

The Adventures of Rhumba and Tuba: The Magnificent Five

Carl Wetzel

Brett Alexander, Illustrator

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Carefree summer days infused with joy are conveyed through the eyes of a man taking care of five fun animals.

The Adventures of Rhumba and Tuba: The Magnificent Five is a jubilant and wonderfully illustrated children's tale, written by Carl Wetzel and illustrated by Brett Alexander, which captures the joy of carefree sunny days through a cast of rowdy animal friends. By the end of the story, Rhumba, Tuba, Jimmy, Squeak, and Squirrel learn to help friends in need, explore the outdoors, and take all the necessary safety precautions.

Two mischievous cats show up for the spring and summer, joining a crew made up of a squirrel, puppy, and mouse. While the protagonist is only referenced in the first person, his identity is revealed as an older man in the illustrations. The man takes in the magnificent five, as he calls them, and entertains them for a summer. They ride bikes, take boat rides, picnic in the park, go wild in a lawn sprinkler, and enjoy a drippy ice cream treat, among other classic summer activities.

One of the standouts from this otherwise ordinary tale is the protagonist's infectious joy for everyday life. For instance, in one scene, he cures the crew's blues on a rainy day by organizing a wet boat race outside—or, in his words, they found “fun...to replace the sun.” And as all five animals play in the sprinkler, he notes, “So they whiled away a whole summery day, with not a care in the world, just delight in nature's beauty, in friends, and in fun.”

Alexander complements Wetzel's upbeat tone with thirteen truly delightful pictures of the animal crew and their summer adventures. The visuals are notably whimsical, such as one close-up of the mouse strapped to a foam packing peanut as a flotation device.

The outstanding art would have been better served by more condensed text rather than the volume's meandering narrative. For instance, rather than allowing the animals' actions and the illustrations to convey the lighthearted tone, the pace is slowed by repeated descriptions of how much fun the five have in every single scene.

What's more, the text haphazardly lapses into rhyming couplets within a paragraph, creating awkward, mismatched phrasing when read out loud; there is also the occasional punctuation typo. Despite these flaws, *The Adventures of Rhumba and Tuba: The Magnificent Five* will delight young audiences as they anticipate or remember boisterous, carefree summers.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (June 3, 2014)

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