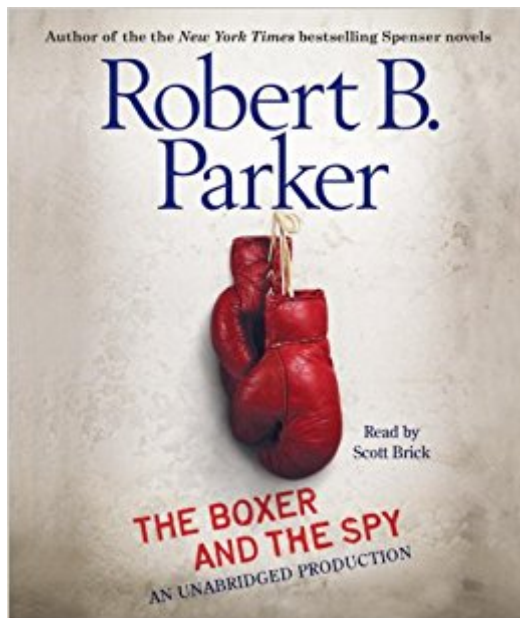


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The Boxer And The Spy



Synopsis

His name was Jason Green and he was dead. When a shy high school student's body is found washed up on the shore of a quiet New England beach town, an alleged suicide linked to steroids. Fifteen-year-old boxer-in-training Terry Novak isn't quite sure what to think. Something just doesn't add up. Artsy and withdrawn, Jason wasn't exactly the type to be doing steroids. So Terry, with the help of his friend Abby, decides to do some investigating of his own. It doesn't take long, though, before they learn that asking questions puts them in grave danger and that survival is going to be a fight. Fortunately, Terry has learned a thing or two about fighting.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 • Parker makes his second foray into YA literature with this tale of a 15-year-old aspiring boxer trying to solve the murder of one of his classmates, deemed a suicide by the authorities. As in his adult "Spenser" books, the question is not so much who committed the crime as how the protagonist will catch him (it is apparent pretty early on who the bad guys are). Terry Novak battles a group of powerful, evil individuals with only his wits, toughness, and a few loyal friends to help him. He has a personal code that requires him to avenge wrongdoing against innocents and will use violence only when forced to. In many ways it is Terry himself rather than the solving of the crime that is the main focus of the novel: haltingly, and often inarticulately, he begins to explore what it means to live honorably, with moral purpose. In this he is aided by George, the wise, elderly black man who is teaching him to fight, and by Abby, the sassy beauty whom Terry

hopes to make his girlfriend. As in any Parker novel, the dialogue is delightful. Character is revealed in a word, a phrase, or sometimes even a gesture. (Has any writer ever conveyed more meaning through a shrug?) While some may object that the fight scenes are a little too graphic or the resolution a little too neat, few could question either the quality of the writing or the book's undeniable appeal to teen readers. —Richard Luzer, Fair Haven Union High School, VT
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--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Parker's second foray into the YA mystery field (after *Edenville Owls*, 2007), finds 15-year-old Terry Novak learning the ropes of boxing from a wizened ex-fighter, who is classic Parker — gruff but keenly understanding. At the same time, Terry's best friend, Abby, is dizzyingly becoming something closer to a girlfriend, though neither really know what to make of the evolving relationship. When a quiet, nerdy kid is found dead of an apparent suicide, murkily involving steroids, the duo make it their business to figure out what really happened. Although Parker leans on the boxing-as-life metaphor pretty heavily, it works; and witnessing a tough-but-sensitive guy on the make figure out when to play nice and when to get mean is classic coming-of-age stuff. What drives the story home, however, is how well Parker is able to demonstrate adolescent uncertainty about the world and then capture those moments when uncertainty shifts seamlessly into confidence. Add Parker's deft touch with dialogue and quick action scenes, and you've got a lean, welterweight contender of a mystery. Grades 8-11. —Ian Chipman --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

