

Reading Matters

Doing the Right Thing: Celebrating Children's Behavior in Books by Jean Dugan

Behaving well, treating others as we ourselves would like to be treated, is a challenge, whether we're two or over 60. Even our best intentions sometimes aren't well received. The characters in a number of new children's books face that challenge by being helpful and supportive (or at least trying to be!) — and courageous in the face of ridicule.



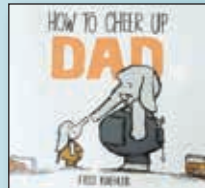
Jean Dugan, a long-time friend of *Exchange*, has been connecting kids with books for over 40 years. She helped establish a library program in the elementary schools of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and later brought her love of children's literature to the public library there. This is one more opportunity for her to share the best new books with children and those who care about them.

When I was three or four years old, I brightened our faded sofa with a blue crayon. Oddly enough, nobody but me was pleased with the result! The good intentions of two little characters in new picture books remind me of my younger self. Sprout, in **Sprout Helps Out**, is the big sister in a busy family who takes charge when everyone else is too busy — doing her own hair by cutting it off, flooding the kitchen when she does the dishes, and feeding the fish a donut. Rosie Winstead's whimsical illustrations, with lots of children's art, are a sweet backdrop for Sprout's ever-so-helpful antics.



Sprout Helps Out by Rosie Winstead (Dial, 2014); Ages 2-5.

Little Jumbo, in **How to Cheer Up Dad**, never quite gets it that his mischievous behavior is the reason Dad needs cheering up (and a time-out), but he knows that the activities they enjoy together — like ice cream and a bedtime story — are just the thing to do to make everything right again.



How to Cheer Up Dad by Fred Koehler (Dial, 2014); Ages 2-5.

Going to school brings new challenges to good behavior. Tyrannosaurus, in **Tyrannosaurus Wrecks**, is the kid in the class who just can't help but destroy what others have built — sometimes "on accident" as children say here. Young listeners will chant along with this lively and colorful classroom story of dinosaur preschoolers learning how to help each other behave, how to build together instead of knocking down.



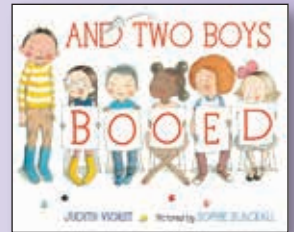
Tyrannosaurus Wrecks by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen, illustrated by Zachariah Ohora (Abrams, 2014); Ages 2-5.

Little Sally McCabe, **The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade**, is a superhero despite her tiny size. After paying "super extra special attention" to the behavior of her classmates, she tires of watching injustice from the sidelines and bravely speaks up against the trippers and teasers and pushers who bully others in her school. Hers is the small voice that makes a big difference.



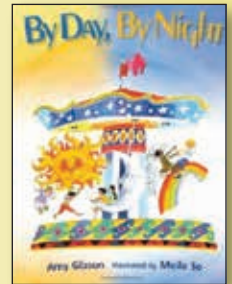
The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade by Justin Roberts, illustrated by Christian Robinson (Putnam, 2014); Ages 5-8.

We never learn the name of the boy in **And Two Boys Booed**, but he is all of us. Watch as he waits his turn in the talent show, first confidently because he's practiced his song a billion times, and then with less confidence as his head slips further and further down into his yellow-striped sweater. Watch the audience, full of squirmy first graders who fool around and play with each other's hair and whisper secrets while the show is going on. And keep an eye on those two characters in the back row; the teacher has their number and keeps them within arms' reach. They're the guys who boo our hero, but they're far outnumbered by the rest who give the brave performers a standing ovation.



And Two Boys Booed by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Sophie Blackall (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2014); Ages 5-8.

Two gorgeous new picture books by noted illustrators show children all over the world behaving as kids do everywhere, dreaming of a world that's "a wonderful place for everyone to live." In **By Day by Night**, Meilo So travels the world with her colorful paintbrush to illustrate the moments that all cultures have in common — waking with the sun, learning to walk and read, playing games, enjoying the change of seasons, and finally, sleeping, to rise again in the morning.



By Day by Night by Amy Gibson, illustrated by Meilo So (Boyd's Mills, 2014); All ages.

Diane and the late Leo Dillon imagine how the people of the world would behave if children were in charge. **If Kids Ran the World** "people would spend more time playing and less time worrying." The world would be run from a fantastic tree house, everybody would learn to forgive, and children would all live with people who loved them. Even the grownups would be happy. What a wonderful world that would be!



If Kids Ran the World by Leo and Diane Dillon (The Blue Sky Press, 2014); All ages.