



The Cheese

Margie Palatini , Steve Johnson (Illustrator) , Lou Fancher (Illustrator)

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Why the cheese stand alone?

In this hilarious riff on the favorite nursery rhyme "The Farmer in the Dell," readers will discover what really happened to that hunk of cheddar.

The Cheese Details

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Author : Margie Palatini , Steve Johnson (Illustrator) , Lou Fancher (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Cheese for online ebook

Beth says

Pre-S-Gr 2. The clever design of the book incorporates Palatini's story of the sequel to "The Farmer in the Dell" with bold watercolor and collage. Johnson and Fancher's illustrations use a cheddar cheese yellow cover, a deep red barn and other farm elements in deep blues, greens and browns. The use of the musical score in collage to add words from the song adds a bit of whimsy and interest, especially for the early reader. Each character's clothing—the dog's blue plaid shirt, the rat's green plaid vest--has its own unique color and pattern. The characters' thoughts and much of their dialogue is in speech bubbles with each character having his own font. Variation of text placement takes the reader across the entire page. Characters diving off the page lead the reader smoothly to the next page. Fluctuation in size of the illustrations help move the story along without crowding the page. Comic strip-type boxes show a few moments in time including the characters waiting until the "cow comes home" led by the farmer. A two-page spread demonstrates the rat moving towards the cheese by changing his size. The dialogue and illustrations could stand alone, but the text enhances them and makes the story even more enjoyable. A great read-aloud, especially paired with a version of the original song. The full-text of the song is included in the back.

Sandy says

Cute story based on the nursery rhyme "The Farmer in the Dell". Kids get a tickle from the ending even though most have never heard of song "The Farmer in the Dell".

The story goes opposite of the song; so in the book the first character the reader meets is the rat. In the Farmer in the Dell song, the rat is the last character. So in the book, the reader meets the rat as he is reading the rules and regulations which are "the cheese stands alone, the cheese stands alone." The rat decides that the song is silly and he grabs his dinner napkin to go eat the cheese which is standing all alone in the dell. From there, the cat confronts the rat and the rat convinces the cat that the song is silly and to go with him to eat the cheese. Next, the dog goes running after the cat and rat to find out what they are doing. In the story, the dog is not very smart; in fact he's pretty dumb. So when the child comes along, the dog spills the beans that the cat and rat are off to eat the cheese in the dell.

And so on. Just before the surprising twist towards the end is a great place for students to make a prediction about whether or not the rat eats the cheese.

Linnea McGowan says

Why DOES the Cheese stand alone?

I LOVED the hilarious take on the song "The Farmer in the Dell," but I was blown away by the details in the illustrations. If you look closely you can see staff notes and lyrics being used to add texture to every aspect of the illustration. AMAZING!

I read it for a Mock Caldecott Award thing my children's department is doing... but I promptly put it on my

list of books to buy and created a lesson plan around it for my elementry school job! SO cool!

...yes I just totally geeked out all over the place. Don't be alarmed.

Deb says

I always felt sorry for the cheese in the Farmer in the Dell song. It always seemed wrong and senseless that the poor cheese has to stand alone. This book is fun and funny and works all that out for me. The rat is the best. Alena enjoyed the book too. She especially liked it when I sang the song at the end.

Sandy says

The cheese must stand alone, you really think so? We all know this popular song from The Farmer in the Dell. Are you singing it now? I bet you are. The story opens up the popular 4 line stanza ending to The Farmer in the Dell where the cheese has to stand alone Hi-ho the dairy-o, The Cheese Stands Alone. Are you singing it now? I bet you are. The cheese only stands alone for so long as the temptation of a chunk of cheese gets the best of everyone and then the cheese gets company. It all starts with the rat checking out the cheese as he emerges from his hole. As he dashes down into the meadow to enjoy the cheese, he is spotted by the cat who thinks she knows what that cunning rat is up to. The rat feels insulted but later he confesses to his mischief. Why does the cheese have to stand alone? The cat tries to explain "well...umm...hmmm...It's the song." It is after some thinking, the two of them decide that together they will attack the cheese. This duo attracts the attention of the dog. This slobbering bothersome dog. He then decides to go with them. This type of action continues as they attract the attention of a girl, a Mother and then a father. It is like a party going to eat this wedge of cheese that has been sectioned off in the field. Tempting cheddar is calling them....

The pictures in the book are exceptional. From the hairs on the rat's nose to the slobber coming off the dog's tongue the pictures are comical and bring a smile to your face. The writing is amusing and entertaining making the reading a breeze. The typeset complimented the book – truly an amusing, entertaining book.

"The dog thought. (Which was not an easy thing for him to do.)"

Teneka Howland says

(2nd - 3rd grade)

The Cheese is a story fun little story that plays off of the nursery rhyme "The Farmer in the Dell". This story is very entertaining and funny. The pictures are very detail oriented. For example, the grass is not only made of fine squiggly lines, it also has words written into it that draws the readers eye. The same goes for the buildings, the sky, and the surrounding land. The illustrator showed dialogue throughout the story by providing "bubbles" similar to those found in comic books or graphic novels. The pictures are also divided into sections on some pages, similar to graphic novels and comic books.

