

Harley the Happy Little Husky

Kerry Tait

Sheila Berg, Illustrator

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A good author-illustrator team, Tait and Berg have created a memorable character who teaches a meaningful lesson about accepting differences.

Kerry Tait's *Harley the Happy Little Husky* is an upbeat children's picture book with a simple but important message about self-acceptance. Young children start to appreciate the differences between themselves and others when they are preschoolers, and Tait's book approaches the subject by introducing young readers to an adorable trio of Siberian husky pups, one of whom notices that, unlike his brother and sister, he has two different eye colors. The unique pup, Harley, begins to feel bad about his differentness until he is adopted by a couple who loves him just as he is. Tait's book is based on a real-life dog named Harley, whose picture graces the back cover.

Sheila Berg's illustrations of chubby, playful puppies are winsome and cute—but don't veer toward cutesy—and perfectly complement Tait's straightforward tale. The puppies are expressive in canine ways, and it is refreshing to see these simply rendered yet sensitively portrayed dog portraits. Berg's limited palette of predominantly cool colors lends a sophisticated feel to the illustrations.

Tait's message about self-esteem is delivered in the simplest prose for youngsters who will probably have the book read to them rather than read it themselves. She engages children with questions they can answer, and they can delight in being able to spot Harley's mismatched eye color and describe the other ways he is both different from and the same as his siblings.

Punctuation is not always correct and the text also exhibits an overreliance on the exclamation point, using it to end several sentences.

This book is a good addition to other children's titles about diversity, self-acceptance, and gaining self-confidence. *Harley the Happy Little Husky* would be a good choice for a K–3 classroom library or for children who may need a gentle nudge toward accepting their differences from other schoolmates, siblings, or friends. A good author-illustrator team, Tait and Berg have created a memorable character in the vein of such wonderfully different icons as Leo the Late Bloomer, Ferdinand the Bull, and the Ugly Duckling.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (June 23, 2014)

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