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# The Contender



## Synopsis

The breakthrough modern sports novel *The Contender* shows readers the true meaning of being a hero. This acclaimed novel by celebrated sportswriter Robert Lipsyte, the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in YA fiction, is the story of a young boxer in Harlem who overcomes hardships and finds hope in the ring on his path to becoming a contender. Alfred Brooks is scared. He's a high-school dropout and his grocery store job is leading nowhere. His best friend is sinking further and further into drug addiction. Some street kids are after him for something he didn't even do. So Alfred begins going to Donatelli's Gym, a boxing club in Harlem that has trained champions. There he learns it's the effort, not the win, that makes the boxer—that before you can be a champion, you have to be a contender. ALA Best of the Best Books for Young Adults \* ALA Notable Children's Book \* New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 366 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #51,843 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Sports #92 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Self Esteem & Reliance #157 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Classics

## Customer Reviews

Alfred's life is going nowhere fast. He's a high-school dropout working at a grocery store. His best friend is drifting behind a haze of drugs and violence, and now some street punks are harassing him for something he didn't do. Feeling powerless and afraid, Alfred gathers up the courage to visit Donatelli's Gym, the neighborhood's boxing club. He wants to be a champion--on the streets and in his own life. Alfred doesn't quite understand when Mr. Donatelli tells him, "It's the climbing that makes the man. Getting to the top is an extra reward." In the end, he learns that a winner isn't necessarily the one standing when the fight is over. Teens and adults alike will be knocked out by

this powerful story of how a frightened boy becomes a man. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

• A novel filled with hardships and hope. • (ALA Booklist)

Set in Harlem in the 1960s, *The Contender* is a moving story about a 16 year old named Alfred Brooks who lives with his aunt and cousins in a small, dingy apartment. His father has long since disappeared, his mother died of pneumonia, and Alfred, essentially a very good kid, has made some mistakes. He dropped out of high school and now works sweeping floors in a grocery store. His best friend James hangs out with thugs and drug users and is quickly becoming an addict himself. One evening when Alfred goes looking for James he finds him at the usual hangout of him and his thug buddies. While talking, Alfred lets it slip that the grocers he works for, the Epsteins, leave money in the cash register overnight on Fridays while they observe the Sabbath. The thugs, and Alfred's best friend James, decide to rob the grocery store. What Alfred forgets to tell them is about the new alarm system recently installed. So of course, after they are caught and arrested, and eventually bailed out, they come looking for Alfred. One night while they're chasing Alfred he runs into Donatelli's Gym, a boxing club where fighters train. And this begins Alfred's journey into fighting, not just boxing, but fighting to make something of himself when the odds are against him. Realistic and gritty, this novel is a wonderful book for young adults. I have read it many times with 7th and 8th grade, and 10th and 11th grade, language arts students and they love it, whether they are themselves from inner-city neighborhoods in Harlem or the Bronx, or from the suburbs. The consistent theme running through the story is the importance of striving to make something of yourself, to become a contributing member of society. It is extremely well written and a novel I enthusiastically recommend.

This is a great book. Fantastic for my students to read. Very motivational and true to life.

My 14 year old son had to read this for one of his summer reading books. He's not an avid reader and often complains about the book he's been assigned to read. *The Contender*, however, he really liked and said it was one of his favorites. He said it was a really good story. So for any parents with boys who don't love to read have your son try this one out.

A book that help me begin my search for the inner fighter within me. It makes you think about your

goals and aspirations and what you're willing to do to get there.

I purchased this book for my son to read for his 8th grade reading assignment. Not only did he enjoy it, I enjoyed it as well. This book met my expectations, and kept my son interested.

The book was assigned for summer reading. Shipping was fast. I did not read the book my daughter did. She said it was just ok. Not her favorite. She is just not that interested in the topic.

This is a great book. Great story and very well written.

My eight grade son is reading this book for school and reports that it is a great story. He recommends it!

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