

Model for *NY Times* Review

Relevant and accurate details

Subjective opinion and personal responses with engaging language

Dialogue from movie

Alex, a 14-year-old in Sioux City, Iowa, whose daily (especially on the school bus), cannot bear to tell his parents what is going on. He even sticks up for his tormenters, who he says are “just messing around” when they stab him with pencils and call him vile names.

“If not for them, what friends do I have?” he asks his distraught, confused mother. It’s a heartbreaking moment. Equally sad — and also infuriating and painfully revealing — is a scene in which an assistant principal at Alex’s middle school tries to settle a conflict between two boys who apparently had been fighting at recess. When she insists that they shake hands, one eagerly obliges, with a smile and an apology. The other sullenly resists, and as she scolds him for his noncooperation (letting his antagonist go), it becomes clear that this boy is the victim, and that the assistant principal’s rushed attempt to be fair is in fact perpetuating a terrible and continuing injustice.