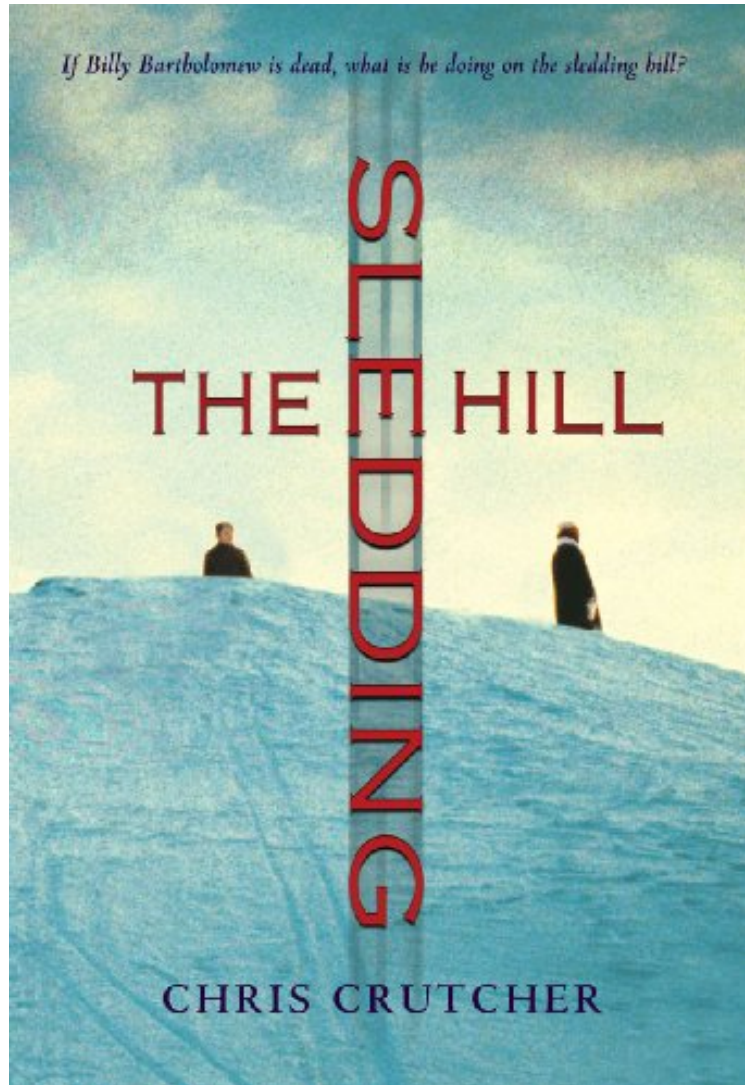


[Download] The Sledding Hill

The Sledding Hill

Von Chris Crutcher

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Von Chris Crutcher : The Sledding Hill before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sledding Hill:

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Courtesy of Teens Read Too Von Teens Read Too Washington State native and young adult literature veteran Chris Crutcher is no stranger to censorship. Many of his critically acclaimed novels have been persecuted for their content and use of "inappropriate language," as well as the thematically taboo nature of the stories themselves. THE SLEDDING HILL, Crutcher's latest novel, deals with the issue of censorship, and the struggle students, as well as pro-literature advocates,

must undergo to ensure the right to read contemporary works. Narrated by the "spirit" of the recently deceased Billy Bartholomew, Billy tells the tale of his best friend Eddie Proffit, who in the course of three months was the first to discover the dead bodies of both his father as well as Billy. Dealing with the trauma of what happened, Eddie decides to stop speaking altogether, sheltering himself from communication with the people around him. With both his father and Billy gone, Eddie is soon pressured by a local church figure to take the plunge into 'salvation' and join the church. But alas! Billy isn't going to let something as trivial as death come between him and his best friend. With the help of Billy (or rather, his spirit?), Eddie is able to cope and come to terms with, in his eyes, what the right thing to do is. In each of Crutcher's novels, it is nearly guaranteed that at least some kind of issue is directly put into discussion and, indeed, *THE SLEDDING HILL* is a story of the censorship of books read by students in schools. Cleverly written, Crutcher manages to poke fun with his writing by instilling himself as the author of the controversial pseudo-novel *Warren Peece* (pun very much intended). Full to the absolute brim with important questions and thought-provoking answers, what else would one expect from a Chris Crutcher novel? I personally find any and all of Chris Crutcher's novels incredibly well-written, and very entertaining for the likes of a teenage attention span. The issues tackled are strongly influenced and make good discussion topics as well as a progressive voice for young ears to hear. Anyone who found the heated debates between the uber-conservative Christians and the liberal-minded protagonists from *STAYING FAT FOR SARAH BYRNES* (an American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults, and highly recommended by yours truly) is sure to appreciate Crutcher's whole-hearted commitment towards all human being's rights to certain freedoms, including the right to read contemporary literature containing modern ideas, no matter how verboten they may sound. Reviewed by: Long Nguyen

