

## Burl, the Attention-Seeking Squirrel

**Charlene J. O'Connor**

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(22pp)

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*Burl, the Attention-Seeking Squirrel is a wonderful picture book with a message of individuality, kindness, and the power that comes from entering each day with a smile.*

Charlene J. O'Connor's *Burl, the Attention-Seeking Squirrel* is a charming picture book that delivers an important message about self-esteem and being yourself.

Burl is tired of just being one of the squirrels in his class. He wants to stand out and be recognized, so he undertakes a series of increasingly elaborate stunts to get his classmates' attention. What Burl does not recognize is that his antics are annoying his squirrel classmates. His friend Sam pulls him aside for a quiet conversation. Her message is kind and clear: it is Burl's kindness and friendship that matters most to his classmates, not his antics.

Building upon a direct rhyme scheme that connects the last word of each paragraph, this brief story will capture and keep the attention of young listeners and readers. Its language is playful and clear, building on subtle internal rhymes; the alliterative repetition of "s" and "f" sounds, for example, works especially well, whether read by a young learner or recited aloud by a parent or teacher. The fun, colorful illustrations complement the playfulness of the text, and are bright enough to be engaging without being so cluttered as to create a distraction.

This book's message is a timely one, especially given the troubling rise in popularity of social media influencers, followers, and likes as measures of self-worth and self-esteem. Burl is reminded that being a good friend, showing kindness every day, and moving through the world with a smile are the best ways to get the attention he wants so badly, making this a perfect book for children who might be entering a classroom for the first time, or who are adjusting to the school experience.

*Burl, the Attention-Seeking Squirrel* is a wonderful addition to any young reader's library with its message of individuality, kindness, and the power that comes from entering each day with a smile.

KLAY DYER (March 11, 2021)

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