

No Yellow Horse, If You Please

Linda Loper Morris

Linda Loper Morris, Illustrator

Hilbert Bermejo, Illustrator

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The games that parents, grandparents, and children invent can stimulate the imagination, teach something, and strengthen bonds. Artist, author, and grandmother Linda Loper Morris, along with co-illustrator Hilbert Bermejo, share that kind of family fun in the preschooler picture book *No Yellow Horse, If You Please*.

The book begins as Hana and her mother play a mealtime word game that involves naming yellow objects. As young readers turn pages, they will enjoy finding yellow bees, umbrellas, ducklings, canaries, and taxicabs. When Hana suggests a yellow horse, her mother emphatically responds: “A yellow horse? / That is very curious. / Sweetie, you must be delirious. / A yellow horse does not exist. / In this idea you must not persist. / Hana, on that I do insist.”

As her mother continues naming yellow objects and denying the possibility of a yellow horse, Hana refuses to back down. In the end, she happily pulls a surprise for her mother from the bottom of her toy box.

Though often awkward, the writing style—especially the rhyme phrasing and the mother's repeated challenges to Hana's suggestions—is evocative of the Dr. Seuss books. However, the treatment of the text, set in all capital letters without serifs, may not have wide appeal. Somehow, though, the thoughtful design of each page makes it work.

The art is colorful, but it is evident that the drawings are the work of two different illustrators. And while the banter suggests that Hana is a preschooler, the illustrations depict a child who is almost as tall as her mother.

Morris got her start writing children's books from the stories and games she shared with her grandchildren. The word game in *No Yellow Horse, If You Please* is one that all families can play. And even with its drawbacks, this story reminds us that much in life—even a toy box—holds the unexpected.

LINDA SALISBURY (February 16, 2012)

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