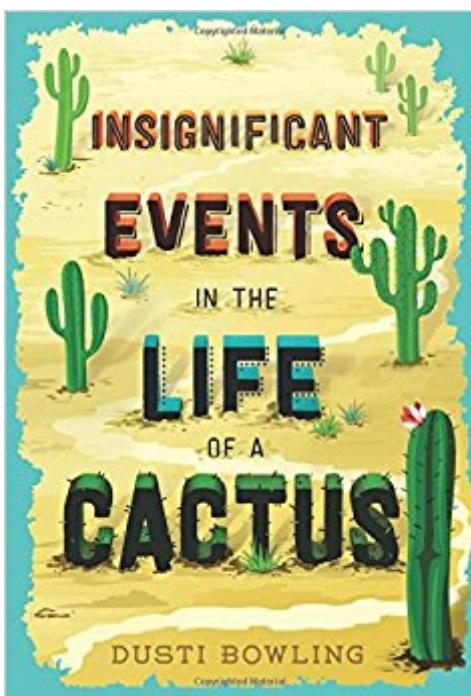


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# Insignificant Events In The Life Of A Cactus



## Synopsis

“Aven is a perky, hilarious, and inspiring protagonist whose attitude and humor will linger even after the last page has turned.” •School Library Journal (Starred review) Chosen for the Autumn 2017 Kids’ Indie Next List! Aven Green loves to tell people that she lost her arms in an alligator wrestling match, or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when her parents take a job running Stagecoach Pass, a rundown western theme park in Arizona, Aven moves with them across the country knowing that she’ll have to answer the question over and over again. Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability, and they discover a room at Stagecoach Pass that holds bigger secrets than Aven ever could have imagined. It’s hard to solve a mystery, help a friend, and face your worst fears. But Aven is about to discover she can do it all . . . even without arms.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 700 (What’s this?)

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #55,940 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Adoption #40 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Moving #116 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Special Needs

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

“Aven Green has always loved her life in Kansas—hanging out with Emily and Kayla, her best friends since kindergarten; planning pranks; and playing on the school soccer team. Though Aven was born without arms, she has never let her lack of armage, as

she calls it, deter her from doing anything she sets her mind to. But when her father gets a job as the manager of Stagecoach Pass, a rundown Western theme park out in Arizona, the family's move, right after Aven has started eighth grade, presents her toughest challenge yet. Having to deal with the many stares and questions of new schoolmates, Aven sorely misses her old life back in Kansas. However, her unflinchingly optimistic spirit, accompanied by her infectious and indomitable sense of humor, keeps her looking for the silver linings in her new life in Arizona, such as making friends with the cute but prickly Connor (who has Tourette's syndrome) or enjoying the ability to wear flats all year-round. But the most fascinating thing is the unusual mystery at the heart of Stagecoach Pass: the disappearing tarantulas, a missing photograph, and a secret necklace. Aven is determined to get to the bottom of the secret. She is a perky, hilarious, and inspiring protagonist whose attitude and humor will linger even after the last page has turned. The tale of Stagecoach Pass is just as compelling as the story of Aven, and the setting, like the many colorful characters who people this novel, is so vivid and quirky that it's practically cinematic. VERDICT Charming and memorable. An excellent choice for middle grade collections and classrooms. *•School Library Journal* (starred review) "A move to dusty, distant Arizona forces 13-year-old Aven to leave her familiar life and friends behind. Don't yawn: Bowling takes this overworked trope and spins it into gold with a skein of terrific twists. For one thing, Aven was born without arms, so the new environment—a decrepit Wild West theme park—poses special challenges. For another, thanks to loving, funny adoptive parents who have raised her to be a "problem-solving ninja" (she boasts), readers may repeatedly forget, despite reminders enough, that Aven is (as she puts it) "unarmed." Moreover, when the dreary prospect of having to cope with the looks and questions at her new middle school sends her in search of an isolated place to eat her lunch she finds and bonds with Conner, who is struggling with Tourette's syndrome and has not been so lucky with his parents. Not only does she firmly enlist him and another new friend in investigating a mystery about the theme park's past but, taking Conner's involuntary vocalizations in stride (literally) Aven drags him (figuratively) into an information-rich Tourette's support group. Following poignant revelations about Aven's birth family, the author lets warm but not gooey sentiment wash over the close to a tale that is not about having differences, but accepting them in oneself and others." *•Booklist* (Starred review) "Connor's Tourette's support-group meetings and Aven's witty, increasingly honest discussions of the pros and cons of "lack of armage" give the book excellent educational potential. . . . its portrayal of characters with rarely

depicted disabilities is informative, funny, and supportive. *• Kirkus Reviews*  
“Bowling’s sensitive and funny novel . . . demonstrates how negotiating others’ discomfort can be one of the most challenging aspects of having a physical difference and how friendship can mitigate that discomfort. . . . [an] openhearted, empathic book.” *• Publishers Weekly*

