Book Buddy

November 2023: Thankful For…

There’s more to Turkey Day than turkey and pumpkin pie. There’s us! Each individual on the face of this Earth is a unique contributor to our universe. This month Clover is “Thankful For …” the gifts that set her apart from any other bee in the hive, and she hopes each of you realize, and give thanks for, your special gifts too.

As a reminder to laud ourselves a bit from time to time, Clover has selected three meaningful new books that feature wholly original characters you’re going to love getting to know. Page On!

There’s no doubt Stickler likes sticks better than any Fido, Spot or Rover in any of our 50 states. Readers will meet this wild, wacko creature with eight eyes in “Stickler” another crowd-pleaser by Lane Smith. The author’s newest features a “what’s-it” that lives in the woods “… where shadow met tree.”

Stickler not only appreciates sticks, the creative creature is totally pumped about the wonders of nature, never taking for granted the blessings of the earth—like “mushy moss, prickly plant, slimy frog.”

As Stickler waxes eloquent about nature’s amazingly wonderful this and that, another being appears that Stickler thinks is an alien. In actuality, the visitor is a bird with an empty can of peas stuck to its head. Always kind and welcoming, Stickler decides to show the alien around. All the while the bird tries to tell Stickler what’s really up—creating a din while he’s stuck in the tin.

Readers will appreciate Stickler, his enthusiasm for natural things, and his acceptance of self. Strange as Stickler is, he doesn’t find fault with who he is. How refreshing!

Let’s hear it for folks with imaginations on overdrive—like the child in “If I Was a Horse” a girl who visualizes what her life would be like if she whinnied and had a flowing mane and tail. This child’s wondering comes spectacularly to life through the artistic genius of Sophie Blackall, a two-time Caldecott Medalist who never ceases to amaze with her heartfelt stories and glorious illustrations.

We meet the spotted horse on the cover of the book sauntering down the steps, clad in a sparkly tutu, and know we are in for fun. The first spread features the horse amid a field of yellow and white flowers. “If I was a horse, I would gallop all day.”

The horse stops running long enough to gaze down a hill, looking straight into a home. A home where the little girl is at the table eating a sandwich while her big brother sits with his nose in a book. Across the room their dad washes up the dishes, looking perplexed at the horse edging into the kitchen to have a sandwich of its own, on rye bread, so it appears.

The hilarity continues as the little girl continues to imagine as an excellent equine, going to school, participating in a swim team meet, rolling in the mud—you name it, the girl imagines it. Until the surprise ending where all comes clear with a piggy-back ride on a brother’s back. Giddy-up!

The incomparable Kate DiCamillo charms again with her modern-day fairytale, “The Puppets of Spelhorst,” the first in a winsome new series. This magical tale celebrates the glory of story using five vintage puppets—each unique onto its own.

Among the puppets, an old sea captain named Spellhorst purchases from a toy shop, is an owl with real feathers, a boy with a quiver of arrows, a lovely maiden with violet eyes, a proud, haughty king, and a wolf proud of its sharp teeth.

Though Spelhorst wishes to only buy the puppet maiden with violet eyes, because she reminds him of the long lost love he left behind when he went to sea, the toy shop owner says the puppets are a set, that they must be purchased together because they are part of a story. And so the puppets, each blessed with an endearing personality, take up residence at Spelhorst’s, until sadly, the old man passes away.

With his death, the puppets’ adventures begin when they’re cast onto a ragman’s cart, eventually becoming the property of two ingenious little girls who write a script for a play featuring the puppets. In the three-act play the little girls direct, the puppets discover their destinies, and grow in self-awareness. It’s the puppets’ lovely interaction with one another that’s the strength of this story, a brilliant, thoughtful read laced with wisdom and wit.

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