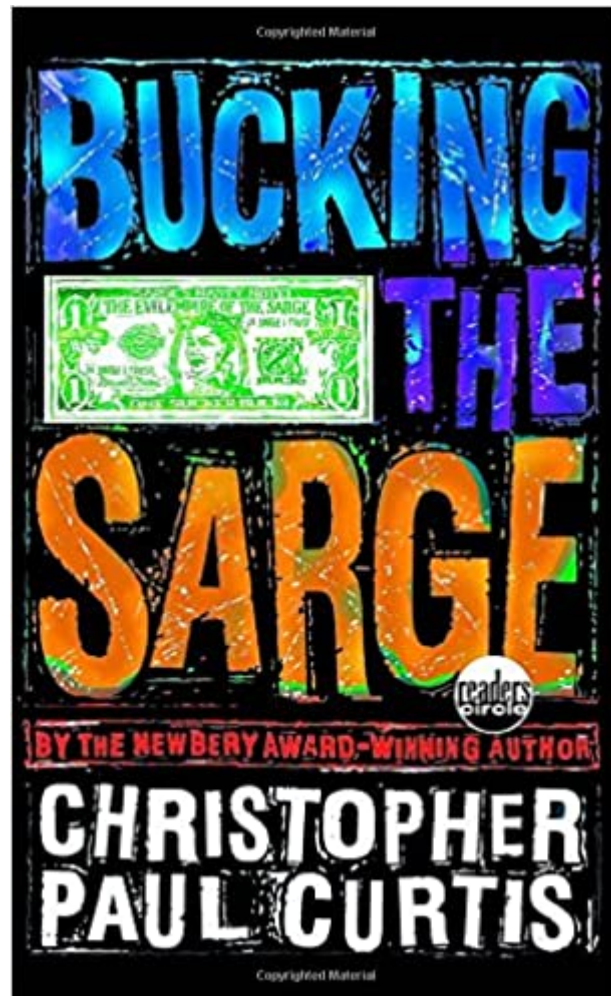




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Bucking The Sarge



Synopsis

Luther T. Farrell has got to get out of Flint, Michigan. As his best friend Sparky says, "Flint's nothing but the Titanic." And his mother, a.k.a. the Sarge, says, "Take my advice and stay off the sucker path." The Sarge milked the system to build an empire of slum housing and group homes. Luther's just one of the many people trapped in the Sarge's Evil Empire—but he's about to bust out. If Luther wins the science fair this year, he'll be on track for college and a future as America's best-known and best-loved philosopher. All he's got to do is beat his arch rival Shayla Patrick, the beautiful daughter of Flint's finest undertaker—and the love of Luther's life. Sparky's escape plans involve a pit bull named Poofy and the world's scariest rat. Oh, and Luther. Add to the mix Chester X., Luther's mysterious roommate; Dontay Gaddy, a lawyer whose phone number is 1-800-SUE-M-ALL; and Darnell Dixon, the Sarge's go-to guy who knows how to break all the rules. *Bucking the Sarge* is a story that only Christopher Paul Curtis could tell. Once again the Newbery Award-winning author of *Bud, Not Buddy* and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* gives us a whole new angle on life and a world full of unforgettable and hilarious characters. Readers will root for Luther and Sparky every step of the way. Praise for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*: "An exceptional first novel." Publishers Weekly, Starred "Ribald humor . . . and a totally believable child's view of the world will make this book an instant hit." School Library Journal, Starred Praise for *Bud, Not Buddy*: "Curtis has given a fresh, new look to a traditional orphan-finds-a-home story that would be a crackerjack read-aloud." School Library Journal, Starred From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1000 (What's this?)

Mass Market Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Laurel Leaf (May 9, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0440413311

ISBN-13: 978-0440413318

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.8 x 6.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #432,380 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Homelessness & Poverty](#) #326 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Parents](#) #524 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Humorous](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Fifteen-year-old wannabe philosopher Luther T. Farrell knows a few things about life. He knows the Sarge (his rich, shrewd, slumlord mom) is tougher than nails and that he better not cross her. He knows his chances of using Chauncey, the ancient condom in his wallet, are slim to none. And, he knows that despite his goal to attend Harvard, he may end up stuck in Flint, Michigan, cleaning toilets in his mom's loathsome empire. Luther spends much of his time helping the Sarge run "Happy Neighbor Group Homes" around the city, including shaving and bathing elderly men and driving residents around with an illegal license. In spare moments he tries to win first place in the science fair at school and hang out with his best friend Sparky, all the while fantasizing mightily about his one true love, the beautiful Shayla. Readers will be moved as Luther, a thoroughly decent if sometimes naive boy, rails against his mother's cold, ruthless notions of what it takes to get ahead in the world. Up-to-the-minute slang and pop culture references will resonate with teen readers, as will the funny, first-person narrative; crisp, often hilarious dialogue; and wonderfully vivid characters. Christopher Paul Curtis, winner of the Newbery Medal for *Bud Not Buddy* tells a warm, witty, heart wrenching story where the good guy gets his due. (Ages 12 and older) --Karin Snelson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 8 Up
Luther's mother, "the Sarge," runs an empire of Flint, MI, slums and halfway houses, and has a loan-sharking business. At age 15, Luther manages one of her halfway houses, drives the residents around in a van with an illegal license, and readies the homes of evicted tenants for the Sarge's next desperate victims. In exchange, she puts his earnings in a college fund, threatens him into submission, and primes him to take over the business. All Luther wants to do is win the school science fair, think deep thoughts, find some action for the vintage condom in his wallet, and do something honest with his life. Curtis tells the teen's story with his usual combination of goofy humor, tongue-in-cheek corniness, and honest emotion. Accordingly, Luther narrates the

