in itself, but I needed a moment of separation from this fantasy world – a moment of reality – for me to be able to truly connect to these two.

I really didn't like the ending. It just seemed to get zanier and zanier, with a much hinted at event *finally* coming to pass, only to have the final outcome withheld for a "where are they now?" update of every single cast member.

However, this is a very entertaining read that I would recommend to lovers of younger middle-grade literature.

Perfect Musical Pairing

Cat Stevens – Child for a Day

This song kind of embodies what I wanted this book to be. More specifically, I liked this:

*I was a child, who ran full of laughter
I was a child who lived for today
My eyes full of sunshine
My heart full of smiles"*

but I wanted more of this:

*We're getting older as time goes by
A little older with everyday
We were the children of yesterday"*

Karen says

I am really starting to wonder what I am looking for in a book anymore. Unhooking the Moon is getting rave reviews and I really just didn't care for it. I understand that it is a kid's book and I am an adult, but I try to read with 11 year old eyes so I can recommend books to the triplets across the street and I just can't imagine any of them liking this book. If I had to like someone in the book it would be the narrator - Bob - whose name was somehow jarring and unnatural. It seems I was supposed to adore Rat, but I really just did not like her at all. She was irritating and obnoxious (not in a ten year old way) and had too many convenient visions. Too many coincidences and lucky breaks altogether for two young children making their way from Canada to NYC on their own. Who was the guy with the cigarette? And if Rat's condition could not be diagnosed, how was it suddenly revealed that Bob knew she would eventually deteriorate? I really wanted to like this book but it was disappointing.

Giselle says

A finished copy was provided by the publisher for review.

Bob and his little sister Marie Clare live with their father in Winnipeg. When the unthinkable happens and their dad passes away, the two siblings go on a journey across several provinces to New York City to find their long-lost Uncle.

What a story! It starts off a bit slow, but I can understand that Hughes is setting up the environment that they're used to living. Once they're on the road, it becomes a huge difference from their sheltered life. The pacing is great once they hit New York. I loved the main characters. I was entrapped by the Rat's vivacious personality and charming demeanor. Never have I read about such a character with a larger than life personality. It was almost like she was in her own little world. And Bob who narrates the story is such a protective older brother. He's at that awkward stage where girls are becoming pretty and less cootie-inducing. I enjoyed their banter the most. The secondary characters they meet add to the fun. And I get how Rat had a second opinion about everyone. It was almost a mystery to me as to why she had so many premonitions.

Then the ending just broke my heart. You knew it would be serious and even though it ended on such a positive tone, I couldn't help but want a happier ending.

Petr says

Báječná knížka. Vtipná, dobrodružná, dojemná... A Krysa je prostě ?íslo.

Mari Anne says

While I enjoyed this middle grade novel about a pair of orphans who go off in search of their long lost uncle, I did NOT enjoy it as a middle grade novel. There were entirely too many swear words, along with very adult themes that were dealt with in this book, that made it seem inappropriate for the recommended age level of 9 - 12. This is the second British children's book I have read where the expletive "goddamn" is thrown around by the kids. In this one they even go so far as to say it isn't swearing. Really? Since when?

If anything I would designate this book as YA, although I think it would make a perfectly lovely adult mystical realism novel.
