

MCMUMMY BY BETSY BYARS



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From Publishers Weekly

Having agreed to tend Professor Orloff's greenhouse in his absence, Mozie finds more than he'd bargained for: a human-size, mummy-shaped pod that hums with energy and seems to call to him with a silent but compelling force. His dread of the creature--if that is indeed what it is--gradually tilts toward a profound sympathy, which in turn helps to put Mozie in touch with his sorrow about his father's death and to embrace the possibility of new life. Byars, who received the Newbery Medal for *The Summer of the Swans*, leavens her shivery tale with ample measures of comedy, evident especially in the antics of Mozie and irrepressible best friend, Batty, and in Mozie's and Batty's sparkling dialogue. Her touch for the memorably incongruous detail is in full flourish as well. The cast of supporting characters ranges from a dizzy but surprisingly intuitive beauty queen named Valvoline to a guardedly affectionate cat named Pine Cone who has literally fallen into Mozie's life--from a passing airplane--and deigned to stay. And beneath the heady brew of mystery and humor lie poignant insights about attachment and loss. Ages 10-14.

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From Booklist

Gr. 4-6. Mozie has a problem--he looks too innocent to be believed, so no one takes him seriously. His part-time job watering plants in a brilliant, eccentric professor's greenhouse takes a somewhat sinister turn when he is mysteriously attracted to a giant, humming pea pod. Although he jokingly christens the pod *McMummy*, Mozie quickly stops laughing when he can't get anyone to believe that he may be in real danger. With the help of a beauty queen named Valvoline and the support of his best friend, Batty, Mozie follows his instincts and his heart through a wild chase, a sad end, and finally a hopeful beginning. If you booktalk this as the "Invasion of the Human Bean," you won't be able to keep it on the shelves. Janice Del Negro

From Kirkus Reviews

Professor Orloff has left Mozie to care for a greenhouse of experimental plants, with specific instructions for administering "Vitagrow." As one particular "pod" grows to mammoth size, Mozie becomes apprehensive: Does it lure him against his will? Will it hatch? What is that humming? Accompanied variously by friend Batty and "Valvoline," an aspiring beauty contestant for whom Mozie's mom is making a sequined gown, Mozie tends the pod until an epic storm crushes both the greenhouse and the pod, which--cautiously inspected with Mozie's deceased father's Swiss army knife--seems empty. But what's the leafy apparition that later disrupts the beauty pageant? This isn't quite fantasy--rational explanations are available for virtually everything--but, unfortunately, waiting to see whether it is, or what Byars will come up with instead, doesn't

create enough interest to carry the story. Byars introduces several motifs without much development-- Batty's family is featured in the first chapter, then fades out, scientist Orloff never comes back, and Mozie's yearning for his father is unresolved. Even the comically tangential interior monologues begin to wear thin; Mozie just isn't as interesting as Bingo Brown, and his high jinks are tame compared to the Blossoms'. A minor effort. (Fiction. 8-12) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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The giant pod in Professor Orloff's greenhouse is giving Mozie some terrifying nightmares . . . After Mozie loses his father, he longs for someone to look up to. Enter Professor Orloff: a brilliant, mysterious scientist with a greenhouse full of experimental vegetation. When he leaves on a trip, Orloff entrusts Mozie and Mozie's friend, Batty, with keeping an eye on his wondrous greenhouse. Inside, the two discover something amazing—and frightening: a plant pod big enough to fit a grown-up human. The pod seems to grow larger every day and to Mozie, it seems a little lonely. Soon, Mozie finds he'll do whatever it takes to protect the strange plant from harm and discover the secrets inside. This sometimes-spooky thriller will provide its readers with as many laughs as goosebumps. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Betsy Byars including rare images from the author's personal collection.

- Sales Rank: #1840720 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-02-12
- Released on: 2013-02-12
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Batty and "Valvoline," an aspiring beauty contestant for whom Mozie's mom is making a sequined gown, Mozie tends the pod until an epic storm crushes both the greenhouse and the pod, which--cautiously inspected with Mozie's deceased father's Swiss army knife--seems empty. But what's the leafy apparition that later disrupts the beauty pageant? This isn't quite fantasy--rational explanations are available for virtually everything--but, unfortunately, waiting to see whether it is, or what Byars will come up with instead, doesn't create enough interest to carry the story. Byars introduces several motifs without much development--Batty's family is featured in the first chapter, then fades out, scientist Orloff never comes back, and Mozie's yearning for his father is unresolved. Even the comically tangential interior monologues begin to wear thin; Mozie just isn't as interesting as Bingo Brown, and his high jinks are tame compared to the Blossoms'. A minor effort. (Fiction. 8-12) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

"McMummy" is a Charming Read

By Lee DeWald

I discovered this book while browsing around our local library one day. I had never read any books by Betsy Byars (I haven't yet read her award-winning book, "Summer of the Swans," but I plan on it), so I figured I'd give it a whirl. Not expecting much, I plunged head-first into the thing. The only problem with that was that once I got started, I couldn't pull myself away.

"McMummy" is a delightfully charming read. All the characters in the book -- from the zany Battie Batson, to the deadpan funny Mozie Mozer, and the has-her-head-in-the-clouds-but-is-still-a-sweet-gal Valvoline (yes, that's REALLY her name) -- are a joy to interact with. Even Professor Orloff, who only makes a couple of minor appearances in the book, is interesting: "Vat is vrong vit da vegetables?"

Mozie Mozer is in charge of looking over Professor Orloff's super-large vegetables greenhouse while the professor is away. Only Mozie is afraid to go there alone. One day he comes across a human-sized pod, which he swears turns toward him as if to acknowledge him! And now the pod is beginning to open up; what could be inside?

The storyline is off the wall, but the character interaction and quick pace of the plot keep the reader well-engaged. I just can't say enough about the characters in this book; maybe the reason I like them so much is because they are all goofy like me. I can relate, you know?

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to spend a couple of hours reading a plain fun book. It doesn't take itself seriously at all, and that's part of the appeal.

I look forward to reading "Summer of the Swans" from Betsy Byars, as well as other books she has written.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Close to good author, anti-climactic book.

By greened

This books just doesn't have a lot to offer. It is clearly written by a lady who knows how to set a stage, really get you into the story, you can feel and smell the world that the characters inhabit, but once she has you there, I'm not sure that she knows what to do with you. The overall story itself is a bit stereotypical, at this point, but even that could be forgiven if the work had included some good action, which it unforgivably fails to offer up. Not wanting to give any of the plot away, I'll simply say that the entire book seems to build to something that never happens. The work is extremely anti-climactic; It feels more like this book is a prequel to a better, more interesting work. I get the feeling that Betsy never really plotted out all that she wanted to have happen in the work, I wouldn't be surprised if she just sat down and wrote, letting the story go wherever it "wanted" to go, then when she got closer to her deadline, she wrapped things up without remembering to throw in any of what a reader would like to have included.

Unfortunately, I have to say that I do not recommend this book.

If you want to read some genuinely fun scary stories, I'd direct you to anything early from R.L. Stine's Goosebumps series.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

McMummy was suspenseful,yet humorous.

By A Customer

McMummy is a book you and your family will love to sit down and read on a dark quiet night. The reason I gave this book five stars is because it was suspenseful and heartpounding throughout the entire book. In my opinion, Mozie and Batty were very much like me. The story is about the boys caring for a greenhouse while the professor is away. Little did they know what secrets that it held. The boys pushed through the massacre of plants and leaves, suddenly they stopped dead in their tracks, McMummy. So take it from me, either check it out at your local library or buy it online. I hope you will enjoy the book as much as I did.

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