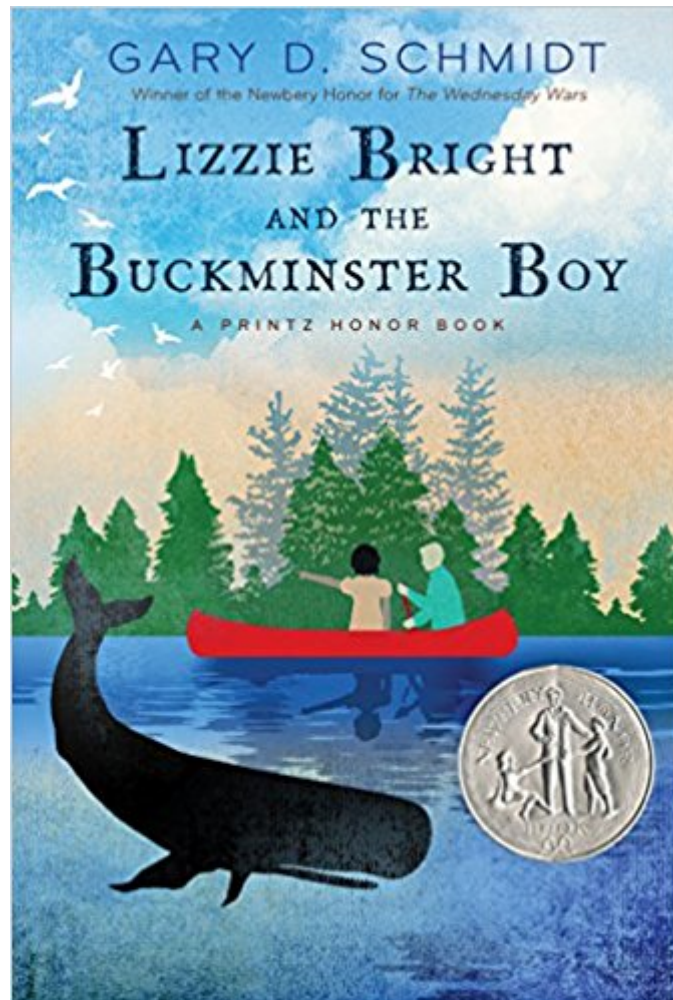




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# Lizzie Bright And The Buckminster Boy



## Synopsis

It only takes a few hours for Turner Buckminster to start hating Phippsburg, Maine. No one in town will let him forget that he's a minister's son, even if he doesn't act like one. But then he meets Lizzie Bright Griffin, a smart and sassy girl from a poor nearby island community founded by former slaves. Despite his father's-and the town's-disapproval of their friendship, Turner spends time with Lizzie, and it opens up a whole new world to him, filled with the mystery and wonder of Maine's rocky coast. The two soon discover that the town elders, along with Turner's father, want to force the people to leave Lizzie's island so that Phippsburg can start a lucrative tourist trade there. Turner gets caught up in a spiral of disasters that alter his life-but also lead him to new levels of acceptance and maturity. This sensitively written historical novel, based on the true story of a community's destruction, highlights a unique friendship during a time of change. Author's note.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6-9-From the sad and shameful actual destruction of an island community in 1912, Schmidt weaves an evocative novel. When Turner Buckminster arrives in Phippsburg, ME, it takes him only a few hours to start hating his new home. Friendless and feeling the burden of being the new preacher's son, the 13-year-old is miserable until he meets Lizzie Bright Griffin, the first African American he has ever met and a resident of Malaga Island, an impoverished community settled by

freed or possibly escaped slaves. Despite his father's and the town's stern disapproval, Turner spends time with Lizzie, learning the wonders of the Maine coast. For some minor infraction, Turner's father makes the boy visit elderly Mrs. Cobb, reading to her and playing the organ. Lizzie joins him, and this unlikely threesome takes comfort in the music. The racist town elders, trying to attract a lucrative tourist trade, decide to destroy the shacks on Malaga and to remove the community, including 60 graves in their cemetery. The residents are sent to the Home for the Feeble-Minded in Pownal. When Mrs. Cobb dies and leaves her house to Turner, he sets off to bring Lizzie home, only to find that she died shortly after arriving at the institution. Turner stands up to the racism of the town. His father, finally proud of him, stands with him-a position that results in the reverend's death. Although the story is hauntingly sad, there is much humor, too. Schmidt's writing is infused with feeling and rich in imagery. With fully developed, memorable characters and a fascinating, little-known piece of history, this novel will leave a powerful impression on readers. Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 7-12. Turner, the rigid minister's son, doesn't fit in when his family moves from Boston to the small town of Phippsburg on the coast of Maine in 1912. It's not only that Maine baseball is different from the game he knows; he's just plain miserable. Then he makes friends with a smart, lively young teen, Lizzie Griffin, living in a small, impoverished community founded by former slaves on nearby Malaga Island. When the town elders drive Lizzie's people off the island, Turner stands up for them, but he can do nothing. Lizzie eventually dies in an insane asylum. The novel may be too long and detailed for some readers, with every plot strand and character accounted for. But the removal of the Malaga community really happened, and Schmidt weaves that history into a powerful tale of friendship and coming-of-age, adding a lyrical sense of the coastal landscape. Characters are drawn without reverence in this haunting combination of fact and fiction that has a powerful and tragic climax. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

It was an engaging way of viewing an important historical event. It is important to pass on to children the lessons that can be learned from history. I enjoyed seeing the way characters were developed and these vignettes had interesting twists. The downside for me was how full of negativity it was and this would be a potentially depressing book for younger children though full of material for older

children with which to interact with them - moral dilemmas etc.

