

## My Cat Brother, Sterling

**Mayra Hernandez**

**Kate Teves**

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*My Cat Brother, Sterling is a sweet picture book about sibling bonding.*

In Mayra Hernandez's endearing picture book *My Cat Brother, Sterling*, a family dog hesitates to tell his cat brother that they are not the same species, worried that this knowledge will ruin all of their fun.

Rocky is the only boy in a houseful of pets, until Sterling, a cat, arrives. Rocky is thrilled by his new brother. He hopes that they can offset the dynamic of the other two cats in their house.

With Rocky at his side, Sterling imagines himself to be a dog. His conviction is profound, as is his admiration for his brother. Sterling barks at the postal worker; he jumps for bones; he pees on trees, eschewing the litter box altogether. When he's placed on the cat tree, Sterling becomes so depressed that Rocky takes pity on him and hauls him away to learn dog games. Though Rocky laughs at Sterling's delusions, he comes to realize that he might be the reason that his brother doesn't know what species he belongs to. Rocky must decide how to handle that revelation.

The story features cute bonding moments between the animals; they mirror the connections that are typical between older and younger siblings. The smiling dog and cat seem to be having a terrific time together in the bright illustrations, most of which contain a small bone for children to find. There are moments of humor for adults, too, as when Rocky suddenly unloads his emotional burden to a cat therapist, or via the subtle bone pattern on the wallpaper.

As a narrator, Rocky is funny and excitable, often speaking directly to the audience. He asks rhetorical questions and marvels at the antics of his brother. Bursts of color found on certain words and phrases emphasize Rocky's emotional state as he blusters into self-awareness.

A sweet story about sibling bonding, the picture book *My Cat Brother, Sterling* follows two brothers who live their best lives, regardless of their species.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (July 27, 2022)

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