

March 2012 Book Reviews

Let's Say Hi to Friends that Fly

By Mo Willems

This is a very simple book about different animals that fly: insects, birds and bats and well, even a rhino courtesy of a plane. The illustrations are simple as well and the extra large, repetitive text makes this a good "first reading" book. Recommended for school collections in particular.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

The Berenstain Bears All Aboard!

By Jan Berenstain

This is a beginning reading book which is full of high use words and simple sentences. It tells all about an old fashioned train ride so it's full of good information too. As with all Berenstain books, the illustrations are very helpful and cute and the content is full of family friendliness. This book would be good as a read aloud or for independent reading in preschool through early elementary and should be part of any public collection and some private ones.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Hugs from Pearl

By Paul Schmid

This is an adorable story with adorable illustrations. Pearl is a friend who loves hugs, but she has a problem. Her friends always get hurt when she hugs them because...she's a porcupine. After trying to soften the pokes several ways, Pearl finally solves her problem and hugs are had all around. A wonderful book for early readers that would be a favorite part of any collection.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Acorns Everywhere !

By Kevin Sherry

This is a story with the briefest of texts...practically a wordless book. So preschoolers and kindergarteners will LOVE the story of a greedy little squirrel who finds out that he likes berries pretty well too. That's good since his forest friends are helping themselves to his acorns. Very fun illustrations. A sweet addition to any collection

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Princess Posey and the First Grade

By Stephanie Greene

This is a GREAT early chapter book for girly girls. The easy text and short chapters with a few illustrations thrown in for good measure will have early readers off and running on chapter books. This story is about a dilemma: Posey needs her tutu to feel brave starting first grade she can't have it in school. What will she do? This series will be as essential to collections as the Magic Treehouse books for emerging readers.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Princess Posey and the Perfect Present

By Stephanie Greene

This is a GREAT early chapter book for girly girls. The easy text and short chapters with a few illustrations thrown in for good measure will have early readers off and running on chapter books. This story is about how Posey plans for the perfect present for her beloved teacher, only to find that another child has also brought the same present. Her tutu has always given her extra help when she needs it. Will it help her solve this disappointing situation too? This series will be as essential to collections as the Magic Treehouse books for emerging readers.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

The Astonishing Secret of Awesome Man

By Jake Parker

This is a GREAT super hero book. It's all about Astonishing Man's fabulous powers but there's a twist at the end that elementary boys (and girls) will LOVE. With great illustrations and fun text, this is a keeper for any collection.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Scat, Cat!

By Alyssa Satin Capucilli

This is a perfect first reading book. The poor little cat is wandering all day meeting all types of unfriendly animals who tell him to scat. Then she finds a nice pillow on someone's porch and the next morning...a little boy doesn't tell her to scat. The text is very easy but fun and predictable. The illustrations are simple and adorable in typical Capucilli style (author of the Biscuit books too). This book is highly recommended for any public collection.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Ladybug Girl at the Beach

By David Soman and Jacky Davis

This is a sweet book about a little girl in her ladybug swimsuit who visits the beach with her family only to find a really scary ocean. She has a good day, though, finding other fun beach activities and eventually finds herself in the ocean and loving it along with her faithful doggie friend. Sweet illustrations. Elementary kids will identify with this little girl and love adventuring with her.

Recommended for any collection.

Heather Reid, homeschool parent, Omaha, NE

Pirates and Princesses

By Jill and Sadie Kargman

This is a cute story for Kindergartners and Preschoolers about girls and boys playing with each other and getting along. The colored pages make easy reading and following along with the story. I read this to my three-year-old granddaughter and she loved it. She wanted to play "twisty cakes" on her swing. I would recommend it for primary grades because the characters are that age. This would be good for bully prevention, too.

Kristy Wittler

How Photography Revealed and Shaped An Extraordinary Life

By Martin Sandler

A documentary of Abraham Lincoln's life and times by over a hundred images portraying his life and the events that defined him. I would recommend the book for older students to adults, and would make a great addition to both public or school libraries. There are good illustrations, photographs and images, to keep the reader interested. This is an excellent book that is extremely documented with photos that really reveal Lincoln's life thoughts. This book would be a great reference for someone interested in history and about Lincoln or for doing research. I, myself, would not purchase the book because my younger students probably wouldn't check it out. Maybe more for college level or public library.

