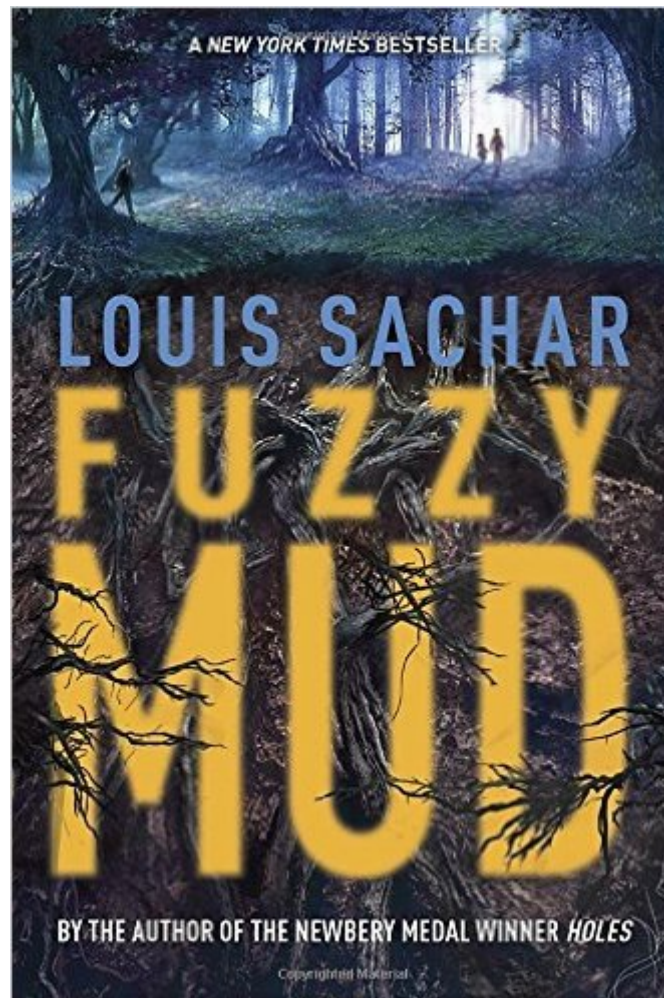


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# Fuzzy Mud



## Synopsis

From the author of the acclaimed bestseller *Holes*, winner of the Newbery Award and the National Book Award, comes *Fuzzy Mud*, a New York Times bestseller. "Sachar blends elements of mystery, suspense, and school-day life into a taut environmental cautionary tale."--Publishers Weekly "Be careful. Your next step may be your last. Fifth grader Tamaya Dhilwaddi and seventh grader Marshall Walsh have been walking to and from Woodridge Academy together since elementary school. But their routine is disrupted when bully Chad Hilligas challenges Marshall to a fight. To avoid the conflict, Marshall takes a shortcut home through the off-limits woods. Tamaya, unaware of the reason for the detour, reluctantly follows. They soon get lost. And then they find trouble. Bigger trouble than anyone could ever have imagined." In the days and weeks that follow, the authorities and the U.S. Senate become involved, and what they uncover might affect the future of the world.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0700 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: Delacorte Books for Young Readers; First Edition edition (August 4, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385743785

ISBN-13: 978-0385743785

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.7 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars "See all reviews" (95 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #6,124 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature > Environment #24 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Bullies #58 in Books > Children's Books > Mysteries & Detectives

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

I originally ordered this book because, as a middle school language arts teacher, I know my students have an affinity for Louis Sachar's novel *Holes*. Sachar is good at engaging young readers--male and female--with characters that feel real and situations that are interesting and

unpredictable. I expected the story to be decent. I wasn't merely entertained, though; I was enthralled. The story has three central characters--a "goody goody" named Tamaya, a bully named Chad, and the bullied Marshall. But this is not a story strictly about bullying, and it doesn't hit readers over the head with messages about being good and doing the right thing. The themes are there, though, blended with questions about science and morality that make this very short novel a very engaging read. I read the book in one sitting, as Sachar does a brilliant job of building suspense and feeding the readers clues about "fuzzy mud" as the story progresses. The story is told by a third person narrator, but the voice is almost prophetic, asking readers to ponder the impacts of population growth, capitalism, science and morality without making judgments about the characters in the story. Sachar doesn't force his ideas on readers, but does an excellent job of encouraging inquiry into contemporary issues. I know that this is a book my middle school students will enjoy. I'm planning a re-read to see if I can figure out how I might be able to incorporate it into my classroom, particularly as there are strong STEM connections to the story. My views as an ELA teacher aside, I strongly recommend this book to both young and more mature readers. It's an awesome read.

