

Dylan's Birthday Present: Little Polyglot Adventures: Book 1

Victor D. O. Santos

Eszter Miklos, Illustrator

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Dylan's Birthday Present is a light educational title that concerns diversity, problem-solving, and a sweet friendship.

A multicultural boy chases a lost chicken in Victor D. O. Santos's enthusiastic picture book, *Dylan's Birthday Present*.

Polyglot Dylan asks for a pet chicken in hopes of speaking to it in Ukrainian, Portuguese, and English. Once he receives the pet, he names it Kiki and introduces it to Emma, his best friend, who speaks Zulu. The chicken wanders off. Both children search for it without success, until they reach a Portuguese home. Dylan's language skills pay off as he speaks to the owner. He finds out that Kiki entered the yard to join several other chickens. This mild adventure concludes with Dylan, his family, and Emma gathered around cake.

The book's cozy, pastel art depicts Dylan's house, parents, and neighborhood, blending picturesque suburban streets with greenery. The effect is soothing, and details are clear within scenes, while international flag banners highlight the book's celebratory theme.

Focused on the benefits of multilingualism, the story defines its amiable characters via spare traits. The birthday is an incidental occasion that delays the main conflict, though it's familiar and appealing. The text is prone to describing what the illustrations already show, from Dylan crying to the children's actions, while its conversations are more formal than what is typical for children.

The book's strongest depictions are of Dylan's supportive home, where his eccentricities are encouraged, and of the characters' pride in their backgrounds. Still, the book only skims the surface of what it's like to grow up trilingual. A handful of non-English words are included and are translated in the footnotes.

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KAREN RIGBY (June 29, 2020)

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