Kristy Wittler

Donut Days

By Lara Zielin

A typical "chick-flick" kind of book. It has the three essentials: smokin' hot guy, cat fights, and non-understanding parents. For grades 7th through 12th, for all libraries. The main character is a preacher's daughter and her insights of religious people and church humor is enlightening. I enjoyed this book and had trouble putting it down. The author's sense of wit and humor on "churchy" people I found especially clever since I was/am involved in church and parochial school.

Kristy Wittler

If You're Hoppy

By April Pulley Sayre

Everyone remembers the song "If You're Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands." This book is a takeoff on the old familiar song. Each verse features different animals. If you're hoppy you are a frog, if you're sloppy you are a pig. If you are growly you are a bear! Appropriate for ages 3-6 and great for public libraries and home use. Since the tune is so familiar, even parents who are not "singers" won't be able to resist singing along with the new lyrics and giving their little ones a chance to join in the fun by either singing or going through the actions of hopping, face squeezing and flapping. It might not be the first choice for a bedtime story, but it is guaranteed to generate giggles and requests to read it again!

Latricia Olson

Scaredy-Cat, Splat!

By Rob Scotton

Splat wants to be the scariest one at his class's Halloween party. After settling on being a scary sock spider he meets up with his classmates who are all scarier than he is. Splat is disappointed that he will not be winning the prize for being the scariest cat. But when the teacher's ghost story causes everyone to jump with fright, Splat's jack-o-lantern lands on his head and freaks everyone out. His wish comes true and he is proclaimed the scariest cat of all. Appropriate for ages 3-8, for both school and public libraries. Scaredy-Cat Splat is a companion book to other Splat books written by Rob Scotton. Children love being scared and being scary at Halloween time. Splat hits just the right note as he searches to find the perfect costume and partake in the festivities.

Latricia Olson

Big Little Monkey

By Carole Lexa Schaefer

One morning Little Monkey wakes up before the rest of his family. He decides that he is big enough to go out on his own into the jungle to find playmates. He encounters a sloth, a parrot, and a boa. None of them are suitable or willing to be his playmate. Happily, Little Monkey returns home to the love and security of his own family in the Mango tree. This book is appropriate for children ages 3-6, in both school and public libraries. As children grow and mature, they all want to be seen as big. Carole Lexa Schaefer hits all the right notes as she explores one of the rites of passage of little ones growing up. I believe most listeners will recall a time when they were the first ones up and did a little exploring and testing of the limits around the house because they, too, were big.

Latricia Olson

Tony Baloney

By Pam Munoz Ryan and Edwin Fotheringham

Tony Baloney is the one in the middle in his penguin family. He's right in between his bossy older sister and his bothersome baby siblings. His companion and partner in crime is his beloved stuffed animal, Dandelion. Tony wants desperately to be in charge, but life doesn't go his way and he behaves badly. Fortunately, he has a place of refuge where he and Dandelion can go until they are ready to face the world again. Appropriate for ages 3-8 in both public libraries and home use. No matter what your position in the family, readers are sure to sympathize with Tony and his struggle to get along with his siblings. Tony has wise and loving parents who provide advice and guidance as he works out his relationships with his siblings, who turn out not to be so oppressive after all.

Latricia Olson

Junonia

By Kevin Henkes

Alice and her parents spend the week of Alice's birthday in Florida each year and this one is no different. Only it is. Alice turns the big ten and is excited to celebrate with her friends in Florida. Her hope is to also finally find an elusive Junonia shell. But things do not turn out as she hopes. Colin, Chad, and Heather will not be there because of school work. Helen Blair is snowed in and won't be able to make it. And Kate, who always camps out on their sofa, has a new boyfriend with a young daughter who will be coming with her so she will be staying in the cabin that Helen usually rents. Can it get any worse? Alice really worries as to how her birthday will turn out. For grades 3rd through 4th. This story is about changes and growing up. The problem is that nothing really ties together. There is the story about searching for shells, one about the birthday, another about a sad little girl looking for attention and still another about the neighbors. This book was pretty much a letdown.

