

K-4 Book Reviews by Michele Carroll

Tea Party Rules by Ame Dyckman. Viking Books. (2013)

Bear Cub happens upon a stuffed bear at tea party, complete with cookies, in the woods. Before Cub can eat the cookies, a little girl returns to the tea party and insists Cub must obey certain rules – like being clean, wearing clothes and using manners. Cub doesn't like following the rules, but he really wants cookies. So, he follows the rules only to have the little girl start grabbing and gobbling the cookies. Then, Cub decides he wants to play “Bear!”

Girls who love to have tea parties will enjoy this book. Boys will like it because many will identify with the bear – especially if they have had to “attend” a tea party with a sister. Recommended for K-2. AR: 1.9

The Life of Ty: Penguin Problems by Lauren Myracle. Dutton Children's Books. (2013)

Ty is a second grader who has always been the baby of the family. . . until Teensy Baby Maggie was born a few weeks ago. Now, instead of chaperoning field trips, making special lunches and spending time with Ty, all his mom has time for is Teensy Baby Maggie. On a field trip to the aquarium, Ty wanders away from the group in search for the penguin exhibit – only to find it closed. But, he knows the penguins have to be around somewhere. Ty ventures behind a “staff only” curtain and finds he is above the beluga whale exhibit and beside the penguin exhibit! Ty notices one of the chicks is being ignored by the other chicks and the mother penguin – just like Ty feels. When Ty puts his hand in the exhibit the chick waddles over and Ty takes that as a sign he needs to take the chick home – so he sneaks it into his backpack.

Ty's teacher has alerted the aquarium staff Ty is missing, his mom has to meet him at school and everyone complains about the “fishy” smell. Ty is ordered to take a bath when he gets home and puts the chick in the tub. When his sister comes in to help him take a bath, the chick is discovered and a plan is hatched to return the chick to the aquarium. The family realizes Ty needs a little more attention.

This is the first book in a new series by Lauren Myracle. Readers who enjoyed the late Barbara Park's books about Junie B. Jones will enjoy Ty's adventures, as well. Recommended for 1st – 3rd; Lexile: 540; AR: 3.2

Kelsey Green, Reading Queen by Claudia Mills. Margaret Ferguson Books. (2013.)

Kelsey's school is having a read-a-thon during the month of April. The winning class gets a pizza party, the student who reads the most books will have their name on a plaque and if 2000 books are read, the principal will shave his beard. Kelsey, a third grader is sure she will win because she LOVES to read and is quite good at it. However, during the contest she drives EVERYONE crazy because she wants to be in the winning class and she wants her name on the plaque.

But, a fifth grade class keeps staying a few books ahead of Kelsey's class, she's sure Simon (who has more bookworms on the school chart than Kelsey) is cheating by writing titles to books he hasn't read, and Cody (who reads on a 1st grade level) hasn't read a single book.

What can Kelsey do to get the results she wants? She finds kindness reaps better results than nagging – but does she realize this in time to win the contest?

How many of you immediately had a student's name or picture pop into your mind when you read about Kelsey? I must admit I would have been like Kelsey and would be considered the reading queen; in fact, I call myself "Queen of the Library".

While this book would definitely appeal more to girls than boys, there are some good social skills interwoven into the story. Kelsey and her friends are very different: Kelsey the reading queen, Annika the mathematician, and Izzy the athlete are able to enjoy each other's company, recognize each other's abilities and respect one another.

This is the first book of a new series, Franklin School Friends. Recommended for 2nd – 4th grades. Lexile Level: 750; AR level: 4.7

Mountain Dog by Margarita Engle. Henry Holt and Company. (2013).

In this story told in verse, Tony's mother has been sent to prison for arranging pit-bull dog fights. Tony has to move from Los Angeles to the mountains of the Sierra Nevada to live with an uncle he has never met. His uncle,

Tio, is a forest ranger and a certified search and rescue volunteer who has a search and rescue dog, Gabe.

Tony is very withdrawn and hesitant to leave the city life, even though he feared his mother, her dogs and her acquaintances. He cannot believe that an uncle he has never met will want him to stay with him permanently. But, Tio and Gabe have large hearts and a lot of patience to let Tony get used to a new life.

The book is told in verse, with chapters alternating between Gabe's thoughts and Tony's thoughts. Students who enjoyed *Love that Dog* and *Hate that Cat* by Sharon Creech will enjoy *Mountain Dog*. This book would also be good to assist students who are in less than desirable family relationships. But it would also be appealing to students (and teachers and librarians) who love dog stories with happy endings.

Recommended for 4th – 6th graders. Lexile 1050; AR 5.9