Kurzbeschreibung Billy Bartholomew has an audacious soul, and he knows it. Why? Because it's all he has left. He's dead. Eddie Proffit has an equally audacious soul, but he doesn't know it. He's still alive. These days, Billy and Eddie meet on the sledding hill, where they used to spend countless hours -- until Billy kicked a stack of Sheetrock over on himself, breaking his neck and effectively hitting tilt on his Earthgame. The two were inseparable friends. They still are. And Billy is not about to let a little thing like death stop him from hanging in there with Eddie in his epic struggle to get his life back on track. From Publishers Weekly Crutcher takes the fad in authorial intrusion one better, inserting himself as a character in this metafictional novel with a heavy-handed message, a schizophrenic presentation and a highly entertaining plot. Eddie Proffit is the very definition of a sympathetic character, losing his Dad and best friend to violent accidents in the opening pages. His story is narrated in *Lovely Bones*-esque fashion by the dead friend, Billy, who, if not in Heaven, is in a very good place free of pain and full of neat tricks to employ during his ghostly mission to help Eddie overcome sadness so deep he has stopped speaking. The exploration of death and of being silenced by grief takes a hairpin turn when book banning a very different type of silencing becomes the focus of the novel's second half. Eddie's elective mutism has his mother's minister, the villainous Sanford Tarter, convinced he needs to be baptized. Tarter also teaches English at the high school, but Eddie is enrolled in a class called *Really Modern Literature*, run by a librarian who prefers "books by authors who are still alive." She requires everyone read *Warren Peece* by the "relatively obscure" author Chris Crutcher. Naturally, this "good book with bad words" exercises Tarter, who incites a crusade to rid the library of all Crutcher's "irrelevant and only marginally well written" books. Plausibility is pushed aside for entertainment and moralizing Billy's father loses his job as school janitor for reading the book aloud to students in the boiler room, a student comes out as gay at the public hearing, another admits openly that she cuts herself but Eddie's cause, and his decision to speak out, is so honorable, these lapses are easily overlooked. The title an allusion to a favorite spot the two friends enjoyed when both were alive doesn't work but, despite its flaws, the story does. Ages 12-up. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist In "Dead Boy Sledding; or, Why Things Happen," a chapter in his autobiographical *The King of the Mild Frontier* (2003), Chris Crutcher remembers being haunted by a childhood classmate's death. Another episode refers to his confrontations with censors for the provocative subject matter and raw language in his novels (Crutcher's books have been frequently challenged). When readers of Crutcher's newest novel wonder about its inspirations, they needn't look far: its themes of senseless tragedy and intellectual freedom serve as a natural postscript to his memoir. But this isn't nonfiction. In fact, it defies categorization, offering up a tasting menu of literary devices du jour, incorporating selective mutism, a narrator from beyond the grave, and a plot in which the author himself plays a major role. The summer before Eddie Proffit's freshman year of high school, his father and his best friend, Billy, die in violent accidents within the same month. Eddie is the first to stumble on the grisly bodies--a "hurricane of calamity" that shocks him speechless. Billy, who always kept tabs on smart but flighty Eddie in life, continues to do so from the grave, documenting Eddie's struggles and serving as a mystical guide, appearing to him in dreams of their favorite sledding spot, and exerting metaphysical "bumps" that jostle Eddie toward healing actions. Most pivotal is Eddie's decision to speak out against a powerful fundamentalist church's challenge of a gritty YA book assigned at school, a nonexistent novel called *Warren Peece* that deals with homosexuality and abortion and whose struggling characters

make Eddie "feel less lonely." The fabricated book's author? Chris Crutcher himself. Most YAs will be drawn to this more for its paranormal premise than any burning curiosity about Crutcher or the issue of book banning. And, at least initially, Billy's creepy, detached narration doesn't disappoint. Telling stories "in [teens'] native tongue" (Eddie's librarian's words) has always been Crutcher's strong suit, and his gifts serve him well here; the juxtaposition of Billy's intimacy with eternal mysteries and his slang-inflected voice are inherently amusing (death is a "way different state"; eternity "a pretty cool place").

Once the controversy heats up, though, the ghostly narrator begins to seem less like a quirky emissary from afterlife than an excuse for Crutcher to channel philosophical and spiritual views through a YA character: "If humans are ever to understand one another, they will have to come to terms with the concept, and the reality of relativity. . . . see how things look compared to other things." For readers who question such articulate sermonizing from a 14-year-old, Billy begs their indulgence: "Death brings out the lyricist in me. I know words I never even heard. In every language." The fluid walls between authorial and characters' points of view are overtly apparent when Crutcher himself appears at the book-banning hearing, points to a character who has just made a fervent, articulate plea, and says, "What she said." The message, of course, is meant to be empowering, but it's still a message.

Avant-garde techniques such as authorial intrusions and "postmortalism"--a recently coined term for telling tales through a deceased character--are common in literature for adults today, but have been slower to enter the universe of YA fiction. For this reason, *The Sledding Hill* is likely to attract attention for its rupturing of familiar narrative rules, and many YAs will certainly find the self-referential loop-de-loop at book's end a heady new experience. But ultimately Crutcher's agenda swamps his characters and their stories, resulting in a book that is more like a set of talking points for freedom of speech than one that, like Eddie's cherished Warren Peece, will inspire YAs to stand up and do battle.

Jennifer Mattson
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