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Tammi Sauer, Scott Magoon (Illustrator)

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Bernadette might seem like an ordinary monster, but sometimes she likes to do some very unmonsterlike things, like pick flowers. And pet kittens. And *bake*.

When the time comes for Bernadette to go to Monster Academy, she's just a teensy bit nervous. Her classmates just don't understand her. They'd rather uproot trees than sing friendship songs. And they prefer fried snail goo to Bernadette's homemade cupcakes with sprinkles. Can Bernadette find a way to make friends at school and still be herself?

Mostly Monsterly Details

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From Reader Review Mostly Monsterly for online ebook

Cassie says

Some of Bernadette's interests are a little unusual compared to the other monsters at school. But she doesn't let that stop her from doing the things she likes.

Ryan says

This book is fun. You can be yourself and still be one of a group. Good message, good pictures.

Helene says

It's fine. We heard it in storytime today. I'm not a huge fan of cute/harmless monsters (monsters serve a purpose, you know!). At the same time, I'm glad my preschooler hasn't told me they're scared of monsters, so there's that. This book's fine. A monster has to fit in, but still gets to be herself a little (even if it's a little hidden). I guess it's kind of a book of etiquette/appropriate behavior towards appropriate audiences.

Mary Zychowicz says

I gave this book 4 stars because for one, Tammi Sauer is a well established author and I like most of her books. The story is about a little monster girl who isn't as "Monsterly" as others think she should be. She finally figures out how to be true to herself and still fit in which is a good lesson for kids. Personally, I'm not a fan of monster characters so that's just my personal preference. The book is cute though.

Angela says

Certainly one of the cutest monster books around. I can't wait to have a Mosnters & Cupcakes party this fall!

Lourdes Heuer says

"For a monster
Bernadette was just
a little too sweet."

Akoss says

The monster aspect is more on the gross and mayhem-causing side than scary. I liked how it's a story about being alike but also unique in one's own special way at the same time.

SheriC (PM) says

Although the concept of a little monster who doesn't quite fit in at Monster School because she's a little too sweet is kind of cute, it really didn't connect for me. I guess I don't see the fun in a monster girl who likes stereotypical little girl things. The illustrations were cute, though.

Hardcover, borrowed from my public library.

Grace says

This book is such a cute book! When I first saw *Mostly Monsterly* from the cover, I thought the book was mainly about a monster with all the "monster" traits, with some unique "human-like" traits. However, I was actually surprised how majority of our main character's action was different from what monsters normally do. She did things that the monsters thought was unique, and weird for any monster to do. It made me let out a small laugh in some times, when she wanted to do something that monsters were not fond of. It was nice how she used her unique creativity to mix with what monsters normally do near the end. I think I will be able to use this book in my future classroom, by creating a lesson of them creating a monster and describing how they are different because of some traits.

Erin says

Any book able to incorporate Elvis is alright in my book (no pun intended! ha!). On a serious note... Bernadette is a monster who is a little different from everyone. She was "mostly monsterly" with point ears, huge eyes, frangs, claws, a tail, two foes, and even a creepy necklace! Underneath her growling and lurching, she was truly a loving monster with a deep dark secret: She was too sweet! While other monsters practiced lurching techniques, she wanted a group hug! She gave notes that were too nice and sang love songs (this is where Elvis comes in!) while everyone else was perfecting their creepy noises! So what happens when Bernadette is about to give up? You will just have to read and find out... :o)

Just kidding. She finds a way to stay on their level and reach her friends in a different way while still being herself.

The illustrations are not my favorite, but a little kid would enjoy the colors, lines, and content (who doesn't love monsters at that age?!), but the message is worth while.

Betsy says

After a certain point the sheer number of princess and fairy books a children's librarian has to handle begins to feel oppressive. The crushing weight of all that pink and all that glitter and all those bows . . . you begin to feel great waves of pity for those little girls who AREN'T into all those things. The kinds of little girls you might find in books like *Miss Brooks Loves Books And I Don't*. Where are the books for the little girl monsters of the world? Enter *Mostly Monsterly* a book that contains no princesses. No fairies. No glitter or bows or pink (excepting the occasional pig-tailed monster). That said, I'd bet your bottom dollar that you could hand this book to a princess-obsessed little girl OR a little boy who obsesses over single subject picture books, and still manage to capture their attention and win their hearts. It's cute, this book, but never makes even the slightest attempts to cloy.

Look, no one's saying that Bernadette is not a monster. She looks the part (two toes, creepy necklace, etc.) and does the requisite amount of lurching, growling, and mayhem. However, Bernadette harbors what you might call a "deep... dark... secret." She has a penchant for sweetness. Whether it's petting kittens or baking muffins, she is only "mostly" monsterly. So when Bernadette starts school with the other monsters you might think she'd try to reign in her cutesy qualities. Not so much. Her classmates, in fact, are horrified as one when they see her attempt a group hug or croon into a microphone. Her cupcakes don't go over any better, and Bernadette comes to realize that though she is only mostly monsterly, sometimes you have to meet others halfway. So she'll make everyone in the class cards... but they'll be gross. And she'll get a group hug.... Underneath a monster pile-on. Sometimes she's monsterly and sometimes she's sweet and both are perfectly a-okay when doled out carefully.

