



Chester's Masterpiece

Mélanie Watt

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Chester's finally ready to write his own masterpiece --- he just needs to get pesky writer-illustrator Mélanie Watt out of the way.

Chester's solo attempts at storytelling are messy, to say the least, but he's determined to go it alone. But where's his story going? After several alternative (but always unhappy) endings, Chester is confronted by a problem he never bargained for. A wry comment on the creative process and how good stories are constructed, this is the most uproarious Chester book yet.

Chester's Masterpiece Details

Date : Published March 1st 2010 by Kids Can Press (first published 2010)

ISBN : 9781554535668

Author : Mélanie Watt

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Animals, Cats, Humor, Fiction

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From Reader Review Chester's Masterpiece for online ebook

Jenna Bailin says

Reading Log

Title: Chester's Masterpiece

Author: Mélanie Watt

Genre: Non-traditional (postmodern) picture book

Theme(s): How to write a story, becoming an author, cats

Opening line/sentence (type directly from text):

“Dear Readers,

I am thrilled to announce that Mélanie Watt will no longer be writing or illustrating children's books because of a toothache and some technical difficulties.”

Brief Book Summary (2-3 sentences in your own words):

Chester the cat has stolen the author's mouse so she cannot finish writing her story. Chester begins to write his story in her book, and she leaves him sticky notes all over the pages asking him if she can get her mouse back.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1 (cut & paste, details below):

<http://www.clcd.com.ezaccess.librarie...>

Connie Fletcher (Booklist, Mar. 1, 2010 (Vol. 106, No. 13))

“Fat tabby Chester continues his fierce battle for control with author Watt. This time, Chester has taken over after hiding Watt's art supplies and computer mouse. The cover image, which looks like it's been taped and stapled over the real cover, showcases Chester brandishing his red marker, with the words With NO help from added before Watt's credit. Chester is a gleeful and exuberant author, rejecting all of Watt's Post-it notes on the ingredients of a good story. This dialogue vividly conveys what books are all about genre, setting, plot, heroes, ending in uproarious fashion. Grades K-2”

(PUBLISHER: Kids Can Press (Toronto ON ;) (Tonawanda NY:), PUBLISHED: c2010.)

Professional Recommendation/Review #2 (cut & paste, details below):

<http://www.clcd.com.ezaccess.librarie...>

Ken Marantz and Sylvia Marantz (Children's Literature)

“Chester's Masterpiece is supposedly crafted by that sly cat himself, with NO help from Mélanie Watt. After hiding Watt's art supplies and computer mouse, Chester takes over, in a book filled with his arrogant boasts along with, the sometimes desperate, post-it interjections from Watt herself. A small real mouse frequently adds his presence (and occasional comments) in this riotous romp by an aspiring feline author-illustrator groping his way toward producing a book of his own. On the way, he offers helpful pointers, before he meets his match in the end. Chester's illustrations, decorated with bits of paper and tape, are made with a red felt marker that also produces his text on three-hole-punched lined paper. As expected from this untutored artist, the pictures are crude, but adequately represent what is necessary for his stories. Chester painted by Watt, in contrast, is a more naturalistic but still cartoon-y cat. Fun on every page from the dedication on. 2010, Kids Can Press, \$18.95. Ages 4 to 8. “

(PUBLISHER: Kids Can Press (Toronto ON ;) (Tonawanda NY:), PUBLISHED: c2010.)

Response to Two Professional Reviews:

Like the reviews pointed out, this book does a wonderful job introducing the terms genre, setting, plot, etc.

The book is funny and the humor is something that both children and adults will find amusing. Additionally, the pointers from the author and the mouse are helpful to children who want to develop their own writing.

Evaluation of Literary Elements:

This is a great example of postmodern literature because the characters in the story are very aware of what is happening in the story and that this is a part of a book. Chester is a very sassy cat and his sense of humor is appealing, but Watts uses this book to teach a little about stories which is nice. The use of the post-it as the author's voice almost makes this book multimodal, because it shows ways of using writing outside of books.

Consideration of Instructional Application:

I would use this story as a mentor text in writing workshop. The author and Chester banter throughout the whole story and through this banter, the author is able to describe aspects of the writing process. Students could identify different parts of the story, writer's block (and strategies to avoid writer's block) and how to write an ending.

