

Growing Readers Review

Volume 13, Issue 2

Laughter is the Best Medicine—Even for Tots

What makes your child laugh? Is it raspberries on the tummy of your infant? Your toddler dressing up in grown-up clothes? A stream of knock-knock jokes from your preschooler? Or sophisticated puns from your school-ager? According to the blog *Ageing Healthily, Happily & Youthfully*, “the average four-year-old laughs 300 times a day and for the average 40-year-old it might be four times.” Why is the world of childhood such a funny place?

Children seem to find joy in both the order and disorder of the world. In *Whose Toes Are Those?*, the pleasure is in solving the puzzle: looking at the big gray toes and nose, carefully turning the flap, and finding out that it really is a hippo. What a delight to be right!

But does moose begin with the letter Z? Of course not. In *Z is for Moose*, everyone but our poor Moose knows the alphabet from A to Z, and he just can't wait for his turn to appear. Preschoolers howl as Moose tries to make his way onto every page, but they also sympathize when he loses his rightful turn to Mouse.

Laughter in literature can come in a more complex package for young school-age readers. Consider kidnapped hippie parents, a marmot translator, and detective bunnies, one of whom is the author of the book. With the hilarious antics of all the characters, the author introduces the element of satire.

Chances are, these selections of children's literature will have you laughing out loud with your own young reader, and you'll add to the count for adult laughter.

By Susan C. Brenner, EdD

“A good laugh is sunshine in the house.”
- William Makepeace Thackeray



www.brighthorizons.com

BOOKS OF EXCELLENCE

SCHOOL AGE

Mr. and Mrs. Bunny – Detectives Extraordinaire!

Translated from the Rabbit by Polly Horvath;
illustrated by Sophie Blackall



Mr. and Mrs. Bunny – Detectives Extraordinaire! will delight school-age children (and many adults as well). Starting with the book's cover (where Mrs. Bunny is named as the author), readers are in for a funny, unpredictable story with many silly turns of events. Complemented by Sophie Blackall's comical illustrations, this book is sure to be a favorite.

The story revolves around Madeline, a ten-year-old girl living on an island close to Vancouver with her hippie parents who make jewelry out of sand dollars. Madeline is the responsible member of the family who cooks, cleans, and holds a part-time job to support the family and longs for a more mainstream existence. The plot thickens when her parents are kidnapped by a team of foxes.

Meanwhile we are introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Bunny, who have recently decided to become detectives and purchase fedoras to look the part. Madeline and the Bunnys cross paths and Madeline ends up hiring the Bunnys to help find her parents.

What follows is a series of madcap adventures that children will love. The Bunnys and Madeline decode messages, befriend a marmot, visit The Olde Spaghetti Factory, and get called before the Bunny Council. The adventure concludes with Mrs. Bunny embarking on her new career as an author. Readers hoping for more will be happy to learn that a second Mr. and Mrs. Bunny book will be released in 2013.

About the Author/Illustrator

Winner of the Newbery Honor award for *Everything on a Waffle* and the National Book Award for *The Canning Season*, **Polly Horvath** is a prolific author of books for school-age children. She resides in British Columbia.

Sophie Blackall, a native of Australia now living in New York, is the recipient of the Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Award and illustrator of many children's books.

“Contrary to folk wisdom, most laughter is not about humor; it is about relationships between people. Over a 10-year period, we studied over 2,000 cases of naturally occurring laughter. We found that most laughter does not follow jokes. People laugh after a variety of statements such as “Hey John, where ya been?” “Here comes Mary,” “How did you do on the test?” and “Do you have a rubber band?”. We don't decide to laugh at these moments. Our brain makes the decision for us. These curious “ha ha ha's” are bits of social glue that bond relationships.”



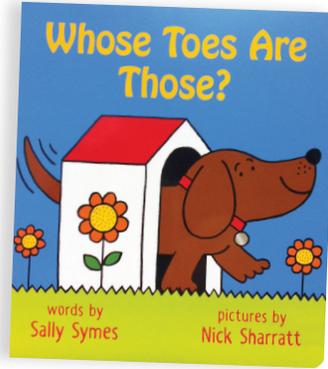
Excerpt from *A big mystery: Why do we laugh?*, by Robert Provine, PhD, NBCNews.com.

INFANT AND TODDLER

Whose Toes Are Those?

Written by Sally Symes;
illustrated by Nick Sharratt

“Whose tail? Whose toes? Whose twitchy nose?” starts the guessing in this board book that is just the right size for the youngest reader. Little hands will want to lift the flap on each page, but not before calling out the right answer! The repetition of the questions and the bright, simple illustrations will keep any child engaged. The final clues and answer enhance the fun and lead the way to more enjoyable discussions of noses and toes.

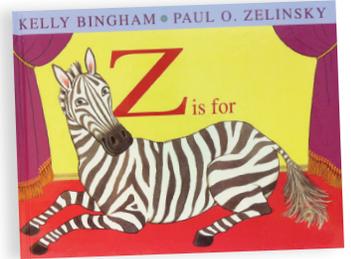


PRESCHOOL

Z is for Moose

Written by Kelly Bingham;
illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky

Zebra's in charge of the alphabet show, and he is determined everything will run as planned. His friend, Moose, is a bit overzealous and decides to steal the show before it's his turn! Even before the book starts, Moose is peeking around the curtains, eagerly awaiting his cue. He shows up early and his antics escalate until Zebra has had enough and announces “M is for Mouse,” cutting Moose out of the picture. Angry, Moose crashes through the rest of the alphabet, determined to ruin the rest of the show. Can Zebra smooth things over? The hilarious plot of this alphabet book will be enjoyed by everyone 3 years old and up.



NOTABLE BOOKS

Llama Llama Zippity-Zoom

Written and illustrated by Anna Dewdney • Infant and Toddler

Rhymes like “Zip! Zoom! Vroom Vroom!” make this a read-aloud delight.

Creepy Carrots

Written by Aaron Reynolds; illustrated by Peter Brown
Preschool

Jasper Rabbit gorges on carrots with a total disregard for how the carrots feel about being eaten. Things in Crackenhopper Field take a creepy turn when the carrots decide enough is enough!

The Other Side of Town

Written and illustrated by Jon Agee • Preschool

Take a humorous trip through New York City and across the “Snooklyn Bridge” to the other side of town for a “tweet loaf” dinner. The rhyming language and silly story will make you and your child laugh out loud!

Benjamin Bear in Fuzzy Thinking

Written and illustrated by Philippe Coudray
School Age

This French author combines kindness, logic, and laugh-out-loud humor in this “Toon” book.

Poopendous

Written by Artie Bennett; illustrated by Mike Moran
School Age

Join Professor Pip Poopdeck as he goes on a different kind of safari. Readers will giggle as they are learning all the unique words for, types of, forms of, styles of, and uses for...poop!

One Cool Friend

Written by Toni Buzzeo; illustrated by David Small
School Age

Elliot is a very polite and somewhat mischievous boy who takes an interesting trip to the zoo with his father, and chooses a “friend” to bring home with him.

