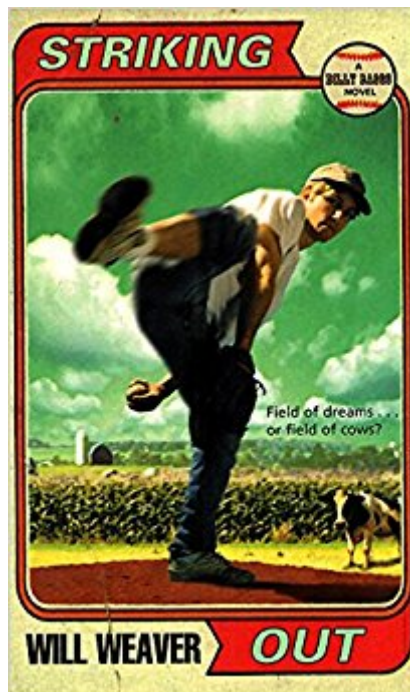


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# Striking Out



## Synopsis

Up until now, Billy Baggs's life has been loaded with nevers. Never been to a movie. Never played baseball with a real team. Never got over feeling guilty for the loss of his brother. But change is in the air. Billy discovers he has a natural talent for baseball, especially as a pitcher. Maybe, just maybe, there's more in store for him than life on the farm. But can Billy convince his father of that? Or is he destined to spend the rest of his life pitching nothing but hay? Teenager Billy Baggs is desperately needed on his family's struggling dairy farm, but he's also an extraordinarily gifted natural baseball player. How he struggles to reconcile his father's desire to keep him on the farm with his coach's interest in getting him on the field is at the heart of this *meaty* story. *"The complex characters grow and change in profoundly real ways."*K. *[With] flashes of humor, a wealth of lovingly recounted details evokes the difficult daily life on a small dairy farm."*Publishers Weekly. 1994 Best Books for Young Adults (ALA) 1994 Books for the Teen Age (NY Public Library) 1993 "Pick of the Lists" (ABA)

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## Customer Reviews

In this story of a 13-year-old Minnesota boy's adjustment to a hardscrabble existence, PW found "a wealth of lovingly recounted details" and "flashes of humor [that] serve as relief." Ages 10-up.- serve as relief." Ages 10-up. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 8-12-This novel opens with a rather grisly description of the death of Billy Baggs's older

brother in a tractor accident. The action quickly shifts to five years later, when 13-year-old Billy is still wrestling with guilt over Robert's death. An opportunity to play summer baseball offers him some hope of regaining the equilibrium in his life, but his family's numbing rural poverty and his parents' own failure to come to grips with their son's death present further obstacles. This is not strictly a sports book, as other threads in the plot involve a pair of sexy farm sisters and accusations of rape; the beginnings of independence for Mrs. Baggs; and Billy's friendship with a slightly loony member of the baseball team. Unfortunately, not all of these threads come together at the end, and one gets the feeling that either a sequel is in the works or that Weaver tried to stuff too much into an already long text. The author also gets a few details wrong-Dodgers pitcher Sandy Koufax had already been retired for four years in 1970, but appears on the covers of all the sports magazines. The strongest parts of the story involve the gritty, unromantic descriptions of farm life, and the honest depiction of the deep emotions of the major characters. This depth of feeling makes readers really care about the family, and is probably enough to make this uneven and unruly book worth a purchase. Todd Morning, Schaumburg Township Public Library, IL Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

I teach 7th and 8th grade language arts and this book has been responsible for turning some of my most reluctant readers into students who can't get enough of this series. Their biggest complaint is that there are only three books to the series. I think the reasons they love this book so much is that Will Weaver makes all the characters so believable. Students can relate to the life Billy has. The fact that the book starts out with a tragic accidental death gets the kids to want to read more. This isn't a book about baseball. It is about a young man struggling to cope with the life he's been given by his parents-especially his calloused father. Even though Billy complains about the way his father is, the author has a very realistic way of making Billy's character act and sound just like his father, even though Billy doesn't realize it. This isn't just a book for boys either. The fact that Billy is at the age where his hormones are working at full capacity also draws in reluctant female readers. At the beginning of every school year, this is the book I introduce and recommend to my most reluctant readers, and it has never failed to turn them into readers!

