

Stand Tall by Joan Bauer

ABOUT THE BOOK

Size matters, but Tree needs convincing. At six feet, three and a half inches, he's the tallest seventh grader in the history of his school, and people expect big things. But he's not good at basketball, he looks much older than he feels, and his parents' divorce is all too new. He copes by helping people like his grandpa, a Vietnam vet who's just had part of a leg amputated, and Sophie, a new girl who's being taunted at school. Taking things apart helps, too. He learned that from Grandpa. And in the process of seeing how lamps get rewired and laser pens work, in Grandpa's powerful memories of the Vietnam War, in helping an old soldier learn to walk again, in Sophie's insistence that Tree be himself, he begins to heal from the divorce and learns to stand tall. But when a flood threatens his home, Tree's newfound confidence is put to the test.

JOURNAL REVIEWS

- Booklist (September 15, 2002)
- Horn Book Guide (April 1, 2003)
- Horn Book Magazine (November 1, 2002)
- School Library Journal (November 1, 2003)
- Voice of Youth Advocates (October 1, 2002)

ABOUT JOAN BAUER

Joan Bauer is the author of the acclaimed young adult novels *Rules of the Road*, *Squashed* and *Thwonk*. Her books have received many honors including American Bookseller Pick of the List, ALA Book for the Reluctant Reader, Junior Library Guild Selection and ALA Best Book for Young Adults. Ms. Bauer lives with her family in Darien, Connecticut and for several years has spent part of each summer hiking in the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Mountains. To see Joan Bauer's official website, go to: www.joanbauer.com.

BOOKTALKS

Booktalk #1

This is not the best year for Tree. Tree is twelve years old and in seventh grade, but he is way too big. He is 6'3 ½" tall and still growing. You might think this was a good thing but to Tree it is an embarrassment. He can't play sports well, like his brothers did, not even basketball. . He is just clumsy. People laugh at him because he is so awkward. He even has to carry his birth certificate with him to prove that he is only 12. That is one problem, but Tree has many other problems too. His parents just got divorced and now he has to live sometimes with his mom and sometimes with his dad. His most wonderful grandpa is having his leg amputated, due to an old war injury, and his dog, Bradley, is getting really old. Grandpa says life is sometimes like a war. "We're all fighting a war whether we know it or not - a war for our minds and souls and what we believe in." Find out how Tree struggles with his own personal war and finds a friend to help him "Stand tall" by Joan Bauer. (Marianne Archard, marchard@aol.com)

Booktalk #2

Tree is twelve years old and stands six foot three inches. Everyone expects him to do great things. It's so hard to be one of the crowd when you stand out. It's so hard to just be yourself. (New Hampshire Great Stone Face Committee, 2004-05)

Booktalk #3

"What can we learn about our personal wars from old soldiers who have seen battle?" is a question posed by the author on her web site. How do we look to those around us for leadership and support in fighting our daily battles? Tree Benton is struggling to come to terms with his parents' divorce, his unusual height, and his new friend's conflicts at school and at home. His grandfather, a Vietnam vet who is fighting the battles of amputation and rehabilitation, shows Tree that you must stand tall and meet adversity head on, without whining or self-pity. Because he is a six-foot three-inch tall seventh grader, he must endure constant teasing about his height. Everyone assumes he will be a star basketball player, but he is not good at that or any other sport, unlike his two older brothers. Tree agonizes over his parents' divorce, frustrated at being shuttled back and forth between homes. His mom, a computer expert, keeps in touch with her own website called heymom.com, but Tree just wants things to be the way they used to be. His new friend Sophie is battling her own problems at home and with the popular girls at school. As he helps his grandfather with his prosthetic leg after surgery, Tree watches and learns from him and the other vets in rehabilitation. He sees them face their problems head-on, with courage and humor and tough love for each other. He stands with Sophie as she combats her tormentors in school, and he realizes that he is not alone in struggling to accept himself and his differences. When he follows Sophie's advice to stand tall, Tree approaches each of his conflicts with courage and determination.

