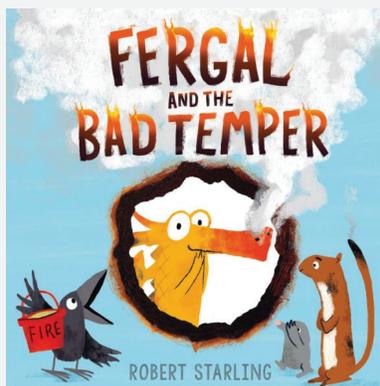


Second Reaction: *Fergal and the Bad Temper Is on Fire!*

Starling, Robert. *Fergal and the Bad Temper*. Imprint, 2019.

Kaitlyn Holshouser



Fergal and the Bad Temper is a picture book intended for a young elementary audience who may be struggling with controlling big emotions. This book is most appropriate for kindergarten, first-, and second-grade students and would be best enjoyed as a whole class read aloud or with a small group of students. I decided to visit a local elementary school in order to see what kindergarteners and first graders thought about Fergal and his fiery temper. In all four classes, the children gathered around attentively and discussed the very things that made them a little frustrated or fiery in day-to-day life prior to reading the book. Disagreements with siblings, not getting a new toy right away, and having to come in from recess were all situations the students admitted made them a little fiery.

Although, Fergal's fiery temper had serious consequences at times, the children couldn't help but giggle when Fergal's fumes of fury set the soccer goal ablaze. This led into the discussion that sometimes our frustrations and fiery outbursts are really quite silly when it boils down to it. The repetition of Fergal's favorite complaint, "That's not FAIR!" provided students with a great opportunity to read along. Students also enjoyed howling along with Wolf and "cawing" with Crow. Ultimately, these components made for a great interactive read aloud that kept the wiggles at bay and the kids engaged.

The theme of the book was not lost on young readers as many of them noted their favorite part was when Fergal decided to use his fire to fuel the hot air balloon. In addition, students

came up with other suggestions. One student suggested Fergal could use his fire to help his friends build a campfire and roast marshmallows. Another student suggested Fergal should share his transformation with other dragons to teach them to use their fire for good. At the conclusion of the story, students were eager to share ways they would like to handle their big emotions in the future. Students easily made text-to-self connections because they could relate to the strategies used by some of the woodland characters in the story. Some students suggested that taking a nap like Cat would help them cool down, while others mentioned they would prefer to go outside and get some of their energy out, much like Hare.

There is no doubt, *Fergal and the Bad Temper* was adored by both students and teachers. When asked to rate this book on a scale ranging from one to ten, ten fingers went up across the room. Some students even suggested that they would have given the book an eleven out of ten if they could! Many of the teachers commented on how much they enjoyed the book and it's no surprise why; Fergal and his friends may just be what children need to prevent future "fires" in the classroom.

Learning appropriate ways to deal with big emotions as a small child can be challenging. The school setting often provides children with their first encounters in dealing with emotions as they enter a new environment and are surrounded by new classmates. *Fergal and the Bad Temper* is an appropriate book that provides an avenue for having these conversations with children. The students are able to step into Fergal's shoes and learn from his experiences and from the strategies employed by Fergal's friends—all of which provided tangible strategies that students can try the next time they are feeling a little fiery, whether it be on the playground or during centers. The story provided limitless connections and sound advice for children who are still learning to manage their "fire" and use it for good. After all, when used the right way, there are a lot of ways that the fire within us can be used to make the world a better place.

About the Author

Kaitlyn Holshouser is a PhD student in the curriculum and instruction program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. When circumstances in life make her a little fiery she prefers to go for a run outdoors or play outside with her dog, Moe. As a former elementary school teacher, she enjoys exploring new books and finding creative ways to support teachers in their literacy instruction.