



The Boys in the Boat **by Daniel James Brown**

Book review by Drew Ames

RATING
5/5

Daniel James Brown's *The Boys in the Boat* details the epic story of the University of Washington's 1936 eight-oar rowing crew and their strive for the gold at the Berlin Olympics of 1936. The crew was comprised of young men from small logging, farming, and industrial towns in Washington, who achieved the seemingly impossible in a sport that was

dominated by wealthy and upper class individuals. The emotional heart of the story is found with Joe Rantz, one of the members of the crew. Joe is the epitome of the kind of working-class Americans that made up that special crew of 1936. Throughout the novel, Brown tells Joe's story, and how he found himself in rowing and the friends he made along the way, in the midst of a heart-breaking family history, crushing poverty, and self-doubt. Brown also recounts the lead-up to the Berlin Olympics regarding Adolf Hitler and his propaganda; how Hitler used the Olympics as an opportunity to impress the world before his true intentions were revealed.

When developing new characters and settings, Brown does an excellent job of slowly but intriguingly providing crisp details to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. This approach is very helpful, especially in the beginning of the book to familiarize the audience with the setting and characters, and lay a foundation to be built upon as the story unfolds. And as the story unfolds, Brown keeps his slow yet methodical way of telling the story, allowing him to portray every aspect of it, from the minute details of the characters and setting to the larger ideas and themes, which by the end of the novel, leaves the reader with a strong feeling of resoluteness and satisfaction.

While the novel is very centered around rowing, Brown's intended audience is anyone who can read. I had no knowledge of rowing prior to reading this book, but with Brown's explanations and details, I was able to either directly gain understanding of what aspect of rowing he was describing because he explained it in an easy way to follow, or he gave enough contextual clues that the reader can use to understand his message very effortlessly.

Overall, Brown masterfully weaves the three stories of the Washington crew, Joe Rantz, and Hitler's approach to the Olympics, to create an amazing novel that is enjoyable for all ages and demographics, all the while entertaining every reader about the fascinating and complex sport of rowing. Because of Brown's excellent writing style, and the captivating story of the 1936 Washington crew, *The Boys in the Boat* has become my favorite book, and I would recommend this book to anyone.