Erica Flory says

hilarious

Nielson says

This is the most clever and darling book I have read in a long time! Chester the cat is starring in his third book, but this time he is writing the book all by himself....with ABSOLUTELY NO help from Melanie Watt! He has hidden her art supplies and computer mouse and is off creating his own story in his own way, even if he has to use ideas from other books, even if he doesn't include other characters, and even if his pen runs out of ink! The pages will make you laugh out loud as you read (via post-it notes) the interactions between Melanie and Chester. Kids will absolutely adore this book and will want to read it again and again because there is so much to it! Chester's silliness even extends to the copyright page as well as the biography page. Teachers and parents will also love this book for its ingenuity and creativity. It could be a great start to a writing lesson for a teacher. This book is a must for schools and homes alike! I would give this book 6 stars if it were possible!

Tzu-Mainn Chen says

My daughter wanted to contribute a review. I have decided to average her score and mine. She rates it five stars. I rate it NEGATIVE KAJILLION STARS. Holy cow, this book is excruciating to read night after night after night.

I have mixed her comments with mine own below - but! I have not indicated which is which.

+ it's silly and funny and it seems like it goes on forever but it doesn't

- it seems like it goes on forever and i think maybe it does
- + because there are three characters and that is ridiculous
- because i wanted Chester to come to life so i could drop-kick him into low orbit
- + because there are a live-speaking cat and mouse
- i give up

There you have it!

Carrie says

Interesting, but busy. Might be a difficult read-aloud.

Steve Holden says

I own the other Chester books, but not this one! Upon reading through it at the library, and falling in love with the others I own, this is now on top of my "to find" list! The same premise remains here - Chester, a cat, and his owner - the author/illustrator of the series - go back and forth in trying to tell a story. They provide laughs in a silly way. This one, however, includes some teaching of how to go through the writing process and actually make a book. It's not as easy as Chester thought it was cracked out to be! This one provides the fun, and a creative way to teach/model the writing process to students.

Lara says

As an adult reading it, it's hilarious. I love the sassy cat attitude (even through the copyright page!). As a child reading it, it might be a little more effort. The text doesn't follow a normal page placement set-up. It's more like how a graphic novel has text all over the page to work with all the illustrations. Older kids should be able to follow the unusual structure to the pages, but younger readers might be a little more challenged.

As a storytime book... not really. It's tons of fun, but being able to read it out loud would be very challenging. The conversational nature of the red ink and post-its and the mouse would be very hard for a group of preschoolers to follow. Still, it's a fun read if you want to give it a try on your own.

Paige Patterson says

Title: Chester's Masterpiece

Author: Melanie Watt

Illustrator: Melanie Watt

Genre: Non-traditional (postmodern) picture book

Theme(s): Picture books, Writing/Storytelling, Cats,

Opening line/sentence: Chester!!! I need to make this book. Now tell me where all my stuff is this instant!!!

Brief Book Summary: Chester the cat steals the author, Melanie's writing supplies and begins to write his own book. Melanie writes to Chester on sticky notes, and the two go back and forth arguing over Chester's incorrect writing. The story includes a mouse who Chester includes in his stories, who is not pleased about what Chester writes about him. When Chester's red marker runs out of ink, Melanie draws a goofy mime outfit on Chester, who we see has hidden the author's supplies in his litter box.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1: Horn Book Guide: (3) K-3 In this meta-story, Chester the cat hides author Mélanie Watt's supplies, so he can write his own tale. As Chester struggles with originality and encounters writer's block, Watt offers him--and the reader--pointers on how to construct a real story with a setting, characters, and plot. Attention-grabbing illustrations show Chester, red marker in hand, drawing kid-friendly sketches.

<http://www.hornbookguide.com.ezaccess...>

Professional Recommendation/Review #2: Connie Fletcher (CLCD, Booklist Vol. 106, No. 13): Fat tabby Chester continues his fierce battle for control with author Watt. This time, Chester has taken over after hiding Watt's art supplies and computer mouse. The cover image, which looks like it's been taped and stapled over the real cover, showcases Chester brandishing his red marker, with the words With NO help from added before Watt's credit. Chester is a gleeful and exuberant author, rejecting all of Watt's Post-it notes on the ingredients of a good story. This dialogue vividly conveys what books are all about genre, setting, plot, heroes, ending in uproarious fashion.

