



## Fighting Ruben Wolfe (Underdogs)

By Markus Zusak

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I say, 'Don't lose your heart, Rube.' And very clearly, without moving, my brother answers me. He says, 'I'm not tryin' to lose it, Cam. I'm tryin' to find it.' The Wolfe brothers know how to fight. They've been fighting all their lives. Now there's something more at stake than just winning. A powerful, poignant novel from the author of the international bestseller, *The Book Thief*.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

As Cameron and Ruben Wolfe walk home from school one day, a rough bloke awaits them at their gate. "Can we talk inside?" he asks.

"Well, for starters," Rube answers, "who the hell are y'?"

"Oh, I'm sorry," says the stranger. "I'm a guy who can either change your life or smack it into the ground for bein' smart."

The brothers decide to listen. They keep listening, and soon they're embroiled in a ruthless underground world of sleazy amateur boxing, 50 bucks for a win, a decent tip for a loss. The intensity of this kind of fighting goes beyond the obvious violence and danger, though, as Cameron wonders whether he even wants to come out from his brother's shadow and both boys seek an identity beyond that of their painfully harsh working class family's.

Markus Zusak pens a surprisingly complex and touching story that will linger long with readers. The language is hard-hitting, witty, and authentic--as are the emotions and action. *Fighting Ruben Wolfe* is not about boxing. It's about respect, stubborn pride, and real brotherly love. (Ages 12 and older) --*Emilie Coulter*

#### From Publishers Weekly

In earthy working-class dialect, Australian novelist Zusak offers a lot of boxing action as well as a sensitive inspection of sibling relationship and family pride, wrote PW. Ages 13-up. (June) n

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#### From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up-The Wolfe family has more than its share of problems. Injured in a plumbing accident, the father is unemployed. The mother works extra jobs to help make ends meet. Sister Sarah is an alcoholic. Eldest brother Steve keeps himself emotionally distanced from everyone as he bides his time waiting for an opportunity to escape. Cameron and Ruben are close, almost inseparable, supporting one another. Despite their hardships, the Wolfes maintain a steadfast pride and determination to survive. The story, narrated by Cameron, centers on his relationship with Ruben, who is everything the younger sibling wants to be but is not. Looking to make a financial contribution to the family, the boys encounter a shady boxing promoter who convinces them to fight for money. Aggressive Ruben, who enjoys a good altercation anyway, is enthusiastic. For him, boxing is a way to prove himself. Cameron is petrified, but he goes along with his brother. Predictably, the two brothers face one another in the ring in a climactic scene in which Cameron confronts his feelings about Ruben and himself. *Fighting Ruben Wolfe* has an intriguing premise that is never fully realized. The characters are only superficially developed, as are the dynamics among the other family members. It is difficult to care about the characters or their situations, and the lack of resolution at the end will leave readers disappointed. A novel that begins with promise but never makes it past the first round.-Edward Sullivan, Langston Hughes Library, Clinton, TN

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