

My Super-Special, Kinda-Human Dog Named Louie

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Perfect reading for story time, this book will have young listeners giggling away at Louie's zany adventures.

Louie the Lhasa Apso lives life with gusto, engaging in all manner of “human” activities, from learning kung fu to visiting the zoo. This rhyming picture book for very young children catalogs a dozen of his exploits with humor and care. Vibrant cartoon-style illustrations and consistent design elements keep the pages turning, and well-designed cover art invites closer inspection. The rhyming format and strong internal structure give this storybook life as a read-aloud for pre-readers.

As the title suggests, this is an homage to the adventurous and “kinda-human” lifestyle of Louie, a young boy’s dog. It features Louie participating in a variety of activities familiar, and sometimes thrilling, to the preschool crowd. Each six-line stanza of rhyme is spread out over two pages and accompanied by a pair of illustrations reflective of the text. The predictable structure, rhyming cadence, and appealing illustrations, which prominently feature the adorable pup in action, give this book an internal consistency that compensates for the lack of an identifiable story arc.

The clever attention to design detail extends to the appealing front and back covers, as well.

Maintaining natural language while writing in rhyme is challenging. Occasional inverted sentence structure or extra-wordy lines written for the sake of rhyming endings throw off the singsongy cadence of the verse at certain points. Several instances of near rhymes—“medicine / again,” “there / here,” “Louie / movie,” etc.—create similar disruption to the rhyme scheme, marring the predictable structure that makes this such an attractive story-time offering. In most cases, careful adult readers will be able to compensate by speeding up syllables and emphasizing rhymes to preserve the rhythm and structures of the text for young listeners.

Louie is simply adorable. His adventurous spirit shines through his expressive blue eyes and comical posturing in the illustrations. Toddlers, preschoolers, and other pre-readers will find something to identify with in his giggle-inducing antics, and will most likely overlook the few instances of awkward language construction and word choice within the predictable structure of the book as a whole. The appealing main character and his zany activities invite discussion about connections with Louie’s activities and the plans and dreams that young people have for themselves.

CAROLYN BAILEY (October 13, 2015)

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