Main content

Article Preview:

"'And now,' cried Max, 'Let the wild rumpus start!'"

from Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak (1963, 1988)

Each time we read a book aloud, discuss it with other readers, or respond to it making our own connections, the "wild rumpus" begins. This month we celebrate the power of literature and the joy it brings to readers' lives. Whenever we read a book, we encounter the flow of language that engages our ears, the sights and sounds that come alive through text and illustrations, and the display of colors and images that fill our senses. We also delight in the way stories are told, the emotions that are evoked, and the responses that are elicited.

Orally

Reading books aloud provides an opportunity for children and adults to embark on a journey together. Some books enhance a read-aloud experience through their literary language, while others contain amazing illustrations that demand closer inspection. When both come together they create a meaningful, and at times magical, story.

The telling of vivid and lively tales from folklore is a pastime in the Louisiana bayous. The exploits of two tricksters, Compere Lapin and his sidekick Compere Bouki, have been the center of adventurous stories since the early 1700s. Sharon Arms Doucet brings listeners her own version using figurative language that is as colorful as Scott Cook's illustrations in Lapin Plays Possum. Lapin often uses trickery to fool his friends in these three humorous tales. In one adventure, Lapin's shenanigans reward him with rum cake and butter, while Bouki is stuck picking cotton. Resolved to even the score with Lapin, Bouki tries to outsmart the trickster. After many cunning deals, Bouki is left hungry for the gumbo that Lapin has weaseled out of him. It becomes obvious that Lapin has more ways to get out of work than there are fleas on a possum. Even though Bouki is never able to get the best of Lapin, the reader becomes the victor by hearing these humorous tales.

Candace Fleming transports readers to Mr. McGreely's garden and into his dream of growing mouthwatering carrots and other vegetables. Mr. McGreely has longed for the time when he can reap the benefits of his gardening work, but unfortunately there are some bunnies with the same desire. In Muncha! Muncha! Muncha! Fleming has readers cheering for the bunnies as they maneuver around Mr. McGreely's fences and walls to enjoy the delicious vegetables. Just when it looks as if Mr. McGreely might win, the bunnies surprise both the gardener and the readers with a story twist. G. Brian Karas's cartoon-like watercolor illustrations accentuate the book's lively sound effects.

In Rosemary Wells's Read Me a Story, Yoko pretends that she doesn't know how to read and write because she is afraid that if her mother finds out, she will stop reading aloud to her. Yoko is successful in fooling many people, including her teacher and her mother, but when Yoko's friend Timothy sees her writing, the secret begins to unravel.

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