



The Festive Frolics of Panda and Owl

Frank Lewis

Autumn Brook, Illustrator

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The Festive Frolics of Panda and Owl is a charming, playful tribute to best friends and finding joy in togetherness.

Deep in the heart of the Bamboo Forest, two best friends embark on a series of everyday adventures. *The Festive Frolics of Panda and Owl*, a collection of five short stories from Frank Lewis, features an endearing panda and an earnest owl.

Whether splashing in the Rumbling Rowdy River, sweeping leaves at the crack of dawn, or attempting to cool water into ice inside a tree hollow, Panda and Owl endeavor to make the most of their time together. They do so with an emphasis on nature appreciation, exploration, and industriousness, encompassed in an overarching theme of friendship.

Each of the book's five stories, with titles ranging from "The Perfect Picnic" to "Panda has a Birthday," is a complete, brief stand-alone tale; they can be read in any order. Color-coded tabs mark the beginnings of each, making them easy to identify and locate in the absence of a table of contents.

Text-prominent pages are offset with small but boldly colorful vignettes by illustrator Autumn Brook. They feature an animated, purple-bowed and beaded anklet-wearing Panda alongside a bespectacled Owl in an oversized purple button down as they navigate through the bright greens of the Bamboo Forest or along the blues of the descriptively named Wandering Winding Twisty Bulging Stream.

A woodland cast of supporting characters, from Badger and his ice-cream stand to Squirrel and Mr. and Mrs. Deer, appear from time to time, but Panda and Owl, with their distinct personalities and styles of speech, share the lead role.

Panda's musings and sense of adventure complement and balance Owl's more logical approach, unique in its often quirky delivery, and children and adults alike will relate to the duo's observations and philosophies about time (three minutes can feel like an eternity), chores (hard work should be rewarded with ice cream), and a variety of other ordinary activities made exciting because they are shared.

Perfect for emergent or beginning readers transitioning from picture books to easy chapter books, or for a story-time read-aloud, the book's simple yet expressive language is fun and light: "Panda made happy Panda sounds and Owl *hoo-hoo-doo-looed*." Creative vocabulary, particularly from Owl, ranges from "bestest" to "absotively certainous" to sporadic singing, rhyming, dancing, or even, occasionally, all three at once. As Owl remarks, "It's such a nice day to sing or dance or even to sing-dance."

A sweetly appealing addition to home or school libraries, *The Festive Frolics of Panda and Owl* is a charming, playful tribute to best friends and finding joy in togetherness.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (November 17, 2017)

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