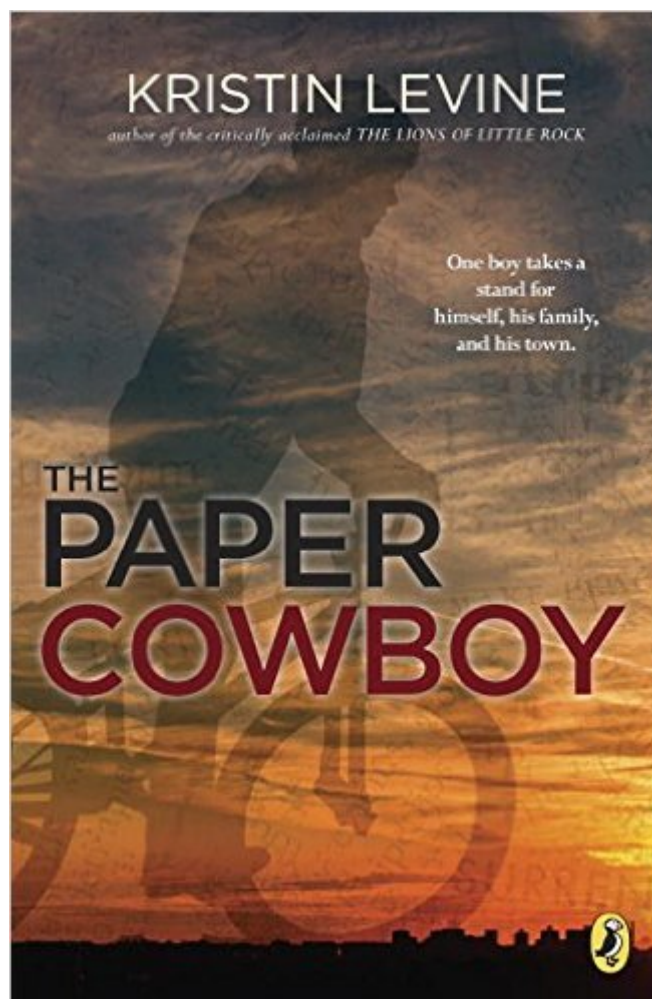


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# The Paper Cowboy



## Synopsis

The newest powerful work of historical fiction from award-winning author of *THE LIONS OF LITTLE ROCK* Kristin Levine. Though he thinks of himself as a cowboy, Tommy is really a bully. He's always playing cruel jokes on classmates or stealing from the store. But Tommy has a reason: life at home is tough. His abusive mother isn't well; in fact, she may be mentally ill, and his sister, Mary Lou, is in the hospital badly burned from doing a chore it was really Tommy's turn to do. To make amends, Tommy takes over Mary Lou's paper route. But the paper route also becomes the perfect way for Tommy to investigate his neighbors after stumbling across a copy of *The Daily Worker*, a communist newspaper. Tommy is shocked to learn that one of his neighbors could be a communist, and soon fear of a communist in this tight-knit community takes hold of everyone when Tommy uses the paper to frame a storeowner, Mr. McKenzie. As Mr. McKenzie's business slowly falls apart and Mary Lou doesn't seem to get any better, Tommy's mother's abuse gets worse causing Tommy's bullying to spiral out of control.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0600 (What's this?)

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Dgs Rep edition (March 1, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142427152

ISBN-13: 978-0142427156

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.9 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #195,855 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #40 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Dysfunctional Relationships #82 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Abuse #257 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Bullies

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

I recently read a blog post by Betsy Bird of Fuse 8 Productions about the worst parents in recent children's books. I think Tommy's parents in Kristin Levine's "The Paper Cowboy" are way up there

on the list. Tommy is a young boy ( about 5th or 6 the grade -I don't think it says) growing up in a small Illinois town in the 1950's. This is the time of Lone Ranger on the radio, John Wayne movies in the downtown theater, McCarthy's Red Scare in the news, and immigrant neighbors wearing the scars of WW II. Things are bad at home. Tommy's mom has always been moody, but after the birth of a 4th baby and a serious accident involving his older sister, Mom's moods turn violent, and Tommy bears the brunt of it. Mom' s terrible traits can perhaps be excused. It's clear she is mentally ill. But, it's Tommy's father that is most disturbing. His willful ignorance of what Tommy is facing is more than just your typical 1950's Dad being out of touch with what's going on at home. Mom's episodes of rage are terrifying and Tommy is utterly alone to deal with them while his big sister is in the hospital. His alienation and fear as he realizes his dad is not going to help is palpable. Yet, he realizes there are people in his community to turn to. He fearfully and tentatively asks for help, and it's a beautiful thing. I love books about the Red Scare. It's a time that is not addressed all that often in children's and YA historical fiction, especially compared to WWII and then the Civil Rights era of the 1960's. However, it's a fascinating time, especially through the eyes of a young boy who just wants to be a cowboy and thinks he can do that by rooting out "Commies" in his small town.

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