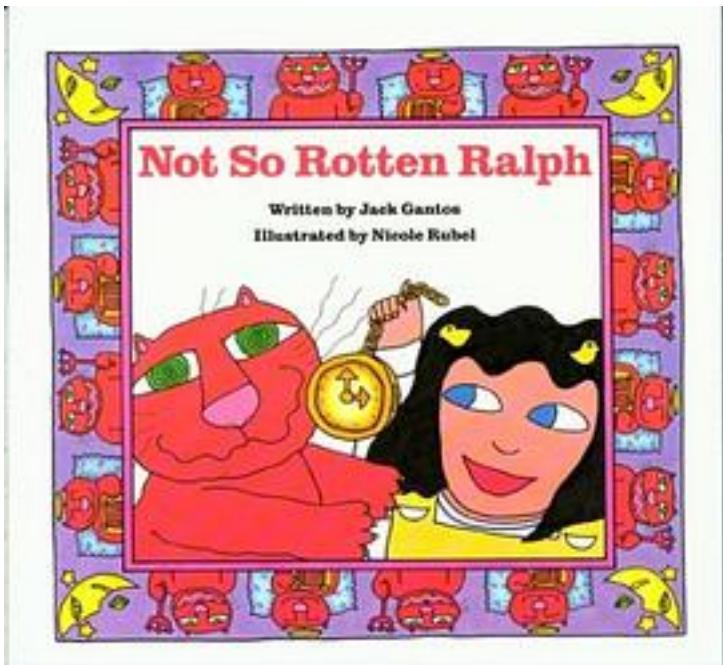


# Not So Rotten Ralph



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From Publishers Weekly Can Mr. Fred's Feline Finishing School really expunge every trace of Ralph's unrepentant rottenness? For a few heart-stopping moments it seems so: although Ralph steadfastly resists the school's more conventional blandishments, he slips into a docile trance when Mr. Fred swings a watch back and forth before his eyes. His owner, Sarah, appalled by his impeccable but utterly bland demeanor, soon finds herself doing the unthinkable: luring Ralph into devilment by any means at hand. Depicting an inspired contest of wills between the normally notorious Ralph and his newly naughty taskmaster, this effort brims with Gantos and Rubel's characteristically and irresistibly funny details: Mr. Fred's "golden rules" prohibit meowing, hissing, burping and fun (Ralph makes a paper airplane of his copy); the

pupils are admonished to keep their paws to themselves in a "self-control room" filled with enticingly fragile objects. Rubel's electrically colored, eccentrically patterned illustrations are as exuberant as ever: particularly rousing is Ralph's spiral-eyed, hypnotically vacant gaze. A cavil: there are a few errors in punctuation and diction (Sarah "awards" Ralph with a party). Ages 4-8. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal PreSchool-Grade 2-Rotten Ralph is such a mean cat that his young mistress tires of his mischievous ways and sends him to Mr. Fred's Feline Finishing School. There, he remains rotten until he is put in the "final finishing room, " where Mr. Fred hypnotizes the students so that they believe they are good. Sarah takes Ralph home and rewards him with a celebration; when he responds by falling asleep, she tries to restore him to his former self. She eats a goldfish, climbs the curtains, and more until Ralph remembers "how good it felt to be rotten." Each full-page picture balances a page of text. The cartoon illustrations, with bold colors and graphic designs, are filled with small details that children will love. The text is comprised of simple, declarative sentences and lacks the humor of the pictures. Ralph's transformation is unconvincingly accomplished, but Sarah's change of heart is even less so. At the beginning she is frustrated by Ralph's behavior-her expressions register open-mouthed, wide-eyed shock. Her pet does not seem to endear himself to her in any way. Readers may well be perplexed when she sighs, "'I'm glad my Rotten Ralph is back.'" This is likely to appeal only to fans of the previous books. Cynthia K. Richey, Mt. Lebanon Public Library, Pittsburgh, PA Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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