



Catchin' Cooties Consuelo

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Most parents know the frustration of taking children shoe shopping. Just about any child will declare earnestly that the flashiest pair fits perfectly, that is until they become dirty. Then they skulk, uncomfortable but no longer returnable, neglected under the bed.

Stan, the shoe store salesman whose rhymed couplets bounce readers through this picture book, tells a cautionary tale about the dangers of allowing vanity to dictate footwear choices. Tyrone's problem is a simple one: "On a good day I maybe stand two feet two / and on my foot I wear a size twelve shoe." So uncoordinated that he often trips over his gargantuan feet, Tyrone tells Stan that his shoe size also prevents him from making friends. The solution, he tells Stan, is smaller shoes—size two.

Tyrone is delighted with his new look, although he suffers incredible pain and can barely walk. Telling Stan that "You know what they say, / No pain no gain," he perseveres for months before admitting that the shoes are so tight he can't take them off at all. In fact, not even a tow truck does the trick. By the end, Tyrone learns self-acceptance as well as an important lesson about the connection between comfortable shoes and foot health.

The colorful cartoon illustrations underscore Tyrone's plight and the consequences of his mistaken solution, without resorting to visual clichés or the ugliness that permeates so much cartooning. From Stan's red suspenders to the colorful bandages on Tyrone's feet, each picture is freshly and originally conceived.

The author's "Smarties Books" series focuses on health issues with catchy, upbeat language. Designed primarily for doctors' waiting rooms and with African American and Latino characters, Thompson renders ethnicity as both strength and a non-issue. Her other new release, *Catchin' Cooties Consuelo*, also illustrated by Harrold, provides a lively lesson on why it's not fun to be sick. Each book ends with a "Smarty" that explains the importance of good hygiene and self-care in direct language that will be accessible to many children without adult help.

ELIZABETH BREAU (August 18, 2009)

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