

English and Modern Languages

Children's Book Reviews

Liberty University

Year 2009

Review: Are You Ready to Play Outside?

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Willems, Mo (author and illustrator), *Are You Ready to Play Outside?* Hyperion Books for Children, 2008. ISBN: 9781423113478. Grades Pre-K-2.

Awards: Theodor Seuss Geisel Award, 2009.

Description

From the joyous cover to the playful ending, this expression of friendship and attitude of adaptation is another triumph for Mo Willems. As Gerald the elephant and Piggie the pig anticipate another day of fun in the sun young readers/listeners will conjure up their own memories of the excitement of playing outside. However, rain begins, first with a “plink” and then an increasing downpour. Each drop produces increasing indignation in Piggie against the precipitation until his shouted protest covers the entire rain-drenched page. Gerald, on the other hand, creates a solution for his friend, but the messy stuff continues to fall. Suddenly, two earthworms who love splashing in the wet, transform the day into a new adventure, and an opportunity for Gerald to demonstrate other talents that are uniquely his.

Critique

Following in the tradition of both Williams and Seuss, this picture book for beginning readers encourages the young audience to keep turning pages with riveted attention to see how the two friends will solve this threat to their plans. Such matters are serious to the pre-schooler. The fact that Elephant and Piggie are very different in outlook as well as diverse in species promotes the idea of playing with children who may be different in ability, culture, or simply interests. Tiny worms inspiring a solution also validates the idea of creativity in the littlest and lowest kind of animal. What a lovely thought to engender in the young child! Overall, this volume in the Elephant & Piggie series is a great addition to the shelves at home and school. However, adults should be prepared to venture forth with boots and an umbrella on the next rainy day, unless they are friends with a cooperative elephant.

Descriptors:

Easy Reading Material
Theodore Seuss Geisel Award
Williams, Mo
Are You Ready to Play Outside?
Diversity
Rain