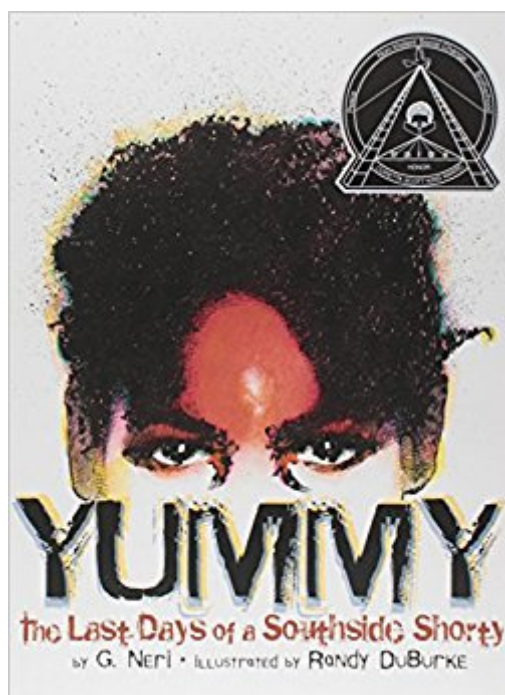


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# Yummy: The Last Days Of A Southside Shorty



## Synopsis

Eleven-year old Roger is trying to make sense of his classmate Robert "Yummy" Sandifer's death, but first he has to make sense of Yummy's life. Yummy could be as tough as a pit bull sometimes. Other times he was as sweet as the sugary treats he loved to eat. Was Yummy some sort of monster, or just another kid? As Roger searches for the truth, he finds more and more questions. How did Yummy end up in so much trouble? Did he really kill someone? And why do all the answers seem to lead back to a gang-the same gang to which Roger's older brother belongs? *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* is a compelling graphic dramatization based on events that occurred in Chicago in 1994. This gritty exploration of youth gang life will force readers to question their own understandings of good and bad, right and wrong.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1994, in the Roseland neighborhood of Chicago's South Side, a 14-year-old girl named Shavon Dean was killed by a stray bullet during a gang shooting. Her killer, Robert "Yummy" Sandifer, was 11 years old. Neri recounts Yummy's three days on the run from police (and, eventually, his own gang) through the eyes of Roger, a fictional classmate of Yummy's. Roger grapples with the unanswerable questions behind Yummy's situation, with the whys and hows of a failed system, a crime-riddled neighborhood, and a neglected community. How could a smiling boy, who carried a teddy bear and got his nickname from his love of sweets, also be an arsonist, an extortionist, a murderer? Yet as Roger mulls reasons, from absentee parenting to the allure of gang membership, our picture of Yummy only becomes more obscure. Neri's straightforward, unadorned prose is the

perfect complement to DuBurke's stark black-and-white inks; great slabs of shadow and masterfully rendered faces breathe real, tragic life into the players. Like Roger, in the end readers are left with troubling questions and, perhaps, one powerful answer: that they can choose to do everything in their power to ensure that no one shares Yummy's terrible fate. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr 7 Up In 1994, an incident of Southside Chicago gang-related violence captured national headlines. Eleven-year-old Robert "Yummy" Sandifer shot and killed his 14-year-old neighbor Shavon Dean. Neri's retelling is based on public records as well as personal and media accounts from the period. Framing the story through the eyes and voice of a fictional character, 11-year-old Roger, offers a bittersweet sense of authenticity while upholding an objective point of view. Yummy, so named because of his love of sweets, was the child of parents who were continually in prison. While living legally under the care of a grandmother who was overburdened with the custody of numerous grandchildren, Yummy sought out the closest thing he could find to a family: BDN or Black Disciples Nation. In the aftermath and turmoil of Shavon's tragic death, he went into hiding with assistance from the BDN. Eventually the gang turned on him and arranged for his execution. The author frames the story with this central question: Was Yummy a cold-blooded killer or a victim of his environment? While parts of the message focusing on the consequences of choice become a little heavy-handed, the exploration of "both sides of the story" is unflinchingly offered. In one of the final panels, narrator Roger states, "I don't know which was worse, the way Yummy lived or the way he died." Realistic black-and-white art further intensifies the story's emotion. A significant portion of the panels feature close-up faces. This perspective offers readers an immediacy as well as emotional connection to this tragic story. Barbara M. Moon, Suffolk Cooperative Library System, Bellport, NY © Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Before Columbine, Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook, there was 'Yummy' Sandifer. When he was just eleven-years-old, Robert 'Yummy' Sandifer (so named for his love of junk food) opened fire in a street of his local neighbourhood in Roseland, Chicago. Yummy fired a 9 millimeter semiautomatic pistol, hitting and killing a young girl called Shavon Dean, who was just 14-years-old. Yummy fled the scene, and a manhunt got underway - the senseless murder and 11-year-old killer making national headlines . . . but that was just the beginning of this tragic saga. Yummy was close to members of the Black Disciples Chicago street gang, and this is presumably how he came to be in