Diane Limoges

Annie Glover is not a Tree Lover

By Darleen Bailey Beard

Annie's grandma is a real activist. Her latest cause is saving an old bent American Elm that she has named Elmer. There is just one problem. Annie and all her friends really want a swimming pool and Elmer will have to go. But when Annie's friend Jazz discovers that their town, Bentley, has been named after this very tree, Annie and Jazz come up with a scheme they share with their 4th grade class to save the tree and hope they find a new place to build the pool. This book is recommended for grades 2nd through 3rd. Here is a fun little book that teaches kids that sometimes you have to decide what is more important and stand up for what you believe.

Diane Limoges

Stay With Me

By Paul Griffin

15-year-old Mark lives with his alcoholic father and works in a restaurant washing dishes. He is a drop out who has spent time in jail due to anger issues. Cece is also 15 living with an alcoholic parent only she is an A student trying to make it into a better school so she can get ahead. The fact that they became a couple is due mostly to Cece's brother, Anthony. Mark has a special talent rescuing and working with dogs while Cece is afraid of them. Now Mark has tamed a pit bull named Boo and Cece is the target owner. Now Boo is dead and Mark is incarcerated. Their future together is impossible. For 9th grade and up. The story line is good but there is a lot of nothing thrown in throughout. You could skim through most of the chapters without losing the gist of the story.

Diane Limoges

True...Sort of

By Katherine Hannigan

Delly has trouble controlling her anger until she realizes that she is bossing people rather than asking questions. She also learns to count before reacting. Delly, who has no friends, befriends a shy girl who will not talk or speak. Delly learns to share her friend. She also learns that she needs to trust others when she needs to help her new friend. For grades 4th through 6th, and would be good in any type of library. The author tackles the subjects of a young person who is constantly in trouble, but learns to become a person who thinks before acting and thinks of others. The second subject in the book is the problem of child abuse and who is responsible to help when abuse is suspected.

Kathy Muller

Purple Little Bird

By Greg Foley

Purple Little Bird worked hard to make his world perfect...with everything in it purple. Soon the bird decided to wander around and find a more perfect place to live. In each place he found there was something wrong. When he wanders around he comes back home to discover that what would improve his home is a variety of color. For grades preschool through 1st, and great for any type of library. The illustrations are very colorful and simply drawn. This book could be compared to any color book like Bill Martin Jr's. *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* This book would be good to discuss color, animal names and homes, sequence in retelling the story and descriptive words to describe the characteristics and needs for each animal's home.

Kathy Muller

Gingerbread Man Loose in School

By Laura Murray

I loved this book, written in rhyme, a take-off from the Gingerbread man we all love. The pictures add to the book. My story hour kids love the story and the pictures and I am sure that all of you could find a place on your shelf for this book. The cute little guy is looking for his class that baked him, and he can't find them anywhere. There is a cozy ending and it really is just a nice book. This book is recommended for grades Preschool through 2nd.

Carol Tramp, Wynot Public School

Polar Bears

By Mark Newman

This non-fiction book is a collection of pictures and facts about the endangered species, the polar bears. Well done and illustrated, it is an easy book to share with little people. Lots of the information I didn't know so it was a learning experience to read it too. It tells where to find them, what they eat, where they live and what dangers they face. This is just a really neat book about these bears. This book is recommended for grades Kindergarten through 3rd.

The Pet Dragon: A Story About Adventure, Friendship and Chinese Characters

By Christoph Nieman

Lin has a pet dragon, she loves him very much. In each picture, whatever the object, there is a Chinese character on top of it. But the dragon is naughty and Lin's father becomes angry and he puts the dragon in a cage. The next morning Lin's dragon is gone. Lin goes in search of her dragon and until she stops to help a witch and the witch helps her back, she cannot find him. An enjoyable book and does a good job of introducing a multicultural theme in a story. This book is recommended for grades 2nd through 4th.

