

Animal Fun for Everyone!

Marjorie Pitzer

Woodbine House (May 19, 2014)

Softcover \$11.95 (14pp)

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This unique board book is recommended for children of all colors, shapes, sizes, and abilities.

Marjorie W. Pitzer continues her series of board books featuring color photos of Down syndrome children with the animal-themed *Animal Fun for Everyone!* Pitzer has worked as an early intervention specialist with infants and toddlers for more than twenty years and has published several other board books specially attuned to kids with developmental delays. Though *Animal Fun for Everyone!* is somewhat unique among board books because it might hold special appeal to families of Down syndrome kids, it otherwise strives for the same audience as any other board book. Judged by either set of criteria, Pitzer has done well.

After starting with an introduction page ("Hey! What's everybody doing?"), each following page features a toddler-aged child interacting with an animal, with a short description of what's happening: "Petting a big dog," "Giggling at a guinea pig," "Snuggling with a bunny," and "Touching a turtle," among others. The book closes with an image of the same child from the intro page, who has joined in the fun, observing "And I'm waddling with ducks!"

Many board books contain pictures of animals, but less common are those that contain photographs of real children interacting with real animals. *Animal Fun for Everyone!* offers a closer connection to real interaction, instead of the more typical illustrations of children, or photos of animals alone. This helps kids better link the real world they see around them with what they're experiencing through the book. And while most children have seen dogs, cats, and fish, the book also contains images of less-commonly seen animals like ferrets and guinea pigs.

Pitzer's photographs are excellent, combining a variety of well lit, well chosen locations with a level of natural spontaneity that keeps the images interesting throughout. Given the limited number of books in which children with Down syndrome can see kids just like themselves, the children's images alone might have a special appeal for developmentally delayed readers; in this sense, the animal element is an added bonus. For children without any previous knowledge of Down syndrome, the book's animals create a bridge of common interest, through which parents can explain the concept of developmental disabilities.

Animal Fun for Everyone! is a well-designed and physically sturdy book that should hold up well under the repeated readings that are sure to be requested by youngsters; it is recommended for children of all colors, shapes, sizes, and abilities.

PETER DABBENE (July 9, 2014)

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