

Meet the Pops

Belinda Barbieri

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Meet the Pops is a bright, smart picture book that engages children with important life lessons.

Meet the Pops by Belinda Barbieri is an amusing and colorful picture book about an adorable family, the Pops, and their children's first day of school.

Coco Pop is the biological daughter of Cherry and Lolly Pop, and Soda Pop is their adopted son. The story follows both children through the ups and downs of their first day of school, teaching lessons about behavior and vocabulary in an entertaining and modern way.

The book begins by explaining the Pops' family dynamic and demonstrating what adoption means. That Soda Pop is adopted does not mean, the narrative emphasizes, that his parents love him any less, or any differently, than their biological daughter. Each child's school day is difficult; the way that their parents deal with their problems is constructive and mature.

From Soda Pop's struggle to fit in and make friends to the devastating loss of Coco Pop's favorite doll, the book's conflicts are relatable to any child. They teach lessons on how to cope with negative feelings and impart applicable strategies for appropriate behavior.

Vocabulary words, including *cope* and *adopted*, are conveyed through "text messages" at the bottom of the page; they deliver not only definitions but advice for how to treat peers with kindness and compassion. This methodology makes the book relatable to technologically focused readers. Some potentially difficult words, like *sulking* and *inspection*, do not receive this helpful treatment.

Characters are cute, captured in colorful computer-generated images. These images seem aimed at a young audience, but the book's vocabulary and themes are more mature.

The Pops live in a candy town called Yummyville, complete with a sugar river and unique animals. Lolly Pop harvests candy trees for work. This could lead to the unhealthy view that candy is natural, like fruit, though the book does briefly mention the importance of moderation when enjoying candy.

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KATIE ASHER (January 25, 2018)

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