Booktalk #4

I am finishing my reading of the 2004-2005 South Carolina Junior Book Award Nominees. This is definitely one of my favorites! You (as an adult, teacher, or media specialist) will appreciate Bauer's gift for writing. With this novel, she has produced a story that is poignant, intelligent, and humorous. Young adults will connect with the narrator, while learning the important lesson of self-acceptance.

The narrator's name is Tree. Can you guess why? He is six feet three inches tall - and only twelve years old! Tree is not "flying-high" in life, though. Everything seems to be going wrong. He is a member of his middle school's basketball team but never scores a point. His older brothers, Larry and Curtis, won athletic awards all through school. Tree feels like he will never measure up to his brothers' many accomplishments. His best friend is his dog Bradley. Bradley is getting older, though, and may not live much longer. Tree is made fun of at school. If he hears "How's the weather up there?" one more time, he may just explode! Tree's grandfather, a Vietnam vet, has to have his leg amputated. Tree loves him dearly and worries how his grandfather will be able to adjust.

That's not the only problem. Tree's parents are getting a D-I-V-O-R-C-E. He can't even say the word. He hates living in two different homes and just wishes things were the way they used to be. Does life ever get better for Tree?

When I read this novel, I just knew Tree's mom and dad would get back together. This would make him feel whole again. Well...Tree does get better. His happiness does not come from his parents reuniting, though. Tree learns to be brave, strong, and to finally accept himself and his life for what it is.

Tree's grandfather once told Tree the secret to fighting a war. He states, "You've got to hold on to the things you know to be true, set your mind to a higher place, and fight like a dog to keep it there. War can be so fierce, you can forget the good. Forget what you're about in this world, what's really important. There's always going to be somebody who wants to try to make you forget it. Don't let them" (page 71). Tree fights his battles bravely. In the end, he is a winner. Tree truly learns how to stand tall.

Booktalk #5

12-year-old Tree is the tallest student in his school at 6-foot-3. Because of his height, coaches want him to play basketball, and teachers expect him to act older than his age. But Tree's biggest problem is his parents' recent divorce. His life is further complicated by having to stay alternate weeks with each parent. Tree learns to cope by helping other people, including his likable Vietnam vet grandfather. Bauer gives her fans interesting characters, delightful scenes, and snappy dialogue in this heartfelt and humorous novel.

Source: Nancy Keane's Booktalks (http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/bauer_stand.htm)

ACTIVITIES

1. Sophie challenges Tree to come up with a motto. Hers is "Speak your mind and ride a fast horse." Come up with your own motto.

2. After the flood, Tree cries over what was lost. What would you miss most if your home was destroyed in a flood?

3. Learn about floods and what to do about them at these websites:

Fargo Flood - <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/fargoflood/>

Red Cross Flood Site -

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_585_,00.html

4. Read more about Iguanas here:

Green Iguana Society - <http://www.greenigsociety.org/home.html>

Stand Tall Word Search

C L I T T E R K G N F A M K N
P T S K A L Y D N P A N Q P P
U G N W Y N C Y I T H J C E I
X Q U L P U T E K F R Y N W E
J A L X R H V S H N D E P A R
B U I T S O E O S Z Y W E M C
S R I E R M I N A D Q L Y V E
O S A G I L U U R X M F K S F
Z O S D E H B T T Y C O N A N
W O A J L Z P S M R H S Z R O
C M A S N E Q O H R Q E Q T E
A U L D M O Y H S A Z D I D L
L G E T T Y X S N L B O S O X
J V Q D F H M F X Z I Z S O Z
O D N O T N E B C U F B R J V

Benton
Bradley
Clitter
Conan
Cosgrove
Curtis

Devo
Eli
Jan
Larry
Leo
Nuts

Pierce
Sam
Sophie
Sully
Trash King
Tree

And the words mean...

All of these words appear in the book *Stand Tall*. Find out what they mean.

Dysfunctional

Alienation

Cogent

Punctual

Behemoth

Stalwart

Serenity

Prosthetic

Defiantly

Infectious