



### When Mr. Dog Bites

Written by Brian Conaghan  
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*“My name’s Doctor Cunningham. Colm Cunningham.”*

*“My name’s Dylan. Dylan Mint.”*

*The doc laughed, but I wasn’t making a joke. He told me his name, I told him my name—that’s what people do. (p. 293)*

Dylan is 16 and has Tourette’s. In essence, he cannot keep himself from saying what he thinks along with other phrases that would be best kept to himself regardless of his condition. But with Tourette’s syndrome, thoughts just escape—the “bad stuff”—as does Dylan’s brutal honesty, which will keep readers laughing even as they deeply reflect on Dylan’s condition and his life truths. Throughout the story, Dylan works on controlling “Mr. Dog,” the tension that builds up inside of him as he works through having Tourette’s, and controlling the impact that the syndrome has on his life and relationships with others.

Dylan thinks that one of his life’s truths is that he is going to “cack it,” because of Tourette’s syndrome, which results from a misunderstanding he constructed when eavesdropping on one of his mother’s conversations with the doctor. Believing there is nothing to do about his fate, Dylan is in pursuit of three “cool things to do” before he dies. One has to do with a sexual conquest, the second has to do with his friend Amir, who is constantly bullied because of his ethnicity, and the third is to have his father return from the war. As Dylan and his friend Amir attempt to reach Dylan’s goals, readers encounter a character unlike they have ever met in fiction. Dylan is sensitive, hilarious, and unencumbered by pretenses that keep many adolescents from being—or seeing—themselves for who they really are. And even Dylan must face facts about who he is and who his father is, and in doing so, grows to be more confident in his abilities to negotiate relationships at school.

This narrative would make a great companion to *Marcello in the Real World* (Francesco Stork, 2011), *Stuck in Neutral* (Terry Trueman, 2001), and *Waiting for No One* (Beverly Brenna, 2011), which feature adolescents with cognitive or physical challenges. Additionally, this would make a great addition to any text set that addresses bullying for any reason, including racial, class, or gender factors. A coming-of-age story that will have readers addressing the way in which young people negotiate the world, *When Mr. Dog Bites* presents a charming anti-hero who sometimes gets confused about life, his family, and his place in the world—just like so many adolescents.

Born in Scotland, Brian Conaghan currently lives in Dublin, Ireland where he works as a teacher. *When Mr. Dog Bites* is his first book published in America. Diagnosed with Tourette's as a youngster, Mr. Conaghan was inspired to write this book from his experiences. His first adolescent novel, *The Boy Who Made it Rain*, addresses bullying. More information can be found on YouTube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLQUUIv\\_fRO](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLQUUIv_fRO)) and from numerous websites both in the US and the UK.

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