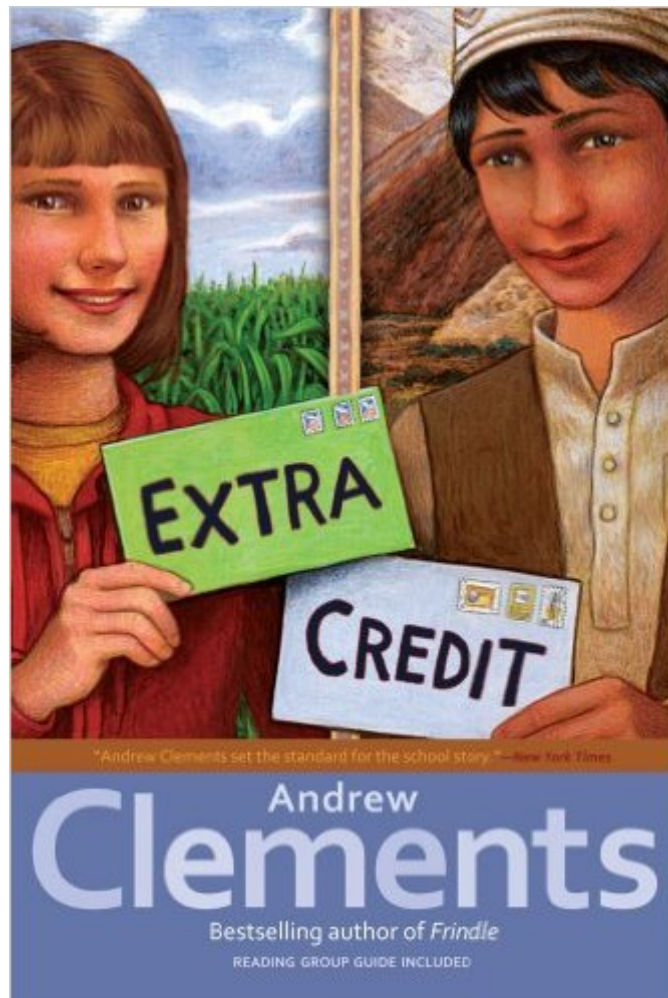


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# Extra Credit



## Synopsis

It isn't that Abby Carson can't do her schoolwork. She just doesn't like doing it. And consequently, Abby will have to repeat sixth grade unless she meets some specific conditions, including taking on an extra credit project: find a pen pal in a distant country. But when Abby's first letter arrives at a small school in Afghanistan, complications arise. The elders agree that any letters going back to America must be written well, but the only qualified English-speaking student is a boy. And in this village, it's not proper for a boy to correspond with a girl. So, Sadeed's sister will dictate and sign the letters for him. But what about the villagers who believe that girls should not be anywhere near a school? And what about those who believe that any contact with Americans is...unhealthy? As letters flow back and forth between the prairies of Illinois and the mountains of central Asia, across cultural and religious divides, through the minefields of different lifestyles and traditions a small group of children begin to speak and listen to each other. And in just a few short weeks, they make important discoveries about their communities, about their world, and most of all, about themselves.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0830 (What's this?)

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (February 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416949313

ISBN-13: 978-1416949312

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.7 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (51 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #70,134 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 in Books > Children's Books >

Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Middle East #511 in Books > Children's Books >

Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Siblings #884 in Books > Children's Books > Growing

Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > School

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Andrew Clements has a very unique writing style and has quickly become one of my favorite

children's authors. Clements delves deeply into showing, step-by-step, cause and effect in his stories' events and rationalizing among his characters. He is also apt to give pages and pages of back story to explain something happening in his books. He uses these techniques very effectively to give the reader a true understanding of what is happening on different levels in his stories. In Clements's latest book, EXTRA CREDIT, Abby Carson is coasting in school - the only class she really puts her heart into is gym class, where she gives her all on a climbing wall she loves trying to scale. It's not that the classroom work is too difficult, but Abby just doesn't LIKE doing the work. Things have gone downhill from year to year, and now Abby learns that she is about to fail sixth grade! Abby quickly looks for a way to avoid repeating sixth grade, and is told she MIGHT be able to pass if she does a few things - hands in every assignment, gets a B or better on every quiz and test, and does an extra credit project, corresponding with a pen pal in another country. From a short list of countries her teacher offers her, Abby chooses Afghanistan, because of its mountains and her love of climbing. In a village near the Afghan capital of Kabul, teacher Mahmood has chosen his best student, Sadeed Bayat, to represent his country and correspond with Abby for her project. However, the village council has other ideas - they cling to the old traditions and believe it improper for a boy to be exchanging letters with a girl. Instead, Sadeed's little sister Amira will write the letters with Sadeed checking them over for quality.

This was the 10th book by Clements that I have read over the last few months. Most of his books have a lesson but this one dealing with hostilities between the US and Afghanistan as experienced by students in both countries pushes the boundary for Clements. It is an interesting read but not one of my favorites by Clements. This is primarily a story about pen pals, Abby Carson and Sadeed Bayat. Abby is in desperate need of a pen pal because she is about to repeat her grade and an Extra Credit project. The project she gets if to have a pen pal and share at least 5 letters and do a bulletin board in the classroom to share the information she learns with her classmates. Her teacher gives her the choice of a few locations where she has contacts in school. Abby decides to write Afghanistan because they have mountains and her favorite thing is the rock climbing wall in the gym at school, because Illinois. The story deals with some typical stereotypes, but also breaking down boundaries. At first Sadeed is reluctant to write to Abby because he is to work with his younger sister and do it. For a boy and girl writing is not appropriate. He feels writing a girl is below him. But as the letters exchange his feelings change. Both Abby and Sadeed encounter resistance, some parents at Abby's school complain about the Afghan flag on her display. And a stranger is furious when he sees American flag stamps on a letter Sadeed has. Even accusing Sadeed of being a traitor

or spy. Both children learn to deal with their feelings. They both encounter feelings they did not expect. They also both learn to appreciate aspects about the others culture and day to day life. In some ways this book was more intense than many of Clements other books.

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