

The Legend of OinkADoodleMoo: The Barnyard Collection

Alan St. Jean

Libby Carruth Krock, Illustrator

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Exuberant, colorful, and superlatively upbeat, this rhyme-and-rhythm treat is simply fun.

Silly enough to charm an entire kindergarten class, *The Legend of OinkADoodleMoo* is a pure delight. Author Alan St. Jean claims he loves to make children laugh, and he certainly proves that here. With enchanting illustrations certain to elicit smiles and more, this book is destined to become a schoolroom and at-home favorite. Billed as Volume I of *The Barnyard Collection*, *OinkADoodleMoo* will leave children, parents, and teachers anxiously awaiting Volumes II and beyond. It is indeed that good.

Whether read quietly by a child or aloud by an adult, St. Jean's book is simply *fun*. Every second line rhymes, and the rhythm is catchy and easy to master. While three farmyard friends manage to diffuse a bad situation and enthrall a grizzly bear with their down-home, foot-tapping music, their antics, captured perfectly and with pure joy by illustrator Libby Carruth Krock, are sure to generate both giggles and belly-laughs from even the youngest audience.

The expressive faces of the three barn mates: Oink, the banjo-playing pig; Moo, the piano-playing cow; and one solitary little chicken, who both plays the harmonica and dances in a single, tin-toed cowboy boot, exquisitely convey every emotion from fear to crazy, unadulterated bliss. What starts as a potentially dangerous situation ends up as a music-filled pizza party, with all manner of animals—and the farmer himself—joining in the fun. The book is, in short, exuberant, colorful, and superlatively upbeat.

Included with the hardcover book is an audio CD of St. Jean himself reading the story. Cues to turn the page allow children to follow along with the text. St. Jean's resonant voice is soothing, perfect for a quiet bedtime story, until ... The story starts a second time, complete with singing and music, a veritable hoe-down version sure to result in toe tapping, dancing, and singing along. This second version is exactly what adults may envision during a first read; it delivers everything the printed version promises: enthusiasm, noise, excitement, and pure pleasure. Be warned not to play the disc through to the end at bedtime, however, for the kids may never settle down!

The Legend of OinkADoodleMoo offers much of what is missing in too many books designed for younger children: a solid story with imaginative but outrageously silly characters, an easy-to-follow plot line, a moral without a heavily hammered message, and simple, engaging fun. On the last page, the chicken proclaims:

"One day we'll be a legend
Here ... at OinkADoodleMoo"

And there is no reason to doubt his word. This is a book that the kids will love.

CHERYL HIBBARD (April 29, 2013)

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