



Baby Brains

Simon James

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Baby Brains utters his first words the day after he comes home from the hospital: "I'd like to go to school tomorrow." His dedicated parents have nurtured his intellect from conception with news, music, and language classes. Their efforts pay off as their child masters kindergarten, medical school, a career as a doctor, and astronaut training, all in his first year of life.

James, author and illustrator of *Leon and Bob*, a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book, as well as several other well-received picture books, humorously sends up the current cultural phenomenon of parents who push their children too hard with the best of intentions. Baby Brains' outrageous levels of achievement, combined with tight pacing that builds suspense, will keep young readers attentive and anxious to see what he will accomplish next.

Large cartoon-style illustrations in watercolor and ink add an element of humor and endearment. His bald head peeking over the top of a newspaper, his pajama clad bottom hanging out of the car engine he's fixing, and his tiny head encased in an adult-size astronaut's helmet, are just a few of the silly images that provoke giggles with nearly every turn of the page.

At the end of the story, Baby Brains proves that he's perhaps best at being ... a baby. He travels into space and learns that what he wants most of all is his mommy. Back home with mom and dad, he gets comfort in his bedtime routine, but decides to help out from time to time at the local hospital, a foreshadowing of future adventures to come in other "Baby Brains" titles.

CAROLYN BAILEY (December 11, 2007)

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