



Compton Valance, The Most Powerful Boy in the Universe

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News & Choice:

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Young fans of **Captain Underpants** and **Diary of a Wimpy Kid** will be drawn to the time travelling antics of this new, unlikely superhero, Compton Valance. 'Life has a funny way of pulling down your trousers and popping ice cubes down your pants,' announces Compton at the beginning of his story, and TV presenter turned author, Matt Brown, makes every effort to shock his readers in a similar way. Each page is packed to bursting with cartoons, captions, doodles and ingenious calligrams, provided by illustrator, Lizzie Finlay. The impact is relentless. The reader is bombarded with pants, bogeys and burps as Compton and his school chum, Bryan, bite into a mouldy sandwich that stinks 'stinkier than the stinkiest stink' which, unfathomably, causes them to travel back through time.

Compton's adventures through time have hilarious implications for other characters in the novel, including his father, who is obsessed with punctuality, and Samuel Nathaniel Daniels, who arrives from the future as a representative of the Future Perfect Unit. The subject of time travel causes typical challenges to the narrative structure that younger readers may find difficult to unscramble. The author makes use of innovative techniques in an attempt to help his readers comprehend what on earth is going on. For example, frequent footnotes act as helpful (and humorous) pointers and the narrator often breaks from telling the story to explain how and why something is happening. The effect is a jigsaw of chapters that, with concentration, can just about be assembled into a comprehensible picture.

However, the appeal of Compton Valance is not in its time-twisting narrative, but in the utter persistence of humour throughout. Every single page is lavishly littered with toilet humour that younger fans will adore, though their parents may not. It is a circus of utter nonsense and randomness that will hook many children and have them burping back to the bookstores for the sequel.

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