

The Mister Peanut McWoolly Story

Diane Wilkins

Monique Legault, Illustrator

FriesenPress

(42pp)

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The Mister Peanut McWoolly Story is a compassionate picture book in which a girl helps a delicate lamb develop his self-esteem.

Diane Wilkins's charming picture book *The Mister Peanut McWoolly Story* is based on the true story of a young girl's care for a frail lamb.

Mama sheep is worried: her newborn lamb is small, weak, and may not survive. Farmer Paul is worried, too. He wraps the lamb in his coat, warms him by the stove, and feeds him from a bottle. Then a neighbor, Elise, falls in love with the lamb, takes him home, and takes over his care, giving him her blanket and sleeping near him. Elise calls the lamb Peanut; once he grows a thick coat, she adds "Mister" and "McWoolly."

Peanut grows stronger, asking questions about the differences between himself and other animals: some are different colors, others have fur or feathers, and they all make different sounds. Elise consoles him: "everyone is different on the outside, but we are all the same on the inside." When Peanut is strong enough to return to the farm to be with his mother, he is nervous, but when he's asked why he is different, he shares Elise's answer, to the resounding response "That makes sense!"

Concerned with acceptance and inclusion, Peanut's story positions differences as normal and interesting, rather than threatening. Its language is friendly and accessible, and it resolves all of its narrative problems with loving kindness. The length of Elise's responses to the lamb's questions builds as the book progresses, resulting in a memorable mantra.

While the book's incorrect use of commas, run-on sentences, and misused and extra words impede it, its colorful, attractive illustrations reflect the emotions expressed in the narrative well; they render the animals with familiarity and convey the joy that the animals feel. They balance well with the text, too, whose soft green background suggests the peace and beauty of the farm landscape.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (August 7, 2021)

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