

Gollywood, Here I Come!

Terry John Barto

Mattia Cerato, Illustrator

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Gollywood, Here I Come!, by Terry John Barto, is charming and fun, sure to capture the imaginations of children in the target preschool/kindergarten audience.

Anamazie Marie LaBelle has big dreams. As she proudly leads the Wattle View School Marching Band down Gobbleville's Main Street as the youngest majorette, she imagines the street is a red carpet and the sun is a spotlight. Anamazie wants to be a star. Anamazie's mother is by her side cheering her on as she leads the parade and then rushes off to the finals of Gobbleville's Got Talent. A disappointing loss is quickly forgotten as a talent scout invites her to an audition for a movie in Gollywood, and Anamazie's dreams soon come true.

Anamazie's character shows the positive outcome that is possible with determination and perseverance; she is committed from start to finish to achieving her dream, and her dedication is conveyed well as she practices singing in the car, or studies a script for hours before her important screen test. Anamazie's mother is consistently supportive, if occasionally (and humorously) overwhelmed by it all. Parental love and guidance is shown as an important aspect of Anamazie's journey.

The prose and dialogue flow smoothly and the text is in a readable font, though a few pages in which it blends into the artwork can be a bit hard to read.

Mattia Cerato's vibrant, colorful illustrations throughout the book are outstanding, full of extra detail and rich color. Anamazie and her friends are turkeys, and their characters are brought to vivid life in the meticulously rendered background. Cerato has included brightly colored street maps of Gollywood and Gobbleville, which are detailed enough to encourage additional exploration, and parents and children can spend extra time with the book pointing out all of the places Anamazie may go and what she might do there.

Gollywood, Here I Come! is a delightful story introducing the concepts of determination and following your dreams. The element of a supportive parent is also appropriate for the target audience, who will see that Anamazie always has her mother's guidance. A scene in which Anamazie stops by her school and encourages her friends to follow their own dreams is a nice addition to the storyline. The exceptional illustrations add a great deal to the aesthetic feel of this charming book.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (June 17, 2015)

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