



## Inkling (Nov 2018)

Popularity: ★★★★★☆



Review: EBSCONovelist

**Author:** [Oppel, Kenneth, 1967-](#)

**Ages 9-12**Fiction

**Description:** A boy from a family overshadowed by grief and creative blocks rediscovers his imagination when an ink blot from his artist father's sketchbook comes to life and helps the family figure out what they truly need.

**Genre:** Low fantasy; Illustrated books; Canadian **fiction**

**Themes:** Coping with death; Artistic endeavors

**Tone:** Whimsical; Amusing; Moving

**Writing Style:** Attention-grabbing

**Min/Max Grade level:** 4 - 6

**Lexile:** 650 **Accelerated Reader:** [IL: MG](#), [BL: 4.6](#), [AR Pts: 7](#)

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

## Reviews

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More About This Book

### School Library Journal:

Gr 4–6—Ethan Rylance has the weight of the world on his shoulders. His mother recently passed away, and his once-successful father is struggling with his career as a graphic novel creator. Because his father is grieving and experiencing depression, it falls to a frustrated Ethan to act as caregiver and playmate to his intuitive and empathetic little sister who has Down Syndrome. On top of the strains of his home life, Ethan is struggling with a school assignment. His classmates assume that artistry is in his genes and Ethan, ever eager to save face, agrees to be the illustrator of their group project to create an original graphic novel, even though he has no notion of how to begin drawing and his father is too preoccupied to advise. But when the ink from Mr. Rylance's sketchbook comes to life one night and begins exploring the family home, everything changes. After discovering the shape-shifting splotch of potential creative energy, Ethan christens his helpful new friend Inkling. For a time, Inkling remains secret, but as the buoyant and optimistic creature grows larger and takes on characteristics of what he devours, more and more people in Ethan's circle find out. Inkling is able to reproduce the art and text he has eaten, a trait that the Rylance family thinks will solve all their problems, but instead brings them to a head that father and son must confront together. VERDICT A unique story about the creative process and the journey through grief. Recommended for fiction collections.—Lauren Younger, Nicholson Memorial Library, Garland, TX --Lauren Younger (Reviewed 09/01/2018) (School Library Journal, vol 64, issue 9, p110)

### Publishers Weekly:

With none but Rickman the cat awake to see it, a blob of ink wrenches itself free from a sketchbook and begins munching its way through a nearby math textbook, “slurp the ink into itself” and leaving a blank, shiny page in its wake. Ethan, the son of a once-successful graphic novelist, discovers the blotch (and its skillful contribution to his graphic novel assignment) and names it Inkling. As Inkling consumes print media, expanding and learning with each absorbed word and image, Ethan and his family—especially his sister, Sarah, who has Down syndrome—become more attached to the lovable creature, whose upbeat personality provides a distraction from their grief over the loss of Ethan and Sarah’s mother. But keeping Inkling and using it to make art poses ethical questions for Ethan and his father, not to mention for a company looking to turn business around. Gray-scale illustrations by Smith (Town Is by the Sea) ground readers in the medium through which Ethan and Inkling communicate. Inkling’s evolving abilities model a realistic creative arc—the creature mimics its most recent literary meal (“I’M UTTERLY ENRAPPED” follows a stint with L.M. Montgomery) until it eventually discovers its own voice—even as the other characters work through grief and find their own stories. Ages 8-12. (Nov.) --Staff (Reviewed 10/01/2018) (Publishers Weekly, vol 265, issue 40, p)

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