absurd, embarrassing details of his life with both adult sensitivity and teen crassness. The dialogue between Luther and Sparky, his "womb to tomb" best friend, is at turns hilarious and touching. The Sarge herself is so convincingly sharp-tongued, shrewd, and despicable that she's the novel's juiciest character. The plot unfolds slowly at first, and teens may lose patience with Luther's tendency to feel sorry for himself. However, once his confidence begins to build, the story keeps a quickening pace with his character arc. His final revenge on the Sarge is so deftly constructed and the novel's resolution so satisfying that it makes up for the occasional lag in the lead-up. Any teen who's ever wanted to stick it to the man (or woman) will love this story. --Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults in 2005, *BUCKING THE SARGE* is a solid read by Christopher Paul Curtis. The early novel of his, *THE WATSONS GO TO BURMINGHAM:1963*, was chosen as a Newbery Honor Book in 1996, and another of his, *BUD, NOT BUDDY*, won the Newbery Award Medal in 2000. An already acclaimed author, Curtis has delivered the humorous, if not outlandish story, of Luther T. Farrell, a young black boy and freshman in high school, who lives with and works for the Sarge (a.k.a. Mom), the mother of all mothers. With his best friend Sparky, his love for philosophy, and his hatred for Flint, Michigan, Luther gets promoted to head of the Sarge's group home. At the same time, he's trying to think up the kind of idea that will win him 1st prize in the school's science fair for the third year in a row, an unprecedented feat. The problem is that the ordained-in-the-stars love of his life that he never talks to, Shayla Patrick, is his greatest competition, having nearly defeated him the year before. While Luther's working his tail off for the Sarge, Sparky is scheming up ways to get rich quick, searching for the perfect case to take to Dontay Gaddy, the Big D.O.G. lawyer at 1-800-SUE-EM-ALL. Luther has a different plan. For a couple more years, he's going to keep working for the Sarge because she's loading up his education fund and that's the only real way to climb the ladder. However, his new promotion at the group home gives him access to information he wishes he'd never found, the kind that changes your life forever, for better or for worse. With Sparky and Shayla still doing their things, Luther's going to have to figure out who the Sarge really is, what he's going to do about her, and how in the world he's ever going to make it out of Flint. Reviewed by Jonathan Stephens

Wanted to use with my seventh graders, but uses inappropriate language and content.

"Bucking The Sarge" is really a brilliant social commentary about the African American existence in the United State of America. While the references to African Americans is toned down and oblique, it is obvious that the author is trying to convey the prejudice of American society in combination with the rampant deterioration of Flint, Michigan and how one family reacts to that situation. Our protagonist is the 13 year old son of a woman who has decided that she will make it on her own. She has gone into the real estate business in Flint, MI. And she is not selling real estate, she owns the houses and rents them out. She also does a number of other underhanded types of things. She cheats the State government on new supplies. She runs a loan shark business that loans money to people down and out. She manipulates people and accomplishes things through underhanded influence. And when that does not work, she turns to money. Our protagonist is her son. He is not well disposed to appreciate the actions of his mother. He is in fact somewhat disgusted at the tactics used by his mother to may her fortune. And ultimately, he decides to revolt against this corrupt authority. The book is highly expressive and depicts a sorry situation in American culture. But it is clear that we should recognize this nadir in American Society so we can address how this type of situation can be handled. The book is a particularly excellent read for those between the ages of 13 and 16. It is recommended for those children and their parents.

I love this book, but it was smaller in size than I expected. Because of this, the print was very small. It arrived in plenty of time for a Christmas gift for my 11 year old grandson.

Daughter had to read this for her summer reading. She loves it!

See my blog review on Libramadre's Contemplations from November 12, 2011: [...]I liked this one so well that I am using it with my current Children's Literature class.

Best understood by a secondary level student, Curtis carefully delineates a life in Flint, Michigan. His ability to construct a believable scenario, authentic characters and an uplifting ending is sooooo satisfying. This is a book worth missing sleep in order to finish. It has got to be on the Newberry list!

Bucking the Sarge: is a nice addition to this collection. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in novels for urban youth.

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Bucking the Sarge Cars Coloring Book: This 80 Page Childrens Coloring Book has images of

Lightning McQueen, Tow Mater, Doc Hudson, Sally Carrera, Fillmore, Sarge, Luigi ... Strip -
The King - Weathers and Chick Hicks. Jim O'Brien: Bucking the Odds The World Famous
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