possession of the gun. During the manhunt, it was reported that the shooting was even an initiation gone wrong. And it was because of his fledgling ties to the Black Disciples that it was the gang who ended up finding Yummy, and executing him. Brothers Cragg and Derrick Hardaway, ages 16 and 14, were the Black Disciples members who met Yummy on August 31. They promised him a safe place to hide from the police . . . instead he was driven to an empty underpass and told to get on his knees - he was then shot twice in the back of the head. His body was discovered by Chicago police the next day, and brothers Cragg and Derrick Hardaway were convicted of his murder and given long-term prison sentences. Yummy's mug-shot was plastered over the cover of TIME Magazine (the same mug-shot his family used for his funeral program). His story sent shockwaves through America as more of his sad background and violent end became known. By three-years of age, Yummy was known to Child Welfare authorities as his mother had a history of misdemeanour arrests and his father was incarcerated. Yummy was beaten on a regular basis, and was found to have cigarette burns on his body as well as more serious bruises consistent with physical beatings. Sandifer was taken to live with his grandmother when he was three, but the house was often overrun with other children (up to 19 at any one time) and by the time Yummy was eight-years-old he'd started stealing cars and breaking into houses. President at the time, Bill Clinton, spoke about Yummy and the sad circumstances of his life and death in a President's Radio Address on September 10, 1994. It was during this address that Clinton announced his eminent signing of a proclamation declaring the upcoming week National Gang Violence Prevention Week. Some sixteen years after the violent life and death of Yummy Sandifer, author G. Neri together with illustrator Randy Duburke, created 'Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty' - a middle-grade graphic novel about the child killer who still haunts Chicago and the American conscience. Neri's reimagining of this tragic event is told from the perspective of Roger, a Roseland resident and classmate of Yummy's. Roger tries to come to terms with the killing of Shavon Dean, the manhunt for Yummy and his eventual murder amidst his own family's struggles with Roger's older brother, who has been hanging out with the Black Disciples. This book is intended for ages 12 and up - though I can imagine a lot of people would take issue with the violent themes being discussed and depicted in a graphic novel for middle-grade readers. But the fact of the matter is; this violence really happened. This is Neri and Duburke recounting and questioning a very real, very violent crime that rocked America and, sadly, involved a young boy who is nearly the same age as the intended readers of this graphic novel. In 1994 Neri was a filmmaker teaching workshops to kids in the inner-city schools of Los Angeles, when the Yummy story broke. In interviews he talks about how those kids grasped and processed the breaking news story of Yummy Sandifer - the opposing beliefs that he was a

thug who deserved his end, versus those who saw him as a victim. There was also a recurring discussion of gang and gun violence. In reading 'The Last Days of a Southside Shorty' I can see how Neri came to tackle Yummy's story from the similar point of view of a young classmate who is grappling with Yummy's death, and life. Roger's voice is carrying this story, as we see events unfold through his eyes - he's weighing the tragedy of Yummy's life against the recent news of Shavon's death . . . and eventually, Yummy's execution. And then there's Roger's older brother, Gary, who is himself friends with members of the Black Disciples. Neri does very well to process all of this information through Roger, who slowly comes to realise the shades of grey in the tragedy. And it is a slow processing - as bits and pieces of Yummy's abusive childhood leak into the news-feeds amidst images of the shrine in Shavon's memory. Randy Duburke has done an incredible job of illustrating this powerful story - in bold, black and white panels he captures Yummy's innocence in one drawing, and then hints at his menace in the next. And some panels are lifted right out of the 1994 newsfeeds and TIME magazine photos - like the haunting picture of Yummy in his casket, surrounded by stuffed toys. 'Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty' has won countless awards, among them; the Coretta Scott King Author Honor Award, Kirkus Review Best Books of the Year, and the 2010 Cybil Award - Best YA Graphic Novel . . . to name a very, very few. And this graphic novel deserves all that praise, and more. Author G. Neri and illustrator Randy Duburke have created a haunting graphic novel exploring one of the darkest moments in America's long history of gun violence. That they've created this novel for young readers is incredibly important and potent. 'Yummy: the Last Days of a Southside Shorty' is a beautiful and raw graphic novel that looks unflinchingly and with great care to the story of Robert 'Yummy' Sandifer - and while the illustrations may be in stark black and white, Yummy's story is reflected in complex shades of grey.

This graphic novel depicts the story of Robert "Yummy" Sandifer's life and death in Chicago's crime ridden Roseland. Based on real life events and told through the narration of Yummy's fictional classmate Roger, readers are shown the complexity behind labeling this 11-year-old gang member and murderer a villain or a victim. The black and white cartoon illustrations help younger readers access the very serious material.

Yummy is an unforgettable, tragic character. I know this book will be tattered by the end of the year, because my students will pass it to each other. Thank you for creating such a honest story that students will carry with them.

This was a easy read as the cartoon pages made it fun for my students to follow along and stay attentive to the real message in the story. Excellent work

All I can say is wow, this is a sad yet fascinating story. No one is expressing the gang's use of children to do their crimes.

This is a very good but that describes the consequences to ones actions. Although in comic book form, this is a very good book whether young or old and the artwork, although gritty, it is great, a good contrast for such a book

Neri has written another powerful, uncompromising tale and he is beginning to create his own niche in books aimed at boys on the margins who are reluctant readers. A remarkable synthesis of story and pictures. Neri's prose is never cloying, always short and direct. A tough story that's hard to forget.

When I read this book I couldn't put it down! I originally got it from the library and ended up buying it to put into my classroom library. I Loved This Book!!

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