

Second Reaction: Imaginary Bond Between a Boy and a Dog Becomes Real

Berger, Lou. *Dream Dog*. Illus. David Catrow.
New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2014.

Larissa Killin



I had the pleasure of reading *Dream Dog*, written by Lou Berger and illustrated by talented artist, David Catrow. Berger has created a delightful story about a boy named Harry who really wanted a dog, but, because his father had a “twitchy” nose that was sensitive to dogs and because Dad worked in a pepper factory, he couldn’t have one. Harry’s father wanted to please his son, so he brought home a lizard that changed colors; however, this kind act did not have the desired effect. While Harry liked the lizard, he did not love it. Harry gave the lizard to his friend, Mathilda Gold, who did love it. At this point, Harry made his dreams come true by wishing them into existence with the aid of his X-35 Infra-Rocket Imagination Helmet. Using his awesome imagination, Harry produced a make-believe dog for himself. This dog looked just like all the dogs that Harry had ever dreamed of with fleas, loving eyes, and a wet nose. Harry named him Waffle and took him everywhere he went. It did not bother Harry that no one else could see Waffle because Harry could. Harry loved Waffle. In the meantime, Harry’s father had gotten a new job and his “twitchy” nose had gotten much better because of this. His father surprised Harry with a real dog, soft fur and hot breath included, named Bumper. With the help of Harry’s X-35 Infra-Rocket Imagination Helmet, Bumper could also see Waffle. The story ends with Harry’s beloved Waffle leaping into the sky to chase passing clouds. Berger writes

that Harry was glad that Waffle was happy and that this happiness was reciprocal. The theme of this book is that the power of a good imagination can make dreams seem real.

I was happy to share this book with my kindergarteners because it is humorous, engaging and whimsically illustrated, and they enjoyed this story from beginning to end. I believe the book is most appropriate for primary-aged children in the way it is designed to tap into their imaginations and dreams.

I introduced the book by discussing the topic of dreams with my students. I asked them to think about things they dream about. I used this to engage them and to get them thinking about things they wished for in their lives. I let them share with the class things that they dreamed of having. I loved Berger's creative use of the X-35 Infra-Rocket Imagination Helmet. I thought it was great way to illustrate a boy using household items such as a football helmet and tin foil to create a means of infinite possibilities for dream-making. I asked the students what they might make a helmet out of if they had the opportunity. I also asked the students what they might imagine if they were wearing that helmet. We had fun going around the room listening to each other's wants, wishes, and dreams. Besides being a positive and fun way to engage the children, I felt that the theme of the book easily blended into my curriculum design. It would work well at the beginning of a school year as part of our "get to know me" unit, which is meant to serve as a means for them to introduce themselves to each other and to share some of their ideas.

I had an abundance of positive feedback as a result of sharing this book. The children asked to listen to it every day after they packed up to go home. They seemed to enjoy looking at the pictures in the book. I put the book on the ELMO projector so that we all could get a good look at the illustrations, and asked the children to point out different pictures in the books that they found interesting. Some of the illustrations they liked the best were all the used tissues or the frog in scuba gear that they found hysterical. I also loaned it out to two other kindergarten teachers to read to their classes. They also had positive reactions about the book and its content.

I will share this book in the future as a mini-lesson about having dreams and not giving up on them. I will also stress the importance and fun of having a vivid imagination. It would be great if the children in my class could create their own X-35 Infra-Rocket Imagination Helmets. I know this would be a fun activity to go along with the book. Creating their own "Dream Books" to go along with their helmets could be a creative writing assignment in which they use pictures to tell their stories just as Catrow did in *Dream Dog*. Sharing their stories with their families at home would be the culminating activity.

About the Author

Larissa Killin graduated from Purdue University and now lives in beautiful St. Augustine, Florida, with her family. She has been teaching elementary children in St. Johns County for two years.