Clarion Review

Picture Books

The Tale of the Pumpkin Seed Squad
Carolyn Mitchell
Brenda Timms, illustrator
AuthorHouse
978-1-4259-7004-8
Three Stars (out of Five)

Riley Chesterfield Mouse is happy and enthusiastic, eager to try new things and experience life fully. One fall Saturday he decides to join a game of football being played by human boys, but quickly realizes he is much too small. His friend Gus finds a creative solution. The next Saturday, Riley and all of his mouse friends gather at the football field to play their own game with a perfectly sized and shaped pumpkin seed serving as their ball.

The Tale of the Pumpkin Seed Squad is a creative and entertaining book. Carolyn Mitchell tells her story in rhyme, a style that is heavily overused in children's picture books. There are, however, some lovely and descriptive passages. For example, she writes, "Outside, Riley found an awesome sight to behold! Fall leaves dressed the trees in bright red and rich gold. As brisk breezes swirled the glowing leaves off the trees, They fell in dazzling piles — *clear* up to his *knees*!"

Brenda Timms has provided equally lovely and whimsical illustrations that support the text. They are colorful and provide a good sense of both motion and emotion.

Though the book is certainly enjoyable, it is not without problems. The text is at times awkward when the author chooses to emphasize some words with the use of italics. The emphasis makes sense in some places, but there are to be too many emphasized words that break up the meter of the rhyme when read out loud. For instance: "To be sure, Big Ralph was *HOT* over being dumped on the ground; His 'Squeaker Squad' was ready for *war* now that *their* turn had come around!" Additionally, the story is very simple, with no attempt to teach the reader a lesson or share any sort of truth.

Children ages three to seven and their parents will enjoy this book. The author's creative use of language and the illustrator's bright and playful pictures are sure to please most readers.

Though *The Tale of The Pumpkin Seed Squad* is not likely to leave a strong and lasting impression, it is certainly a story that can provide a few moments of family fun.

Catherine Thureson