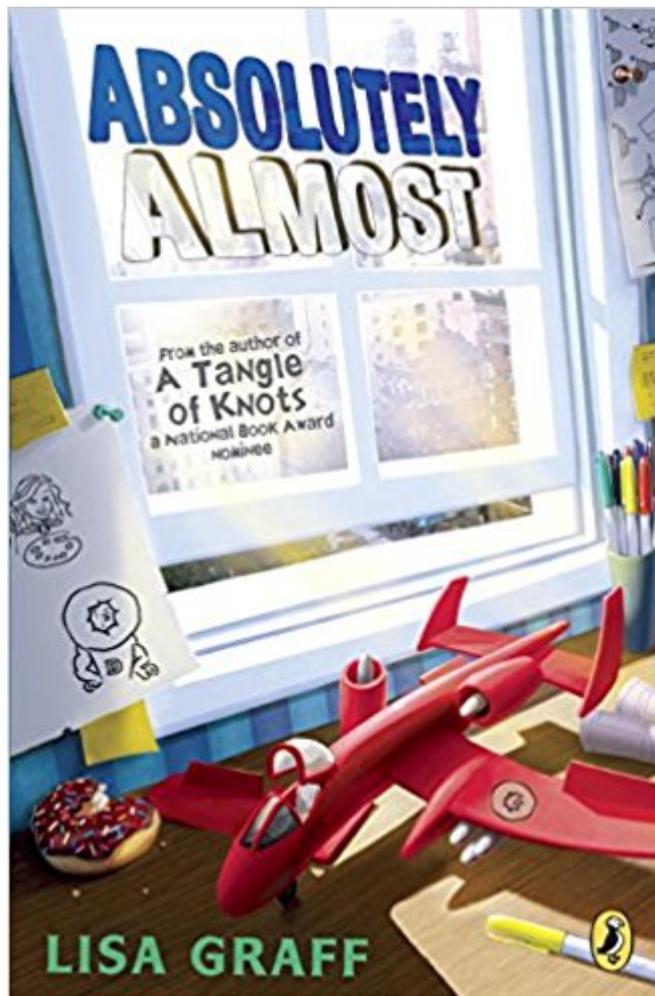


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# Absolutely Almost



## Synopsis

From the author of the National Book Award nominee *A TANGLE OF KNOTS* comes an inspiring novel about figuring out who you are and doing what you love. Albie has never been the smartest kid in his class. He has never been the tallest. Or the best at gym. Or the greatest artist. Or the most musical. In fact, Albie has a long list of the things he's not very good at. But then Albie gets a new babysitter, Calista, who helps him figure out all of the things he is good at and how he can take pride in himself. A perfect companion to Lisa Graff's National Book Award-nominated *A Tangle of Knots*, this novel explores a similar theme in a realistic contemporary world where kids will easily be able to relate their own struggles to Albie's. Great for fans of Rebecca Stead's *Liar and Spy*, RJ Palacio's *Wonder* and Cynthia Lord's *Rules*. Praise for Lisa Graff's novels *Tangle of Knots* (nominated for a National Book Award)\* "Combining the literary sensibility of E. B. White with the insouciance of Louis Sachar, Graff has written a tangle that should satisfy readers for years to come."--Booklist, starred review *Double Dog Dare* "Graff's...story is lighthearted and humorous, but honestly addresses the emotions associated with divorce. Her characters' voices, interactions, and hangups are relatable, as they battle each other and adjust to their families' reconfigurations."--Publishers Weekly

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6 • Albie, an only child living in New York City, has learning difficulties. No matter how hard he tries to give the correct change to the takeout delivery guy, or get all his spelling words correct, he inevitably fails to get it right. When readers meet the fifth-grader, he's just left his fancy private school and is about to be the new kid at public school. His dad is mostly absent and forgetful, except when demanding that Albie try harder. His mom tells him that Dav Pilkey's "Captain Underpants" (Scholastic) is for babies, and gives him Esther Forbes's Johnny Tremain instead. His exacting Korean grandfather predicts that he will end up in a ditch. At school, despite some sympathetic teachers, he is bullied and teased. His only friend is Betsy, reserved and bullied herself. Things begin to change when Albie gets a new babysitter. Calista is an artist and definitely unusual: she makes a cover for Albie's Captain Underpants that says "Johnny Tremain." She takes him for donuts and to art exhibits and, most importantly, she likes him for who he is. Albie's just-believable naiveté leads him into social difficulties as he is given an opportunity to be one of the "cool" kids, even though this entails abandoning his friendship with Betsy. Despite the fact that Graff is scrupulously honest in refusing to provide a conveniently happy ending, Albie comes through significant emotional hardship to a genuine sense of self-worth. Albie himself would find this book inviting at first glance: short chapters, an accessible sans serif font, and plenty of white space, and even his mom might think it acceptable for a fifth grader. • Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Albie almost understands why he is starting fifth grade at a new school. It's got something to do with the things he can't quite do, like subtract numbers inside his head or figure out the words in books. Fortunately, Albie also gets a kindhearted new sitter named Calista, who can turn Albie's sadness into happiness simply through the magic of donuts. But even Calista can't stop the mean kid at school from calling Albie names, or make Albie's parents see how hard he tries in school. As every kid knows, some problems take more than donuts to solve. Graff (*A Tangle of Knots*, 2013) creates a heartfelt portrait of a child searching for nothing more than a safe place to thrive. The story is parsed into short chapters that can stand alone as mini-stories, perfect for young readers who aren't ready to tackle full pages of text. This format is also well suited to presenting the incremental steps of Albie's evolution from bewildered victim to hero of his own story. Beautifully written, Albie's story is accessible and dignified, with a gentle message that will touch any reader's heart. Middle-grade readers will love the references to Dav Pilkey's

inexhaustibly popular Captain Underpants series, which has introduced so many children to the fun side of reading. A perfect book to share with struggling readers. Grades 4-6. --Diane Colson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I loved this book about a middle school boy who finds out what it is like to be not quite the student that his parents expect. The themes of parental expectation, success, friendship, bullying, and identity are well done in this juvenile novel that is very accessible and may be a great companion piece to Wonder.

I used this book as a read aloud for my fifth grade class. My students loved the book, as the main character, Albie, was a believable character in his struggles with school, friends, and family. This book was easy to just right for my students. Great book to highlight dialogue, a character's internal thoughts, and the power of humor in realistic fiction!

Excellent book for children - I read it along with my 11 yr old granddaughter and it has a lot of good things to say.

While this book is easy to read, the subject matter(s) make this a wonderful book to teach, discuss, and truly delve into for a class of 4th or 5th graders and beyond. It is something every child and parent should read. Beautifully told with words that teach, inspire, and cause self-reflection upon one's own points of view. I loved it! Well done!

A boy who believed he is almost good enough in every ways through out of his life has started to see himself little positive way little by little. We all have struggles and doubts, but it's important to give ourselves a chance to reflect who we truly are. I recommend this book to kids and to all who are kids in heart.

My son who is not what one would call a "reader". In other words, he has to be motivated to pick up the book and finish it. However, with this book, he finished it in two weeks (nightly reading) and never complained. He loved it!

I would recommend this book to teachers of students in the same age range as Albie for them to use as a read aloud. I think that is what I am going to use it for. :)

Just as described

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