



Clarion Review

Picture Books

The Goopy Ghost at Valentine's Day

V R Duin

CreateSpace

978-1-4663-3780-0

Four Stars (out of Five)

V R Duin's *The Goopy Ghost at Valentine's Day* is the tale of Goopy the Ghost's search for a friend. When Cupid sets out to help Goopy find a pal in time for Valentine's Day, the quest sets off an unexpected chain of events, with disaster narrowly averted.

The adventure begins when Goopy asks for Cupid's help. Cupid shoots a cantaloupe with his arrow to make a friend for Goopy. However, when Cupid's cantaloupe ghost, Mushy, appears, he steals the horse Cupid is riding. A wild chase ensues as Cupid and Goopy try to stop the runaway horse and rescue Mushy from his wild ride.

Duin's lively text will easily capture the attention of the young target audience. The rhythmic patterns and catchy wording make this book ideal for read-alouds. The author's opening line sets the stage for fun: "Our goopy, gooey orange ghost / Was feeling very glum." The use of alliteration makes this a great book for children who are at the beginning stages of reading.

The colorful illustrations by Bonnie Lemaire will catch and hold children's attention as well. Lemaire uses bold oranges, reds, and blues to bring the tale to life. The faces of her characters, made comical through exaggerated features and over-emphasized expressions, will make this book a favorite for young children.

A unique aspect of this particular children's book is its references to the mythological characters Mars, Mercury, and Cupid. This is an interesting way for young children to be introduced to a few mythological figures and archetypes.

Occasionally, the rhyming and rhythm of the poetry come across as forced. For instance, Duin writes, "Goopy would serve as bait / To try and draw Mushy near. / The thought that it might not work / Was their most hidden fear!" The phrase "hidden fear" does not really make sense, but seems to be used only because it fits into the rhythm. Additionally, the illustrations

clash at times in style and color, such as when the warm and cold palettes conflict with rather than complement one another.

Overall, though, this charming book will capture the attention of children and provide wonderful read-aloud material for parents and teachers.

Emily Adams