Some folks see this as a parable about learning to be true to yourself, and I suppose that's one way of looking at it. I'm more interested in the fact that this story is about how Bernadette doesn't continue to pig-headedly act against the will of the crowd, but rather she realizes that compromise is key. She could have just decided all other monsters were wrong and that she was right and continued to bake cupcakes with sprinkles. Instead, she finds a kind of middle ground with the other monsters. That monsterish instincts do not preclude other instincts as well. Note too the lack of any kind of an authority figure on the part of both the author and the illustrator. Sauer certainly doesn't make any mention of a teacher or professor holding Bernadette accountable for her individuality. Instead, Sauer (and Magoon by extension) make this a book about a kid interacting with her peers. It's about how you're perceived by a group, not how you're perceived by an authority figure. I think that's an important distinction to make.

Magoon's challenge, as I see it, was to find a way to make his little monster simultaneously monsterish and adorable. We don't know the extent to which Sauer and Magoon collaborated (generally speaking authors and illustrators of picture books tend to have very little contact with one another). So it is entirely conceivable that Sauer's description of Bernadette ("Pointy ears, fangs, claws, tail, two toes, huge eyes, creepy necklace") were all Mr. Magoon had to go on. After that point he had to create a girl child monster cute enough to make her softer instincts plausible but monsterish enough to convince you that you weren't dealing with a human child or anything. He does a pretty darn good job, I have to say. The eyelashes and Ramona-esque haircut help but really it's the facial and body expressions that set her apart from the pack. That coy glance she shoots a rope, knowing full well that she is just moments away from cutting it. Or the sideways excited glance she shoots her classmates when they first spot her homemade cards. There's a subtlety to this little monster, even in the midst of her school assigned havoc.

I would hand this to the girl that finds herself in a family of brothers only. I would hand it to the kid who finds his or herself to be the only sane person in a sea of disobeying twits. I'd give it to the kid who has monsterish instincts of their own, and the one who would never purposefully disobey but can at least give themselves permission to dream about it a little. Heck, I'd give it to everybody. It's not your usual "be yourself" moral, and I think that kids can seriously appreciate that. Worth inspecting closely.

Ages 4-8.

The Library Lady says

Recently there was Yuck That's Not A Monster featuring a sweet fluffy pink monster. And now here's Bernadette who looks monsterly but is also in touch with her sweet side. So here's a bit of that along with another "learn to make your differences acceptable to a group" a la the recent Chamelia. But kids will be so busy enjoying the wild rumpus here that perhaps the message will mercifully be drowned out. And the art is a lot of fun.

Paula says

Meet little Bernadette. She's all monster on the outside: fanged, blue-gray, with claws and a tail, but on the inside she has alarming tendencies toward sweetness. And that just doesn't fly at monster school with the other kids. Agh! Seriously? Another picture book about accepting your differences? Yes. And this is the good one. You knew there had to be one. (I kid, I kid! There are others that are good. It's just that by the time you've read about the energetic sloth, and the tiny dinosaur, the unstealthy ninja, the bat, and the pink penguin, your eyes begin to cross and you begin to think anyone who is different should just be shot. And that includes me, so relax.) ANYWAY. Mostly Monsterly is as funny as can be, with sweet little Bernadette surreptitiously petting kittens, baking cupcakes, and freaking her gruesome classmates out when she suggests a group hug. Her reconciliation of her sweet side and her monster side is innovative and replicable. And I'd like to have sheets made of these cutely creepy illustrations - the cover is exactly the color of my living room.

Miriam says

Contrary to the title and asserted premise, Bernadette actually seems pretty minimally monsterly to me.

This was cute, but I'm not sure what the point was -- the author seemed to be going for a twist (but not really, because the twist has also been done before, better) on the hoary old "it's ok to be yourself" kiddie book theme. But, Bernadette is the one who goes off to Monster Academy, despite preferring hugs and cupcakes to growling and smashing, and she's the one trying to change the other monsters, who seem pretty happy as they are. No one is preventing her from baking and hugging kittens as she likes to do. New acquaintances declining to give you hugs is not really discriminatory, Bernadette. Maybe you should go home to that kitten you appear to have abandoned.

Lisa Vegan says

This book is quite adorable. It's about Bernadette the monster who is mostly monsterly. She does most of the things monsters do, but she's also a bit different and likes to do sweet things (such as those that well behaved girls would do) that monsters don't do or admire in others. In this story Bernadette finds a way to fit in with her fellow young monsters while still being true to herself.

The illustrations are so much fun. They're of monsters but they're not going to scare the vast majority of children. Most are very amusing.

This is a really fun read aloud book.

And, according to the author's bio section on the inside back cover, Bernadette's secret cupcake recipe can be found at her website: <http://www.tammisauer.com/>. I looked and it's the very easiest recipe to veganize but it could be done, and I'm sure for vegan kids, or those allergic to dairy or eggs, any white frosting with sprinkles cupcakes would be satisfactory.
