

Hammy

Kiraya Lynn Kestin

Creations by Kiraya (Jul 16, 2012)

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Hamsters like to escape their cages and discover the world around them—a bit like children growing up. In *Hammy*, both children and hamsters are welcomed back with open arms, or to the family cat's open mouth, in this case.

Hammy the hamster is the pet Mary begged her parents for, much to the chagrin of her sister, Linda, and Shadow Mist, Linda's cat. Mary's parents agree that she can bring home a teacher's pet hamster, but she will have to take good care so Shadow Mist doesn't hurt him. Hammy, however, escapes from his cage and runs outside. Mary thinks her lovable hamster is lost forever, until a week later when Shadow Mist carries Hammy into the house, unharmed.

Author and illustrator Kiraya Kestin weaves a pleasant story. Her prose is enjoyable and simple enough for young children to understand. Slightly older readers will be entertained by the story itself because Kestin's sentence structure is varied and holds the attention of her audience. Kestin especially excels at writing dialogue, in part because she does not always use the words "Mary said" but instead employs phrases like "Mary beamed" or "she proudly announced," which help the reader relate to characters on an emotional level.

Kestin's watercolor illustrations are realistic and stimulating. She captures the natural poses of humans and animals, and even the way clothes and fabrics drape. The illustrations are dynamic in that there are many different views and angles on each page. The images are overlaid on a pale blue background with little hamster footprints running over the page, and this is pleasing to the eye.

The formatting of the text is satisfactory, though there is one instance where a new paragraph is started in the middle of a piece of dialogue. The font is curvy and fun—fitting for a book about children and pets. Some of the text is laid on the blue background and some is not, diversifying the look of the pages.

Hammy is Kestin's first book and is based on a true story of her childhood pet hamster. It is recommended for children in preschool through third grade.

BETH VANHOUTEN (June 17, 2013)

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