



Clarion Review

Picture Books

Little Squirt

M. L. Buzogany

Xlibris

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Two Stars (out of Five)

Little Squirt is a classic underdog story in which the action takes place in the water. Seymour is a baby whale (calf) who is not able to spray as high as his peers. Seymour has two weeks before the spouting contest and he wants to be able to compete. He finds that with practice, dedication, and effort, he is able to achieve his goal. The book's title does not reflect an affectionate nickname for Seymour, but a description of his efforts to spout water like the other calves. Seymour's spray does not reach the heights that the sprays of other calves do, and the others make fun of him with this unflattering nickname.

Author M.L. Buzogany is a retired elementary school teacher who was in the classroom for thirty-five years. She uses her teaching experience to inspire her Seymour stories and has dedicated the book to her nephew.

This is a story for very young readers, so nearly every spread has one sentence of text that is accompanied by an illustration on the opposite page. The writer seamlessly informs readers that baby whales are called calves without interrupting the story to point this out. Although the text is spare, presumably to keep it simple for young readers, an explanation of just why whales spout in the first place would have been helpful.

The story's illustrations are reminiscent of children's drawings; this may have been done on purpose, but it gives the book an amateurish look. However, the author makes good use of the illustrations to impart information to the reader. They also include little gags like "Save the Kids" posters which are presumably a riff on "Save the Whales" campaigns. Alert readers may wonder why Seymour receives a "Super Squirt" trophy labeled with the year 1992.

Midway through the story, Seymour dreams that he wins the spouting contest. This goal seems unlikely since he has been derided by the other calves who can spray much higher. However, after getting up early each day and practicing a lot, he does win the contest. The story

seems a little simplistic, and Seymour manages to win on his own, without help from anyone else. Still, *Little Squirt* is a good starting point for a discussion with children about goals and how, with effort, dreams can come true.

Jada Bradley