Wow. I am a huge fan of Louis Sachar. He is one of the greats, wrapping deeply troubling themes into kind-hearted and accessible packages that teach kids (and adults) without shaming or preaching. He sets his own bar so high in that regard that with each new book I read I begin by expecting disappointment. And there has been none so far. With Fuzzy Mud, Sachar just absolutely kills it again. In a matter of pages, the main characters were inside my heart, and I felt deeply protective of them. By mid-book, I had sympathy for less sympathetic characters and began to realize how some things - with some issues - everyone is affected; everyone is harmed. How universal these things are, and how fast toxicity spreads, are reinforced with the recurring recitation of a geometric progression: rapid multiplication characterized primarily by a common ratio. It's just genius, and it happens within the context of this beautifully written, sweet, completely clear and non shaming book that deals with bullying and the environment and the common elements that go into both of those things. And how the only way to stop harm - the common ratio - is us. Vocabulary suitable for advanced 4th graders on up. Themes are a little dark for younger children (more Holes than Wayside). Plenty of meat for older kids, and I just loved it (I am old).

Tamaya Dhilwaddi, a fifth grader at Woodbridge Academy, is a good girl who never causes trouble in class or get into trouble. Marshall Walsh, a seventh grader, has been walking to and from school with her for years. Marshall is also an ordinary kid and wouldn't cause

trouble, but then a bully starts looking for a fight with him. Chad Hilligas sets up a fight after school. Marshall is running from the fight when Tamaya discovers the fuzzy mud. Sachar hasn't written another Holes, but I think his fans will enjoy this shorter story of how these kids brought attention to a problem that adults were overlooking. I like that the adults in Sachar's books are not written as oblivious to their children. They are caring parents, but perhaps busy trying to make a life for their children. This story will encourage young readers to think about genetic engineering. It will encourage them to think about problems associated with increases in world population. It can encourage a discussion of why some students bully others. As a writing teacher I love the reference to the "How-to" paper in Tamaya's classroom and the example that she wrote for the ending of the book. This is a treasure of a book for classrooms and critical thinking.

Fifth grader Tamaya Dhilwaddi always walks home from school with seventh grader Marshall Walsh because her mom won't let her walk home alone. At the end of one particularly irritating school day, Marshall takes a shortcut through the woods. Tamaya has no choice but to follow him. She stumbles and nearly falls into a puddle of yellowish-brown goo "fuzzy mud." But that's the least of her worries as she discovers why Marshall has led her into the forest. Chad Hilligas, the school bully, is chasing him. When Chad catches up with them he pummels Marshall. Tamaya attacks Chad with a handful of fuzzy mud. She and Marshall run for their lives thinking that trouble is now behind them. But it is only the beginning. Tamaya breaks out in an ugly rash of blisters and Chad doesn't show up for school the next day. Tamaya embarks on a mission to find Chad and is soon up to her eyeballs in an environmental catastrophe of global proportions. As Tamaya's predicament unfolds, Sachar infiltrates the mystery with transcripts of top-secret Senate committee hearings that reveal the origins of Biolene, a gasoline substitute made up of super-powered, man-made micro-organisms. In theory, Biolene is the solution to mankind's insatiable energy thirst except for one caveat. Under less-than-controlled conditions, the micro-organisms have the potential to mutate and grow exponentially into a highly-contagious, lethal substance that Tamaya coined "fuzzy mud." And she's covered in it! In his inimitable style, Sachar opens up a 21st century Pandora's box that contains bullying, divorce, the energy crisis, overpopulation, bioengineering, bio-hazards, pandemic, and Hobson's choice between two evils. "Fuzzy Mud" is a modern parable disguised as a fast-paced farce, easily devoured in one sitting.

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