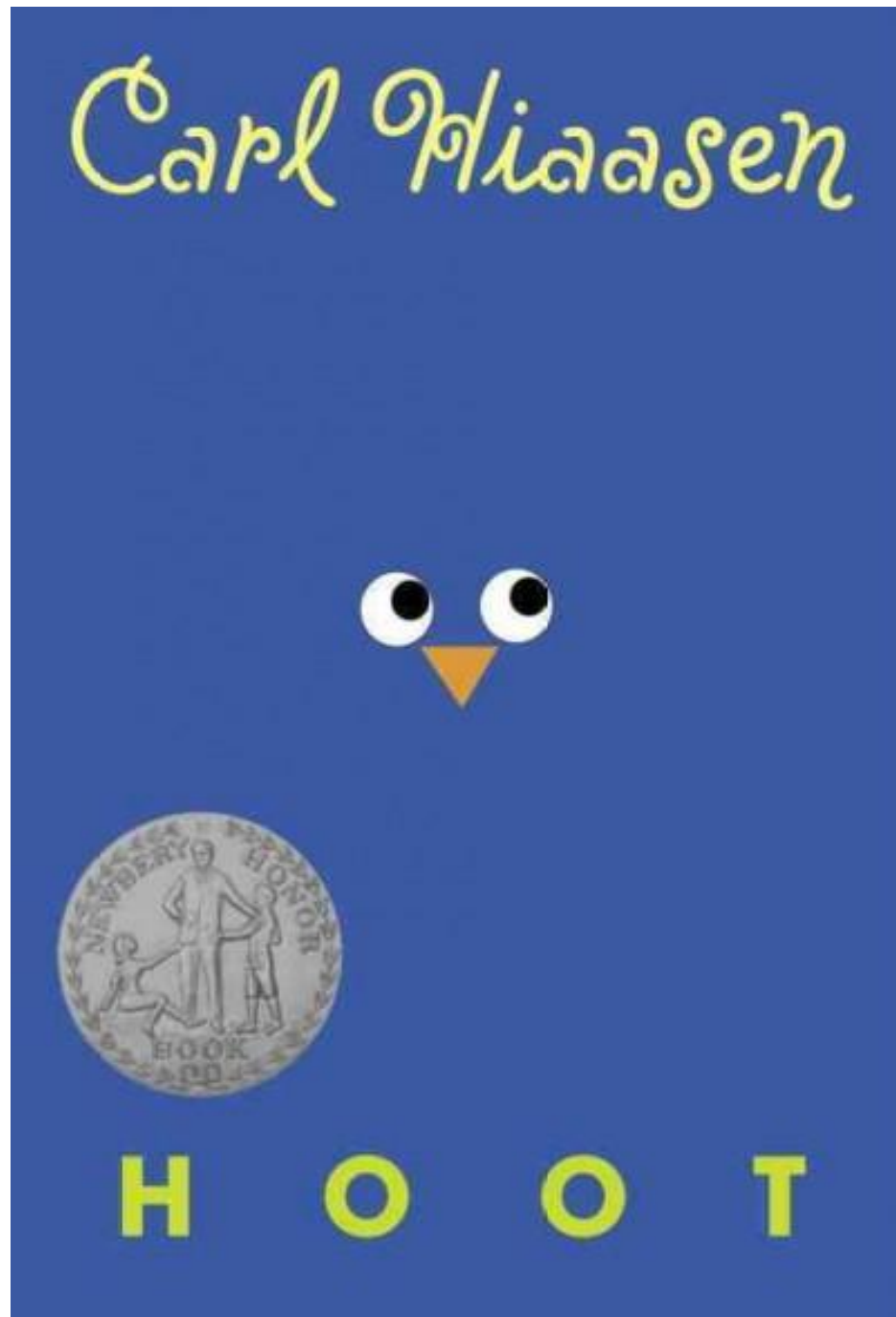


About the book...



Newly arrived in Florida, Roy's not ready to admit that Florida could be better than Montana, the last state his family lived in. Riding the school bus, he notices a barefoot boy who often runs beside the bus and later, after befriending Beatrice, finds out the boy is her stepbrother and is known as "Mullet Fingers" for his ability to catch mullet fish. Roy and Mullet Fingers become unlikely allies as each fights to protect the burrowing owls who live on a plot of land being developed by Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House. Mullet Fingers wages an all-out battle, pulling up the survey stakes, putting alligators in the portable toilets and releasing cottonmouth snakes to scare the guard dogs. Eventually Roy takes their battle to the local government and enlists the aid of his parents, Beatrice's soccer team and a former Miss America runner-up to halt construction of Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House.

- Books & Authors

About the Author...



