



Popularity: ★★☆☆☆



## Aven Green sleuthing machine (Apr 2021)

Review: EBSCONovelist

**Author:** [Bowling, Dusti](#)

**Ages** 0-8Fiction

**Series:** [Aven Green, 1](#)

**Description:** Knowing that the cells from the arms she was born without created her detective-worthy brain, third grader **Aven Green** finds the limits of her perceptiveness challenged by two cases involving her teacher's missing lunch and the disappearance of her great-grandmother's dog.

**Genre:** Early chapter books; Illustrated books

**Themes:** Living with visible disability

**Character:** Likeable; Spunky; Physically disabled

**Tone:**Funny

**Writing Style:**Witty; Attention-grabbing

**Illustration:**Cartoony

**Min/Max Grade level:**1 - 4

**Lexile:** 690 **Accelerated Reader:** IL: LG, BL: 4.4, AR Pts: 2

**Persistent link to this record (Permalink):**

### **Booklist:**

Grades 1-3 In this prequel featuring Bowling's armless sleuth, Aven (Momentous Events in the Life of a Cactus, 2017), who is navigating third grade while pursuing detective work on the side, finds herself tackling two perplexing problems at once, with her grandmother's dear dog going missing just as a lunch thief strikes her school. It's a lot to take on, but Aven , armed—or "footed," as she would say—with detecting tools and endless enthusiasm, is determined to crack the cases and bring the perpetrators to justice. She is an irrepressible and irresistible narrator, whether reflecting on life as someone born without arms or amicably interacting with her funny friends and family. Unapologetically smart and refreshingly confident in her abilities, this super-sleuth extraordinaire is a joy to tag along with. -- Emily Graham (Reviewed 3/15/2021) (Booklist, vol 117, number 14, p56)

### **School Library Journal:**

*/\* Starred Review \*/* Gr 1–4—Bowling's beloved "Life of a Cactus" protagonist returns in a new series of chapter books that capture her life as third grader. Aven Green is a smart, lively, confident white girl who happened to be born without arms, a congenital condition called amelia. For Aven , having no arms hasn't stopped her from living life to the absolute max! Young readers will laugh aloud at Aven's funny reactions to queries about what happened to her arms (they were not scrubbed off in the car wash, eaten by iguanas in the Galapagos, pulled off in a game of tug of war, or flattened by a steamroller). They will be intrigued by the practical skills she has perfected, using her feet to brush her teeth, comb her hair, eat mint chocolate chip ice cream, and write about all of the mysteries she has solved with her trusty magnifying glass and sleuthing kit. With no arms, Aven says all those extra cells went straight to her brain, making her extra smart and, in her own words, "a sleuthing machine" who has been solving cases for a really long time—practically a whole month! Bowling's book features Perry's engaging pencil illustrations, short five- to seven-page chapters, explanations of potentially unfamiliar terms such as brain cell and acronyms, and a list of Aven's sleuthing words: culprit, alleged, hypothesis, and more. The author holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in education and infuses her writing with humor and empathy. VERDICT This chapter book companion to Bowling's well-loved middle grade series is a recommended purchase.—Cheryl Blevens, Cunningham Mem. Lib., Indiana State Univ. --Cheryl Blevens (Reviewed 03/01/2021) (School Library Journal, vol 67, issue 3, p89)

## **Publishers Weekly:**

In this prequel to Bowling's middle grade *Life of a Cactus* novels, eight-year-old Aven Green, who was born without arms, doesn't "solve mysteries like any old detective." When a mysterious culprit starts stealing lunches and cafeteria food at her Kansas elementary school, Aven eagerly decides to solve the case. But the mysteries continue piling up: her great-grandmother's dog, King Smith of Kansas City, or Smitty for short, goes missing, and a new girl named Sujata joins Aven's third grade class and inexplicably appears unhappy. As the food crimes persist and Smitty remains absent, Aven begins to feel overwhelmed. But with the help of her family and a new friend, Aven discovers that the cases just might be connected. Bowling centers earnest Aven's quirky wit, determination, and earnestness ("But you know one thing I've never read as being necessary to be a good P.I.? Having arms. That's what"), introducing an exuberant adoptee whose disability does not exist to serve the plot. Perry's b&w line illustrations feature supple-limbed, cartoon-style characters, including portrayals of Aven doing activities with her feet. Aven's candid voice ensures that this chapter book series starter will draw a young audience. Ages 6–9. Agent: Shannon Hassan, Marsal Lyon Literary. (Apr.) --Staff (Reviewed 03/01/2021) (Publishers Weekly, vol 268, issue 9, p)

## **Kirkus:**

Bowling introduces the outspoken, armless narrator of her *Life as a Cactus* series to younger readers. Eight-year-old Aven Green doesn't need arms to be a good private investigator; her feet work just fine. In fact, all those extra arm cells went to her brain instead—at least, that's her hypothesis. So when somebody starts stealing food at school, she's on the case. But then her great-grandma's dog, Smitty, goes missing, and then new student Sujata arrives—looking mysteriously sad. Can Aven's "super-powered brain" solve three cases at the same time? The simple plot, peppered with humorous malapropisms and leaps of kid logic, is primarily a showcase for Aven's precocious personality. Witty, stubborn, and self-confident ("I was shy once. It was on a Wednesday afternoon in kindergarten"), Aven takes her disability in stride; her classmates are also accepting. She and her friends share rowdy and gleefully gross activities, complete with "ninja" chops, flatulence, and "rainbow barf." Her (adoptive) parents are warmly supportive, but her long-suffering teacher is perhaps too much so; her remarkable tolerance for Aven's occasionally disruptive antics may raise some eyebrows. Perry's black-and-white cartoon illustrations energetically depict Aven's agile feet and mischievous grin. The tidy ending sets up another adventure; a list of Aven's "sleuthing words" is appended. Most characters, including Aven, appear to be White; Sujata is Indian American. A fun series opener with a feisty protagonist who'll keep readers on their toes. (Mystery. 6-9) (Kirkus Reviews, March 15, 2021)

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### **Genre**

Early chapter books

Illustrated books

**Tone**

Funny

**Writing Style**

Attention-grabbing

Witty

**Illustration**

Cartoony

**Theme**

Living with visible disability

**Subject**

Adopted children

Child detectives

Children with disabilities

Eight-year-old girls

Friendship

Girls

Lost dogs

Stealing

Third graders

## **Character**

Likeable

Physically disabled

Spunky