Related Content Areas:

Physical Education/Health, Langauge Arts

Lesson Idea:

The teacher could make a lesson on healthy diets. The story ended with the characters having a picnic party with a variety of food. The students could divide these foods into the different categories of the food pyramid and decide whether or not this meal was a healthy one or not. The students could practice separating other foods according to their place in the food pyramid. The students could also create a healthy diet of their own.

Megan says

Grades 1-3

The Cheese was an absolute hoot! Palatini plays off the nursery rhyme The Farmer and the Dell while using the estranged relationship of a cat and rat to tell the story. She uses strong words like 'ridiculous', 'scurrying', and 'sneaking' to describe the rats actions to claim the cheese. The artwork in this book is amazing and it is completely obvious as to why it is a Monarch Award Nominee for 2009. The rat and cat's ideas are incorporated into the artwork and it is easy to see exactly what they are each thinking. The illustrators use an amazing array of colors to interest the reader. Not only the colors and illustrations will appeal to the reader, but the reader will find out exactly why that "cheese stands alone!"

Language Arts/Spelling

Students could look into other nursery rhymes to see if they have any underlying meanings.

Sandybear76 says

Read this one to a class of 2nd graders and to a class of 3rd graders. They got the giggles out of the story and liked the illustrations, which had describing words in the pictures. A few students wanted to check it out but I need to read it again later in the week to the other 2 classes of 2nd and 3rd graders. We did sing a rousing rendition of farmer in the dell at the end of the story.

Tabitha says

Ages: 1st grade-4th grade

Johnson and Fancher developed strategic illustrations in the book, The Cheese, which contained framing with thin, straight lines as well as curvy thin lines mixed with an array of primary and secondary colors. They created words and symbols that blended in with nature and the bodies of the characters. Palatini arranged the text to become part of the background while mimicking the same words in the narrative form of the text with a lot of repetition. She also included bubbles as if from a comic book that expressed what the characters were saying and thinking. Kids can appreciate this story because it is a familiar nursery rhyme written in another form.

Language Arts/ Science

LA- Write your own nursery rhyme and illustrate

Betty-Ann says

At the end of the song, "The Farmer in the Dell", the cheese stands alone. All alone. But why? There is stands – so yellow, so mellow, so tasty. The Rat doesn't think this is a very good idea. "This is ridiculous! What's the point of a hunk of cheese being left out and lonesome when it can be enjoying the company of a perfectly fine rat like me?" So off he goes to get the cheese. But on the way he meets the cat, the dog, the child, the Mother, the farmer and they all decide that a picnic to eat the cheese would be best. But while they are all off getting the rest of the food, they leave the rat with the cheese. And he is saying, "Take your time. I'll just stay here and hang out with the cheddar. Heh. Heh. Heh."

Alesha Harris says

This is a book that goes along with a nursery rhyme. It tells the story of about a rat who wanted to eat some cheese. This is a funny story to read to children and it helps children understand the concept of sequencing.

Matthew says

This is the sort of story that can be appreciated by readers of any age. It's all based around the familiar song, The Farmer in the Dell, and what it does best is point out the absurdity of that old nursery rhyme. The class that I shared this with laughed the entire time. The repetition builds the momentum of the book. Like so many other stories that Margie Palatini has whipped up over the years, the wordsmithing is top of the line and the illustrations pair well with the general silliness of the text. Add it to your fractured faiy tale collection or your nursery rhyme collection, but don't miss out on the fun. This is worth your time.

Ms. Kelly says

Kind of cute. I do really like the idea of using "the farmer in the dell" to question authority.

BUT the payoff at the end was a little anti-climactic. I expected something big, like maybe the cheese stood alone because it was a rabid piece of attack cheese, and it was for the protection of the rest of the farm, or maybe it was quarantined because of a rare cheese-disease that turns all who taste it into additional chunks of cheese!

Alas, neither of those were the real outcome, and I was left a little disappointed in the saccharine ending.

Katie says

The Cheese
5 out of 5 Stars

The illustrators used hues of blue and green that gave the audience the feeling of being outdoors. The artwork is completed by using various methods of painting. There is a sense of layering and collage with the text and music pages used in the illustrations. The pages are busy with text written in the paintings, which causes the reader to examine closely each piece of artwork. In addition, framing is used to give the book further ways in which to slow down readers. There are various fonts used; each font portrays a different message. Some fonts seem to look hurried, some careful, others practical. The plot of the story is predictable and the author uses repetition in the text. The target audience of the book would be students from kindergarten to third grades. Students would be able to relate to wanting something that they cannot have. I gave the book five out of five stars for the details of the illustrations. The addition of text to the illustrations, as well as framing, made the book stronger because readers have to examine each page closely. Music and science are two areas in which the book could be integrated. In music, students could have a lesson about the various barnyard songs. For science, students could learn about the process of making cheese.

Sassy says

I really love what Margie Palatini does within the world of Mother Goose, Brothers Grimm, etc. Piggie Pie! is still my absolute favorite.
