

# The Adventures of Everyday Geniuses



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## Book List Review July 2008

### **Last to Finish: A Story about the Smartest Boy in Math Class**

The second picture book in The Adventures of Everyday Geniuses series features Max, a third-grader who had always liked math until his teacher started using a timer for testing the class on multiplication facts. Max clutches when he tries to hurry. When his missing math folder reveals that Max has been working problems from the older brother's algebra book "for fun," he is invited to join the school math team as well as a program for accelerated math students. Tinted with colorful washes, ink drawings illustrate the story with sympathy and humor. One particularly expressive picture illustrates the phrase "my mind freezes" with a drawing of unhappy Max seated at his school desk, his head turned into a snowman's noggin, carrot nose and all. The well-phrased text also reassures children that understanding is more important than memorization and that a strength in one area of learning can offset a weakness in another.

— *Carolyn Phelan*

## Book List Review June 2008

### **Stacey Coolidge's Fancy-Smancy Cursive Handwriting**

From Mrs. Thompson, the teacher, to Frederick, the class guinea pig, everything about second grade seems good to Carolyn. But when the class starts practicing the slants and curves of cursive writing, she finds it difficult and her happiness evaporates. Detailing her frustrations and contrasting her struggles with a classmate's easy success, this picture book reflects experiences familiar to many young students. Carolyn's sympathetic teacher puts things in perspective, telling her that when it comes to writing, ideas and emotions are much more important than slants and curves. Designed to encourage children, books in the Adventures of Everyday Geniuses series tell stories of students who struggle in some respects, while excelling in others. Bright with colorful washes, the cartoonlike drawings clearly express the characters' emotions. Given the pressure to introduce cursive writing to younger students, this picture book will resonate with a growing number of children.— *Carolyn Phelan*