This book 'found me and twisted around me like a cat asking for a bowl of milk' - to borrow from the book. It played with me and drew me in until I would have to 'pause and quiver' at the sheer beauty of it. It toyed with me, 'scooting around me and pulling at my ears. It threw up the dust off the road into my face, to turn me around, and when I leaned into it, it suddenly let go and pushed at me from behind, laughing.' It punched me in the nose and then poked me in the eye. Because, every time I thought I knew where it was going, and was about to sigh, 'it struck me with something about as expected as a megalosaurus lumbering up Parker Head.' Turner Buckminster and his family have moved to Phippsburg, Maine - from Boston. He feels 'exiled by fate from a place he loved' and is further exiled as the story progresses. He finds that everything is different, including things he has taken for granted, like the way a baseball is thrown, and swimming. Turner is about 13 years old, and the book is a journey through the storms and tribulations of adolescence, of recognising frailties in parents, and self, of having to find a moral code of your own, and most importantly that establishment of relationships outside the family circle that may force you into taking a stand against your family. The weather is a driving force in the telling of this story. There is the veneer of religion but the real greater force is nature. There are people who understand the weather and the tides, and those who don't. Some of the strongest images in the book, the most telling about character, use weather: Lizzie leaves after talking with Turner, and 'The sea breeze came down from the leaves and followed at her heels, jumping up now and again and frisking all around.' Turner, after noticing Mrs Hurd's shutters have been painted green, 'The sea breeze, wearing its overcoat, followed him all the way until he closed the door on it. Then it tipped up into the sky and spread out, looking for a maple it could scorch or a beech it could blanch. It found the maple and went about its business, so that if Turner looked out his front door, he might have seen the maple just past First Congregational shiver some and then coldly begin to burn into reds.' When Turner's father sets yet more reading and summarising work, 'Outside the window, the sea breeze dropped and slunk away.' Mr Stonecrop 'blustered out of the house, and Turner and his father watched him take the street by right of possession. There wasn't a sea breeze anywhere near him, and if there had been one, it would have been trampled into the dust of Parker Head until it wasn't anything but a puff or two.' And so it goes, the weather a character of mythical proportion, guiding and prodding and ever changing, both predictable and unpredictable, and certainly inevitable. I love the way that Gary Schmidt draws upon the great classics of storytelling - Shakespeare in the Wednesday Wars, and The Aeneid and the eternal theme of conflict in this. He makes them real, and gives them a currency

for readers of today. This book lingers for a long time, and like great food, has a compelling after taste. I'm still trying to sort out all of the flavours.

Yes, this is a great book of historical fiction. I gave it to a friend who teaches far up in New Hampshire. Growing up in a small, New England town, it was easy to think that racism and sleazy people only exist elsewhere in the country. This book opens a young reader's eyes with a fascinating story. -- Many good discussion points throughout. --Ticia Tubman

During the English reading series at my school there were several authors that I liked, but Gary Schmidt stood out as an author that I could really enjoy reading. I picked one of his books at random from and ordered it. It was called Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy. It was about a boy in a small town in Maine where his father was the new pastor. The story was brilliantly written with unflinching honesty since it is from the perspective of the young boy. The boy isn't prejudiced, and doesn't know how or why to be. The whole story is interestingly hinged upon the fact that he's not used to underhanded pitches in softball. If he had only been good at softball he might never have known Lizzie Bright, or made friends with the old women in the town. I laughed out loud several times during the book but also admit that I cried a little bit at the end of the book. It wasn't unnecessarily sad or tragic, but rather kind of honest and real. The good guys don't always win, and justice doesn't always prevail. I will be keeping this one on the shelf for my kids to read as soon as they get old enough. Gary Schmidt is a wordsmith, but you get so enveloped in the story that you don't notice it. You only notice the characters and feel like you know them. That is a rare enough thing for an author to be able to accomplish. I highly recommend this book to any young reader and their parents.

I think this is Gary Schmidt's greatest book, one I recommend without reservations. It's the story of young Turner Buckminster (a well-chosen name), whose minister father has moved the family to Maine. The setting is the early 1910s. Turner has a hard time fitting in with the local boys, who make fun of the way he plays baseball. He has no difficulty at all connecting with a young African-American girl, Lizzie Bright, whose family fled to Maine during the days of the Underground Railroad. The small black community of which she is a part lives on an island. Lizzie teaches Turner about the island, the coast, the sea creatures and plants of the area. The white community wants to remove the black families from the island in order to develop the island for tourism. Turner takes a side in this struggle, and that is a courageous thing to do. The results, however, are tragic. This is a

good book for teens and also for adults. The story will stay with you long after you read it. Highly recommended.

I like this author's works. He uses art and literature to frame his stories...Shakespeare, Audubon, Fitzgerald in other works, and in this one, Vergil and Darwin. The author focuses his stories on early teenage boys who mature due to the experiences in the book. He does it deftly and effectively. I'm not sure that I've ever known a boy of this age who achieves the same level of maturity and independent thought as the main protagonist, but it's nice to think that it's possible. And it's nice to think that somewhere, someone still considers serious Latin to be an appropriate course of study for young people. The novel reads easily and quickly, and I highly recommend it. It's a little gem, just like the author's other books.

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