Carl Hiaasen was born and raised in Southern Florida and spent his childhood romping through the mangrove swamps and freshwater lagoons surrounding his home. His childhood coincided with a period of rampant development in his environmentally sensitive state, home to the Everglades. Year after year, Hiaasen witnessed large tracts of swampland disappearing as they were filled in by developers eager to build houses, strip malls, and resorts. Angered at the transformation, Hiaasen became a newspaper columnist for the *Miami Herald* and used his fiery words to rail against the rapid transformation of the landscape. He has written more than 1,000 columns, with frequent topics being dirty development deals, corruption, and political scandals.

Well-known in his home state, Hiaasen expanded his readership when he began writing novels in the 1980s. His books, like many of his columns, often deal with environmental issues. Hiaasen's books, however, are not all gloom and doom. Humorous—

and satirical in nature—they often land atop best-seller lists.

For more information, visit the author's website at <http://www.carlhiaasen.com/index.shtml>

Selected Writings

- [*Chomp*](#), Alfred A. Knopf (New York, NY), 2012.
- [*Flush*](#), Alfred A. Knopf (New York, NY), 2005.
- [*Scat*](#), Alfred A. Knopf (New York, NY), 2009.

[*Hoot*](#) was awarded a Newbery Honor in 2003.

Reviews

Horn Book

Hoot is quintessential Hiaasen - a mystery/adventure set in South Florida, peopled with original and wacky characters - with a G rating. Roy Eberhart the new kid in town, hooks up with teenage runaway Mullet Fingers (so named because he can catch fish with his bare hands) and his sister Beatrice, a "major soccer jock ... with a major attitude." The three discover that the proposed site for a Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House is also a nesting ground for small burrowing owls, a protected species, and they attempt to halt construction. Initiating a cover-up

that reaches all the way to the mayor's office, Mother Paula's executives ignore the owls and try to speed up ground-breaking ceremonies before the public learns their secret. But Mullet Fingers sabotages their efforts: he removes survey stakes; puts alligators in the portable toilets; and releases a mess of cottonmouth shakes to scare away the guard dogs, The narrative carries a lot of frenzied commotion that only becomes more preposterous with each new character's entrance. There's Garrett, "king of phony farts" at middle school; Officer Delinko, not "the sharpest knife in the drawer"; and Kalo, the amiable rottweiler trainer ("That vun dere is Max. That vun, Klaus. That vun, Karl. And that big vun is Pookie Face"). Each individual has a story to tell, sometimes advancing the plot (Officer Delinko's ambitious investigation provides believable access to all characters) and sometimes imposing an earnestness at odds with the humor (Beatrice and Mullet Fingers endure a dismal home situation). Not consistently a hoot, but worthy of a holler. Hiaasen's first YA book succeeds as a humorous diversion.

Publishers Weekly

With a Florida setting and proenvironment, antidevelopment message, Hiaasen returns to familiar turf for his first novel for young readers. Characteristically quirky characters and comic

twists will surely gain the author new fans, though their attention may wander during his narrative's intermittently protracted focus on several adults, among them a policeman and the manager of a construction site for a new franchise of a pancake restaurant chain. Both men are on a quest to discover who is sabotaging the site at night, including such pranks as uprooting survey stakes, spray-painting the police cruiser's windows while the officer sleeps within and filling the portable potties with alligators. The story's most intriguing character is the boy behind the mischief, a runaway on a mission to protect the miniature owls that live in burrows underneath the site. Roy, who has recently moved to Florida from Montana, befriends the homeless boy (nicknamed Mullet Fingers) and takes up his cause, as does the runaway's stepsister. Though readers will have few doubts about the success of the kids' campaign, several suspenseful scenes build to the denouement involving the sitcom-like unraveling of a muckity-muck at the pancake house. These, along with dollops of humor, help make the novel quite a hoot indeed. Ages 10-up.

Kirkus Reviews

The straight-arrow son of a maybe-federal agent (he's not quite sure) turns eco-terrorist in this first offering for kids from one of detective fiction's funniest novelists...Roy Eberhardt has recently arrived in Florida; accustomed to being the new kid after several family moves, he is more of an observer than a participant. When he observes a bare-footed boy running through the subdivisions of Coconut Grove, however, he finds himself compelled to follow and, later, to ally himself with the strange boy called Mullet Fingers. Meanwhile, the dimwitted but appealingly dogged Officer Delinko finds himself compelled to crack the case of the mysterious vandals at the construction site of a new Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House—it couldn't have anything to do with those cute burrowing owls, could it? The plot doesn't overwhelm with surprises; even the densest readers will soon suss out the connections between Mullet Fingers, the owls, and Mother Paula's steadfast denial of the owls' existence. The fun lies in Hiaasen's trademark twisted characters, including Dana Matherson, the class bully who regularly beats up on Roy and whose unwitting