<http://www.clcd.com.ezaccess.librarie...>

Response to Two Professional Reviews: The first review comments mostly on the "attention-grabbing" illustrations in the book, which were certainly my favorite part. It was so fun to read everything and look at all the details Chester had drawn in. There is a lot of humor and goofiness in the story, and the uniqueness of how it is written is sure to draw in students just as it drew me in. In addition to how cool of a book it is, it is also absolutely educational, yet does it in a way that is not the focus so much that it takes away from the fun of the book.

Evaluation of Literary Elements: This book is very unique in that it is the author writing sticky notes to Chester the cat who is actually writing the story. The book has a self-awareness as they discuss its own literary elements that Chester is or is not including. Despite the unusual writing and conversation between cat and author, it is easy to figure out what is happening and what is the conflict within the story. The setting is within the book itself, and the plot is all about the writer getting her tools back so she can write an actual story. The story is interesting because as she points out certain elements to Chester to add to his story, in a way they are already there. For example, she says he needs a setting, but the setting is inside the book, also, she takes about needing a hero/villain, but in a way, Chester is the villain for stealing the supplies, and the author is the hero attempting to get things in order.

Consideration of Instructional Application: This story would be great to use as a mentor text for a writer's workshop as it touches on many different aspects of writing. Chester and Melanie discuss copying others' work, writer's block, the "ingredients" needed to write a story, genre, setting, illustrations, protagonists/antagonists, and how to end a story well. I would love to read this story to a class and then focus on one of these aspects everyday to go more in depth with them. By expanding upon each of these topics, you can follow along with Chester's story piece by piece and also pull other mentor texts that show better

examples of the things Chester struggles with.

Donalyn says

Chester the cat, the star of two previous books, Chester and Chester's Back, takes over this time to write his own book. Stealing author Melanie Watt's supplies so that she cannot interfere, Chester illustrates and writes several stories, but cannot seem to find his groove. The clever exchanges between Watt and Chester as they fight for ownership of the book extend onto the copyright page and author's bio. A marvelous story for inspiring young writers and showing the work that goes into creating a book.

Kaethe says

August 4 2010

The Offspring and I really enjoy the Chester books which are lessons in story-telling and book-making and art, as well as amusing picture books. Chester starts out by messing about with the books Melanie Watt is producing, and in this outing he upgrades to stealing her art materials and producing a book all on his own. Watt communicates with him through a series of post-it notes, advising him on how to create his own story, choose his setting, etc.

Library copy.

Kaitlyn Craig says

I did not really care for this book, there was just too much going on and it was hard to know what to read first on each page. There were two different conversations going on throughout and it was confusing to me. I would not want to use this as a read-aloud since I did not really care for it.

Luann says

I already love Scaredy Squirrel, but now I can see I need to go back & read all of the Chester books! This is one of those rare books where all readers need to read the entire copyright page. Too fun!

Laura (Book Scrounger) says

This was a neat idea for a story (a cat takes over the author's book and tries to write his own stories), but it reads like a giant argument between author and cat, and the different "voices" with text all over the place make it confusing and difficult to read aloud to a child. Maybe some adults and older children would enjoy it, but I found it a bit spastic and maybe trying too hard to be funny.

Sarah Westgate says

Genre: Fiction

This book could be used in a Kindergarten class and up. One unique feature of this book is Chester is writing the story and having a conversation with the author through sticky notes. This book would be great to use when teaching children about writing great stories with details!

Tasha says

In this third Chester book, Chester has completely taken over and is writing the book all by himself. He has taken Melanie's art supplies and her computer mouse. But writing a children's book isn't as easy as Chester thinks. He has to come up with original ideas, select a genre, illustrate the book, and then work on a happy ending rather than a gloomy one. Luckily Melanie is right there with helpful criticism along the way, even demonstrating her skills as an artist with just a pencil.

I know this is going to sound odd, but I love the dynamics between Melanie and Chester. Their quibbling is such fun to watch. Here Melanie is confined to writing post-it notes to Chester as he creates his masterpiece. Along the way, readers learn about what goes into creating a children's book, though they will be having far too much fun to notice that they are learning things too. Watts' illustrations are done with such differing styles that it is easy to forget she is also drawing Chester. The book design is a large part of its success and that is thanks to her art.

Highly recommended, but make sure you enjoy the other two Chester books too. All three are such fun.
Appropriate for ages 5-8.