Dusti Bowling grew up in Scottsdale, Arizona, where, as her family will tell you, she always had her nose in a book. Dusti holds a Bachelor of Psychology and a Master of Education, but she eventually realized that her true passion was writing. *The Day We Met*, her self-published YA novel, has sold over 20,000 copies. She currently lives in Carefree, Arizona, with her husband, three daughters, one bobcat, a pack of coyotes, a couple of chuckwallas, several rattlesnakes, and a few herds of javelina.

This tween novel will leave you with a smile on your face. Aven and her parents are moving to Arizona where her father is going to run a western themed amusement park. She’s dreading the move, mostly because she will have to make new friends- friends who aren’t used to the fact that Aven was born without arms and does everything with her feet. Although finding friends isn’t easy at first, Aven meets Connor, a boy who has his own disability to conquer, and the two of them discover a mystery at the theme park that keeps them busy as they try to uncover secrets from long ago. Bowling has done a great job of creating engaging and likable characters. This book is a lot of fun to read, but it also carries a great message of friendship and accepting differences in others without seeming preachy. The western theme park setting is quirky and fun as well. Middle grade readers should fall in love with this novel which would also make a fantastic read aloud.

“Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus” is a thoroughly engaging, well written book that contains a huge message for each and every reader. Dusti Bowling has created a vivacious, spunky main character, twelve-year old Aven Green. Aven can do anything her peers are able to do, she just does it differently - Aven has no arms. Adopted at the age of two, her parents always allow her to try to and to succeed at accomplishing each task; they never hover or baby her because she lacks arms. When her father is offered a job in Arizona at the Stagecoach Pass Amusement Park, Aven faces new challenges - and a mystery about the park’s owner, Joe Cavanaugh. Conscious of her physical difference, Aven avoids the cafeteria; in doing so, she makes a new friend - Connor, a classmate who has Tourette’s Syndrome. The two, along with another “outsider” - overweight

classmate Zion - work to discover Joe's secret and to save the financially struggling Stagecoach Pass Amusement Park. The multiple positive messages and life-affirming viewpoint Aven exhibits are extraordinary. Her empathy and understanding for both Connor and Zion are inspiring. Each of the boys adds another dimension to Dusti Bowling's novel and each contributes to the overall storyline. Actions and reactions of the characters are realistic. Aven's lists, created for her blog, are both humorous and heart-breaking as she allows readers to glimpse into the reality of her life. "Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus" is a book for every reader, regardless of age. It is not difficult to read, but it packs a powerful message that nothing should stand in the way of accomplishing whatever task you face. I loved this book and am sure you will, too.

This was a fun book to read. It is the story of unconventional characters and their friendship. I confess I was fascinated by the main character, Aven Green, and the amount of things she was able to do with no arms. She says in the story that a lot of people feel sorry for her given her limitations but she is such a strong character right out of the gate that I never felt sorry for her and often felt triumphant when she accomplished things. The author said she studied a woman who has a following on social media who has no arms and obtained her opinion on the authenticity of Aven's character while writing the book. I appreciate the author going to great lengths to make her character accurate. The story is about Aven and her family's move from Kansas to Arizona so her parents can manage a wild west theme park (which is basically rundown and not terribly popular). Aven dreads this move because she will have to endure "the look" from those who are curious, the aforementioned people who feel sorry for her and the nasty people that label her a freak. Along the way she befriends a young man with Tourette's and another young man who is teased because of his weight. The trio has a lovely friendship, while they help and support each other to overcome their trials and tribulations of navigating through middle school when they are not "normal" (characters' words). I enjoyed this book a lot. I found myself looking forward to reading it when I went to bed at night. My only quibble is I was a little disappointed in the "mystery" promised in the story. I thought the suspense had been built up that it was going to be something pretty spectacular and the excitement sort of fizzled out upon the big reveal. However, that does not detract from my giving this charming book five stars. A wonderful read for anyone who feels they are not part of the crowd

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