help Roy wickedly enlists; Beatrice Leep, Mullet Fingers's fiercely loyal sister and co-conspirator; Curly, Mother Paula's hilariously inept foreman; and Roy's equally straight-arrow parents, who encourage him to do the right thing without exactly telling him how. Roy is rather surprisingly engaging, given his utter and somewhat unnatural wholesomeness; it's his kind of determined innocence that sees through the corruption and compromises of the adult world to understand what must be done to make things right. If the ending is somewhat predictable, it is also entirely satisfying—*Hoot* is, indeed, a hoot. (*Fiction. 10-14*)

Discussion Questions

(<https://multcolib.org/hoot>)

1. Roy is unhappy about moving to Florida and starting at a new school. Have you ever moved or changed schools before? How did you feel?
2. Do you know any bullies like Dana Matherson? What is the best way to deal with a bully? What

makes someone become a bully?

3. How is Roy's family different than Beatrice/Mullet Finger's family?
4. Mullet Fingers sets out to sabotage the Mother Paula's building project because he wants to save the owls. Are there any situations you feel strongly about that would make you act like Mullet Fingers?
5. After Roy gives his own name when taking Mullet Fingers to the hospital, his mother tells him, "Honey, sometimes you're going to be faced with situations where the line isn't clear between what's right and what's wrong. Your heart will tell you to do one thing, and your brain will tell you to do something different. In the end, all that's left is to look at both sides and go with your best judgment." Do you think Roy did the right thing by giving his name at the hospital? Have you ever been in a situation like Roy's mother describes? What did you do?
6. This book is set in Florida. Did you feel like you got a good feel for what Florida is like by reading *Hoot*?

7. Why did Mother Paula's Pancakes "lose" the Environmental Impact Statement? What do you think they could have done instead?
8. There is a lot of humor in this book. Find one of the parts you thought was funny and share it with the group.
9. Who are you most like in the book and why?

Activities

Watch the movie [*Hoot*](#).

Find out about animals in your area that are endangered or protected. Visit the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to learn more about endangered animals in Michigan:

www.fws.gov/endangered/map/state/MI.html

Learn more about kids helping burrowing owls through the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network:
<http://burrowingowlconservation.org/kids.html>

Read-Alikes

Cynthia DeFelice, [*Lostman's River*](#) (1994)

Lostman's River is home to Tyler MacCauley and his family. He loves its abundance of natural life.

Although poor, the MacCauleys manage to survive on their settlement and haven't resorted to profiteering from the resources of the Everglades. But greed and profit have brought great danger into the swampland. When Tyler and his family dare to trust a stranger, they find out, to their horror, that they have jeopardized not only the land and all who live there, but their own future as well.

T. A. Barron, [*Tree Girl*](#) (2001)

Rowanna's stern caretaker has warned her again and again not to go near the trees that surround their seaside cottage. But Rowanna is drawn to the forest-especially the High Willow on its faraway hill. Are the trees really forest ghouls, as Mellwyn says? Or could they possibly hold the secret to Rowanna's past and the mother she can hardly remember? If only she could get near the High Willow, Rowanna feels certain she would understand. . . .

Patricia Curtis Pfitsch, [*Riding the Flume*](#) (2002)

The year is 1894; the place is California.

Naturalists and journalists are writing against the

felling of giant sequoia trees. Francie agrees with their position, but times are hard, and her parents believe that the town will die if the lumber company fails. Then Francie finds a mysterious message from her sister, Carrie, who has been dead for six years. It seems to indicate danger, and Francie is determined to investigate. Her clandestine search unearths connections between a hermit who died in a mysterious fire, a nasty lumber company official, and her sister; but to find what she needs to resolve the puzzle, she must gather her courage and ride the dangerous log flume down the long, watery shoot to St. Joseph.

Louis Sachar, [*Holes*](#) (1998)

Stanley Yelnats's family has always had bad luck--ever since his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather broke a promise to a woman in his Latvian village. Now the bad luck has caught up with Stanley Yelnats IV. Falsely convicted of a crime he did not commit, Stanley is forced to attend Camp Green Lake--a juvenile detention facility located within a dry lakebed. Every day, the residents of the camp must dig a hole five feet deep and five feet around. Ostensibly

the hole digging is to build character, but Stanley figures out pretty soon that they are actually digging to find something, and Stanley and his friend Zero, also known as Hector Zeroni, try to escape Camp Green Lake and solve the mystery of the holes.



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