Clarion Review

Picture Books

The Most Curious Girl in Her Class: The Adventures of Hecky and Shmecky
Herman Huber
Esteban Erlich, illustrator
Mishpucha Books
978-0-9883544-0-1
Five Stars (out of Five)

In his delightful, well-written picture book, *The Most Curious Girl in Her Class: The Adventures of Hecky and Schmecky*, clinical psychologist, grandfather, and author Herman Huber introduces the spunky young Hecky. Relentlessly inquisitive, Hecky asks her teacher "10 questions every day about everything." Her mother is not spared the endless questions either. Huber draws from his own experiences in creating Hecky and her younger brother, Schmecky. He is joined by illustrator, Esteban Erlich, himself the father of two, whose contributions bring life to the siblings' adventures. Together, the author and illustrator present an enjoyable story certain to enchant young readers and listeners.

Hecky's strong personality is sure to be familiar to parents who find themselves reading this book aloud, again and again, to their own bright and curious children. Schmecky, Hecky's "goofy little brother," is the typical younger sibling; he gets bossed around, and he likes to tag along. On a forbidden adventure into the forest, the two encounter the most charming amphibian ever: a smiling, talking frog named Dennis Hopster. It is the frog who slyly promotes the book's message about the importance of reading. Books, as it happens, are his greatest joy. He also introduces the concepts of helping others, expressing thanks, and giving back. Both the frog character and the lessons he offers are terrific.

Erlich's illustrations are superb and fit the story perfectly. The colors he uses, particularly the purples and greens, are positively beautiful, and there is some element or object in every picture that seems to pop right off the page. The children's expressive faces are appealing, and the animals that appear in the forest are sweet and nonthreatening. The only misstep is the presence of a pair of glasses on Hecky's bed at the beginning of the story. She never wears them, either in school or outdoors. Because another pair of glasses figures

prominently in the story, the pair on the bed should have been incorporated into the story.

Hecky and Schmecky are a fun and relatable pair, and young children will laugh at their exploits and understand the lessons shown along the way. Huber and Erlich have created a clever, thoroughly enjoyable book that surely will be read and reread. The book's title, *The Most Curious Girl in Her Class*: *The Adventures of Hecky and Schmecky*, suggests that it may be the start of a series. Parents and children alike will be excited if this is the case. Hecky and Schmecky are such a delight that everyone will want to hear more from them.

Cheryl Hibbard