

God Creates a Snake

Charles Peterson

Brian Russell, Illustrator

God Creating Animals (Aug 13, 2019)

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God Creates a Snake is a subtle and humorous tale that humanizes God as fallible.

Charles Peterson's humorous picture book *God Creates a Snake* jokes about expectations and reality, excitement and disappointment; it proves that getting what you want isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Snake goes to visit God, hoping to learn all about all of the things he can do. God tells him he can go on land, climb trees, and swim in water. Snake is impressed, but he asks God how far he'll be able to run when he gets his legs. God tells him that they've run out of legs—but then a centipede walks in, asking if he really needed 100 legs, which Snake, unfortunately, wasn't supposed to see.

The book is an extended joke with a satisfying punch. Peterson knows how make people laugh. He sets up, builds, and expertly pays off the punchline in comical fashion; the story is perfectly paced to do this work. Brian Russell's illustrations add to the humor, showing non-verbal expressions that portray the characters' feelings.

Though picture books are generally geared toward children, it's unclear whether or not a child would understand the layers of humor in this book. That humor is well crafted and expertly delivered, but in subtle ways. Its lack of embellishments and straightforward language are accessible, but the format itself might not best serve the message or audience.

The computer-generated illustrations are consistent and easy to follow. Big, bubbly characters are drawn in simple terms, and this unadorned quality, combined with the book's bright colors, is appealing. Snake, God, and the centipede stand out in the office where God works.

God Creates a Snake humanizes God, playing on the fact that deities are capable of making mistakes. It is a humorous take on what would happen if we could all ask God why we weren't given the things that we wanted, and a joke about God's plans being fallible.

REBECCA MONTERUSSO (August 30, 2019)

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