

## Adventures of Lilly and Tommy: We Are Baking an Apple Pie

**Silvia Sarhadian**

**Eleni Anca Oprescu, Illustrator**

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*Sarhadian and Oprescu have pioneered a creative formula for integrating math skills into a simple story line.*

You're never too young to learn how useful math skills can be in the "real world." More than a simple apple-picking story, Silvia Sarhadian's *Adventures of Lilly and Tommy: We Are Baking an Apple Pie* introduces basic addition, subtraction, and division skills in a colorful and thoughtfully designed picture book.

While siblings Lilly and Tommy gather the ten apples their mother requested for the pie, big sister Lilly sees the perfect opportunity to give her brother a math lesson.

Although the title is wordy and the first page is simply a long, unillustrated paragraph, most of the book is accessible for emerging readers. Simple sentences and similarly suitable vocabulary are arranged sparsely on the pages. Grammatically correct dialogue and repetitive phrasing advance the simple plot and add to the readability of the text. Lilly, Tommy, and their mom are all stock characters who behave predictably, making it easy to focus on each mathematical challenge as it is presented.

Eleni Anca Oprescu's colorful, full-page digital artwork complements the narrative in a realistic style. The visual elements are creative and attractive. Artwork reinforces the mathematical concepts Lilly is teaching Tommy. For example, Lilly is pictured holding up four fingers as she tells Tommy, "We need four more apples." At the bottom of the page, ten numbered apples add an additional visual cue. Apples one through six are identically shaded red, and seven through ten are white, foreshadowing the next mathematical operation.

The illustrations also build on the text by introducing surprise elements into the story, like Tommy accidentally breaking some eggs during baking time. The only exception to the thoughtful composition are a couple of pages where the black text is placed over a dark or busy background like a tree trunk or kitchen cabinets. The words are visible, but much easier to read when positioned on the light blue background of the sky, as on most pages.

The last page of the book pictures the family together eating apple pie and reading a book specifically identified as *Oh Wow, It's a Pizza Party*, which seems like a hint for a potential sequel. The author and illustrator have pioneered a creative formula for integrating math skills into a simple story line that could be applied to any early math concepts. This educational offering would work well in a preschool or early grade classroom as either a read-aloud book or a book for young independent readers.

CAROLYN BAILEY (November 30, 2015)

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