Carol Tramp, Wynot Public School

One Last Time: Goodbye to Yankee Stadium

By Ray Negrón

Ray the bat boy has been summoned by Mr. Steinbrenner, owner of the Yankees, asking Ray to take a walk. Mr. S tells Ray that the stadium is 85 years old and needs to be replaced. He tells him about all the famous people and how many people have come through the gates to see the team play. Ray is asked to let all the great legends know that this is the last spring before the move to a new stadium. Ray located them all, Joe DiMaggio, Babe Ruth, Calfish Hunter, Mickey, Roger, and Turmon Munson. The next morning in the magic room those legends talk, they are excited about the new Stadium. They think that records are to be broken, and they gather on the field for the last game, playing like they always did. Read the book to see how the story ends! Great for baseball fans. Recommended for grades 1st through 4th.

Carol Tramp, Wynot Public School

The Wizard Mouse

By Dean Morrissey

In the last couple of years several books have been written using a mouse as the main character or one of the main characters in a fiction book. Rollie the mouse holds his own in this story. Bucking family tradition of farmers, he wanted more from life so he decided to go look at the world and try something else. The book is humorous in quiet ways, for example: "It is much farther for a mouse to walk a mile than a person, so it takes them much longer." Arriving at a tower, he couldn't help but notice that there were a couple of cows floating in the air by the tower. The wizard, a once powerful person in the kingdom, has seemed to have lost the ability to correctly perform his spells. Rollie offers to help by memorizing his spells and whispering them to the wizard when he needs them. Finding the magical fish saves the wizard and Rollie is appointed a wizard mouse of the kingdom. The painted pictures are beautifully done and add much to the story. I really enjoyed it. This book is recommended for grades preschool through 3rd.

Carol Tramp, Wynot Public School

Mabel One and Only

By Margaret Muirhead

Mabel is the only kid on the block. She usually can find someone to play with or help, but on this day there is no one. Finally in frustration she goes home and goes through junk where she finds a cardboard box which she uses as a space ship. When the adults realize that she hasn't had a friend all day they come and knock on the window of the box each offering something for her, which she refuses. Read the book to find out the ending. Cute watercolor sketches. This book is recommended for grades preschool through 2nd.

Carol Tramp, Wynot Public School

Touch Blue

By Cynthia Lord

Superstition believer, Tess Brooks, thinks following the rules of breaking bad luck will always work. However, life becomes a little more real and complicated when Aaron joins her family in Maine as a foster child. Aaron has been bounced around from foster family to foster family and brings a little "reality" to Tess' world. Can simply touching something blue or turning around three times make things better for everyone? Tess is trying to become as good of a lobster trapper as her dad. She is hoping her island school house does not shut down because she does not want to move off the island, the only place she knows as home. She is trying to help Aaron feel he belongs to her family and community. Tess is trying to bring Aaron and his mother together in a "chance" meeting. Can a wish upon a star get all this done? This book is recommended for grades 4th-7th in a school or public library setting. The story line and characters really reach out and touch your heart. It is innocence meeting reality and watching the characters learn some harsh life lessons. It is an easy read and easy to understand story that grabs your attention and stays with you even when you put the book down.

Jane Dodson

Scapegoat: The Story of a Goat Named Oat and A Chewed Up Coat

By Dean Hale

Oat gets the short end of the stick every day because Jimmy keeps blaming him for everything that he does, making Oat his scapegoat. Oat tries to tell everyone the truth but no one can speak goat so they don't understand his bleating. Until one day, neighbor Bert Sproak threw his goat talking expertise into the mix and told the adults the truth about what Jimmy was doing and how he was blaming Oat. Bert then lets P. Petunia Oat know that he knows what really happened to Jimmy's coat. This book is recommended for K-3rd grades for school or public libraries. Whimsical illustrations, fun rhyming, and crazy situations will be enjoyed by the young reader. A good lesson in truth telling is embedded in this story as well.

Jane Dodson

All aboard with the Berenstain Bears in this adventurous addition to the classic New York Times bestselling series The Bears are on a steam train trip across Bear Country. Mama and Papa enjoy the scenery, but the cubs want to learn about the train. If they are lucky, Grizzly Jones might let them blow the whistle. Woo-hoo Beginning readers will feel like they are on board with the Bear family as they pass new sights and find out all about how the train runs. The Berenstain Bears: All Aboard is a Level One I Can Read book, which means it's perfect for children learning to sound out words an