Striking Out Up until now, Billy Baggs's life has tired and bored him out. He has never had any real friends or played baseball for an actual team, and has never gotten over feeling guilty for his brother's death. Billy works almost all day at his father's farm, and rarely sees the outside world. One day he goes into town with his dad, to help purchase the animal feeder. Across the street from

the Farmhouse is a baseball diamond where a game is in play, a homerun is hit and the ball rolls near Billy. He picks it up and tosses it back, with ease, it goes all the way to home plate. The Coach for one of the teams is amazed, and rushes over to Billy and his father. The Coach offers Billy a spot on the team, but Billy's dad argues that he has too much work, and no time for such games. Billy is disappointed, but ends up getting to play after talking to his mom, who settles it with his dad. After attending his first practice ever, Billy and his teammates realize that he is a natural born player, and an amazing pitcher. He makes many friends, and learns things about himself that he never realized was there. His new friends teach him that life is full of disappointments and let-downs, and that with family and friends, you can make it through anything. For once in his life Billy is having a blast while leading his team to the championship game. Everything is seeming to fit into place for Billy Baggs, until a surprising misfortune happens, and Billy is left with a serious choice, to give up his new friends, and the game he loves so much, or to let his family down. Will Billy figure out his predicament, or is he destined to pitch for the rest of his life. In my opinion this book was really good and very interesting! I thought that it had an excellent plot, and an amazing ending! I was able to feel like I was in the book a lot, I could easily relate to the situations and characters in the story. Thanks in large part to the fact that, the author used a great deal of description, when describing the setting and characters. I was really into the main conflict too, since I love baseball, and that was what the whole story was pretty much based around. I thought that characters were realistic because I could relate to their emotions in the types of situations they were in. I believe that the ending was extremely satisfying and easily the best part of the entire book, it was exciting, and I never expected what happened and it worked out great in this type of story. Will Weaver's voice in this book, is 3rd person. The author did not really use vocabulary in interesting ways, aside from the slang "southern" drawls in the dialogue. I think that the author's vocabulary and writing style were pretty easy to read. Will Weaver used dialogue but didn't really use enough I believe, If there was one thing I could change about the author's writing style it would be for him to add more dialogue. I thought that Will Weaver did an excellent job describing the characters and their emotions, which made the story a lot more fun to read. If I had to rate *Striking Out*, I would probably have to give it an 8 out of 10 possible points. It was honestly that good,. I enjoyed the book so much I will probably end up reading it again sometime. I thought that the descriptions in the novel were superb, and the characters were like everyday people that I have probably met before, and that's how realistic they were. All in all, I enjoyed the book a lot! I thought that the entire book was well paced, and extremely exciting throughout. The author did a phenomenal job, and I would recommend this book to anyone and everyone, especially someone who enjoys baseball, and likes

to read about it. This is totally the book for you!

After five years of trying to fill his dead brothers' shoes for his father, Billy Baggs begins the struggle to forge his own dreams. In his first novel for young adults, *STRIKING OUT*, Will Weaver uses his memories of growing up on a farm in Minnesota to shape the setting and plot of this book. Will Weaver now lives in Bemidji with his wife and two children, where he teaches Creative Writing and English at Bemidji State University. I think male or female teenagers who enjoy realistic fiction will enjoy this book. Although it seems like this book is mainly directed at teenage boys who enjoy baseball, I think it's a book that will attract both baseball, and non-baseball fans alike. The book deals with all problems that young adults face with their parents when they take their first steps towards independence. Billy wants to begin playing baseball, his father is against it, finally Billy and his mother take a stand, and he begins playing. The book is written in the third person, although it focuses mainly on Billy, it occasionally takes on the view of his baseball coach. The effect is interesting, throughout almost the whole book you see what Billy sees, feel what Billy feels, and then suddenly you switch to what the coach sees in the boy, or what other people would think when they saw Billy; a tough, gap-toothed farm boy who is good at baseball. I think the main purpose of this book was to teach readers the value of family, and finding your place in the world. Throughout the book Billy's family is arguing, or ignoring each other. Each one is haunted by the past; the book starts during a turning point for the family. The title of the book *STRIKING OUT* is very important since Billy and his mother are both starting to take a stand, and strike out against his father living in the past. At one point in the book his mother, pent up with emotion, starts yelling; "things have to start changing around here!" Will Weavers' strength in writing is character. Each of the characters is well defined, they all have their weaknesses, they are not good, or bad. Although he is writing in the third person you still understand how Billy feels, and when you switch to the Coaches' point of view, you understand what other people see in Billy. When you take on Billy's point of view farmers are described as the normal people, and other higher-class members of the town, are looked on as being snobby. When the coaches' point of view is taken on, Billy is described in a somewhat ragged fashion, as a person of higher class would see him. Billy, and his father both have complicated characters, Billy's father is strict but sensitive, a deep and emotional character that somehow seems believable. Weaver's writing is raw and powerful when it comes to writing about Billy's family. You understand the hurt each member felt when his brother died, and how much it has impacted their lives, Billy's father especially. When I first started reading the book, I didn't realize that Billy was only thirteen, he seemed much older, I thought that the author wasn't very good at capturing the

character of a thirteen-year-old, but I soon realized that I was wrong. The reason Billy seems older is because he's a farm kid, he has more responsibilities, and therefore seems older. Weaver subtly explained this in parts of the book, and made me understand. Weaver painted a fairly detailed picture of the setting, a small town in rural Minnesota, home of farmers and the "upper class

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