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# The Can Man



## Synopsis

Tim's birthday is just a week away, and more than anything he wants a skateboard. But money is tight, and Tim knows his family cannot afford to buy him a board. As Tim ponders how he might earn money for a skateboard, he hears The Can Man down the street collecting empty soft drink cans. The clang of the cans in the homeless man's cart gives Tim an idea. He will collect cans too, and cash them in for the redemption money. By the end of the week, Tim has almost reached his goal--until a couple of chance encounters with The Can Man change everything. Told with honesty and respect, this timely story shines a perceptive light on current social concerns. Readers will be encouraged to think beyond themselves and celebrate the simple acts of kindness and sharing that make a difference in people's lives.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 5 - 10 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 5

## Customer Reviews

Grade 3â "5â " Joe Peters, "The Can Man," lived in Tim's building until the auto body shop where he worked closed. Unable to find a job, he's now homeless and relies on the cash he gets from redeeming empty cans to survive. When Tim learns that his parents won't have enough money to buy him a skateboard for his birthday, he takes his cue from The Can Man and decides to earn the money himself. However, while he amasses several bags of cans, The Can Man finds almost

nothing. Tim has been venturing out ahead and collecting in the homeless man's territory. Joe Peters harbors no hard feelings, though, and even helps Tim at the redemption center. But when the boy weighs his skateboard against the man's urgent need for a winter coat, he gives him the money. The lengthy text describes the homeless man's situation without judgment, and Tim's parents don't pressure him to stop encroaching on Mr. Peters's turf, leaving him free to make his own decisions. The large illustrations, rendered in oil, depict an urban neighborhood of shops and multiethnic apartment dwellers. Pair the book with Ann McGovern's *The Lady in the Box* (Turtle, 1997) to help students consider the human face of homelessness.â”Marianne Saccardi, formerly at Norwalk Community College, CT (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Tim's parents remember when the homeless man who pokes through the garbage on their street used to live in their apartment building before he lost his job. Now, he collects cans and sells them for five cents each. Tim wants a skateboard for his birthday, but Dad says that they can't afford it, so Tim decides to earn the money himself by collecting cans, just like the Can Man does. Tim works hard, and soon he has several bags filled with cans, but as he walks the streets, he notices that the Can Man has no coat. After Tim trades in his collectables at the redemption center, he decides to give his earnings to the Can Man, who returns Tim's generosity with a surprise. The characters feel a bit too perfect here, but the spare dialogue rings true, and the full-page oil paintings have a quiet realism reminiscent of Edward Hopper in scenes of Tim's close multiracial family indoors and the Can Man alone outside. A humanizing story that reaches beyond easy messages. Grades K-3. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Tim wanted a skateboard for his birthday. But the family couldn't afford it. So Tim decided to earn the money himself. He collected cans and planned to cash them at the redemption center. The homeless can man was also collecting cans too. Tim's extra effort to collect the cans left the homeless man with a barely empty cart. The can man told Tim, he was planning to collect enough cans to buy a new coat to replace his old tattered coat. Tim's feelings toward buying the skateboard started to waver. The can man assisted Tim in pushing the cart stuffed with cans to the redemption center to collect the money to buy the skateboard. When Tim collected the money, he had a change of heart. He gave the money to the can man. The story doesn't end there. On the day of Tim's birthday, he found a large plastic bag. Inside he found a skateboard. The used skateboard had a

fresh coat of paint and had Tim's name painted on the bottom. The skateboard came from the can man.

this was a fantastic little book that did a nice job of helping to teach how we can help people who are homeless and do not have the things we do. I used it in church when we were learning about homelessness. it was a great way to introduce a tough topic to our kids and they totally got it. well done with beautiful illustrations, this little story handled a mighty big societal problem in a delicate but very real way. loved this book, will use for years to come to teach compassion and empathy to my kids, toward those who are less fortunate.

Such a great book to teach children that with hard work you can accomplish a lot, as well as helping others is more important than helping just yourself.

Such a lovely story and great to teach theme.

I ordered this book because it was on my son's list for recommended books. This book is GREAT!! highly recommend it!

A wonderful book in every way--story and illustrations. Illustrations tell the story when words do not--what a significant enhancement: the cityscape neighborhood of Brownstone apartments, the multicultural clerks in the retail shops, the incredulous look on a little sister's face when her brother trudges up the stairs with bags full of sticky, empty soda cans, as well as the ethnic diversity of Tim's parents. Tim's parents remember Mr. Peters, the homeless man, when he lived in their building. Since he lost his job, he collects cans and recycles them for monetary reimbursement. Tim wants a new skateboard for his birthday and decides to collect cans. He discovers Mr. Peters needs a new winter coat, and donates the can money to him. Mr. Peters in turn gives Tim a refurbished skateboard, but newly painted with Tim's name on it. Tim spies Mr. Peters later on sporting a new coat.

If you were a young person who was working hard to save up money to buy a desired recreational item but then found out that someone else needed the money even more than you did, what would you do? Tim's birthday is just a week away, and he wants a brand new skateboard like his friend Mike's more than anything else, but Tim's father says that money is tight and the family can't afford

toys or sports. Then Tim watches a homeless man going through trash barrels to find cans that he can take to the recycling center for cash. Everyone calls him The Can Man, and he gives Tim an idea. If The Can Man can collect cans to get money, so could Tim, and by going The Can Man's route backwards, he manages to collect seven bags full. However, Tim learns from his parents that The Can Man is actually Mr. Peters who used to live in the same apartment building that Tim's family does but lost his job and has been down on his luck for some time. When Tim runs across Mr. Peters one cold, drizzly day, he sees that the homeless man, who has been collecting so that he can get a new coat to replace his old flappy one before the snow comes, doesn't have many cans in his cart. Yet Mr. Peters offers to help Tim take his own cans down to the recycling center by putting them in his cart. It takes a long time for Tim and Mike to push all the cans into the machine. By the time they are done, The Can Man is leaving and it is beginning to snow outside. What will Tim do? Will he keep the money for himself to buy the new skateboard? All of us who are parents want our children to grow up being thoughtful, kind, and generous toward others, especially those who are in need. Of course, the best way to accomplish this goal is for them to see these traits exhibited in our own lives. But these characteristics can be additionally impressed upon their minds by being illustrated through memorable stories. At the risk of sounding repetitive, The Can Man is a really, really, really neat book! It is always a joy to read, even in fiction, about young people who make the conscious choice to help others even when the temptation is great to be selfish. Author Laura E. Williams was inspired to write the book as a result of a man she often saw collecting cans in a shopping cart. It will, in turn, inspire readers to think beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.

The holidays have passed, we've given thanks for our many blessings and we've set our goals and aspirations for the new year. But we sometimes need to be reminded to think beyond ourselves and celebrate the simple act of kindness. The Can Man by Laura E. Williams is the perfect story to share with young readers to remind them what's important. Tim's birthday is near and he wants a skateboard more than anything. So to save the extra money he needs, he decides to collect cans, just like 'the can man' who wanders up and down Tim's street. Tim realizes how hard it is to collect cans, and when he actually has a chance to talk to Joe Peters, he finds out what the Can Man's been saving up for--a new coat before the snow starts flying. Just as Tim redeems his cans and small flakes of snow sprinkle down from the sky, he learns that the Can Man probably needs it more than he does. This is a touching story that reminds young readers about the importance of giving and how a good deed does not go forgotten. At a time when many are down on their luck, this is a

warm reminder about caring and compassion. A wonderful book to teach children about homelessness.

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