High school chums and almost boyfriend/girlfriend Terry and Abby suspect that their classmate's suicide was not a suicide at all, but foul play somehow tied in with some shady goings-on by their school principal and a local pol now running for governor. But what, they observe, could a couple of kids do about it? A lot, as we soon find out. Robert B. Parker's third book for young adults ("*Edenville Owls*" and "*Chasing the Bear*" were the first two), doesn't talk down to kids, and in fact discusses Mr. Parker's usual themes with the same enthusiasm as they're approached in his adult thrillers. These include the importance of having a personal code, and being consciously aware of both the strengths and challenges of one's personal relationships, especially one's primary romantic relationship. Actually, in this book's case, it's more of a potential romantic relationship, as Terry and Abby are still somewhat circling each other and figuring everything out, even as each is clearly taken with the other. The title alludes to Terry's enthusiasm for boxing and Abby's plan to mobilize

her and Terry's friends to spy on the adults they suspect of murdering their friend and scamming the community. A decent plotline (maybe slightly simpler than a usual Parker plot, but not much), likable characters, and some good confrontation scenes result in a solid, entertaining effort. As I also said about the characters in Mr. Parker's other two stand-alone (so far) young adult titles, it would be nice to see Terry and Abby again sometime.

Parker is targeting teen readers with this book. However, this is a great read for anyone who occasionally enjoys a light read, that is very entertaining.

This book is written by the author of the world famous Spenser and Jesse Stone mysteries (among others) Robert B. Parker. This is his second book targeted for the youth market, but I'll be the first to say adults will truly enjoy it also. The reader is first introduced to a shy, young, sad boy by the name of Jason Green. His Father had died and his Mother has buried what's left of her life in a bottle. He didn't like sports so a lot of kids in school thought he was a "sissy". What he did enjoy was old movies and drawing. Each night at dinner his Mother would get drunk and then Jason would have the rest of his night down to a science. He'd go out for a walk down to the beach to a secluded spot to be by himself to think about things, and by the time he got home his Mother would be passed out drunk, and Jason would just go to bed like nothing happened. Then one fateful night while Jason was in his special spot he overheard a man and woman talking about some illegal endeavors, but they couldn't see him. The man and woman were afraid of being seen together so the woman left first. Then the man saw Jason and said: "You heard everything." Jason said: "I didn't hear anything." The tide later brought in Jason's dead body. The rumor around school was that he had used steroids and committed suicide. The cast of characters that are introduced on both sides of the law form the backbone of the story involving the unrelenting quest to clear Jason's name and uncover the criminal element in William Dawes Regional High School. The main protagonist is fifteen-year-old Terry Novack who is working extremely hard learning how to box from George, a black fifty-five-year-old former boxer who works at the local gym. Terry is extremely dedicated to following all the rules, regulations, and training regimens that George sets out. The idea is to find out if Terry truly has the proper character to be a boxer before he actually gets in the ring. Throughout the story George is instrumental not only in the physical and mental part of boxing, but he also conveys sage advice to Terry in his own unique brand of English, that includes numerous sentences that are devoid of many integral verbs and adjectives. Terry's trusty sidekick is his good friend and burgeoning love interest Abby Hall. Abby is a tremendous student, extremely cute, and

becomes the "spy" to Terry's "boxer" in this coming of age story of loyalty and the many obstacles in growing up in today's young world of dwindling role models. While just about all the other kids in school thought Jason was gay and didn't care that he died, Terry remembered that years ago when his own Dad had died, that the day of his Dad's wake, "there was a kid, by himself, Jason Green, wearing a suit coat and tie. He walked past the funeral parlor man at the door, who looked at him as if he didn't belong, and came straight up to Terry. Hi, he said. I wanted to tell you something. My Father died when I was ten, Jason said, after a while you won't feel so bad as you do now. Terry nodded. You'll get used to it, Jason said. Terry nodded again. I just wanted you to know, Jason said. Thank you, Terry said. Thanks for coming." That memory empowered Terry to enlist his (girl) friend Abby and all their other friends as they fought the powers that be at the school that included the muscle-bound hot-tempered principal Mr. Bullard, All-State football player Kip Carter, and even Gubernatorial candidate Mrs. Trent, as Terry would not be stopped short of his goal of clearing Jason's name. Terry, Abby, and their friends tackle the questions of steroid use, first kisses, and love and sex, at the right time in the right way. I recommend this book to readers all across the age spectrum. Parents can feel very confident that if they give this book as a gift to teenagers that the right message will be presented. Older Robert B. Parker fans will take a small delight in recognizing characteristics in George that resemble Hawk, and Terry and Abby could almost be a teenage Spenser and Susan. A delightful book.

This was more for teens but it still kept this 62 year old on pins and needles! It was great!

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