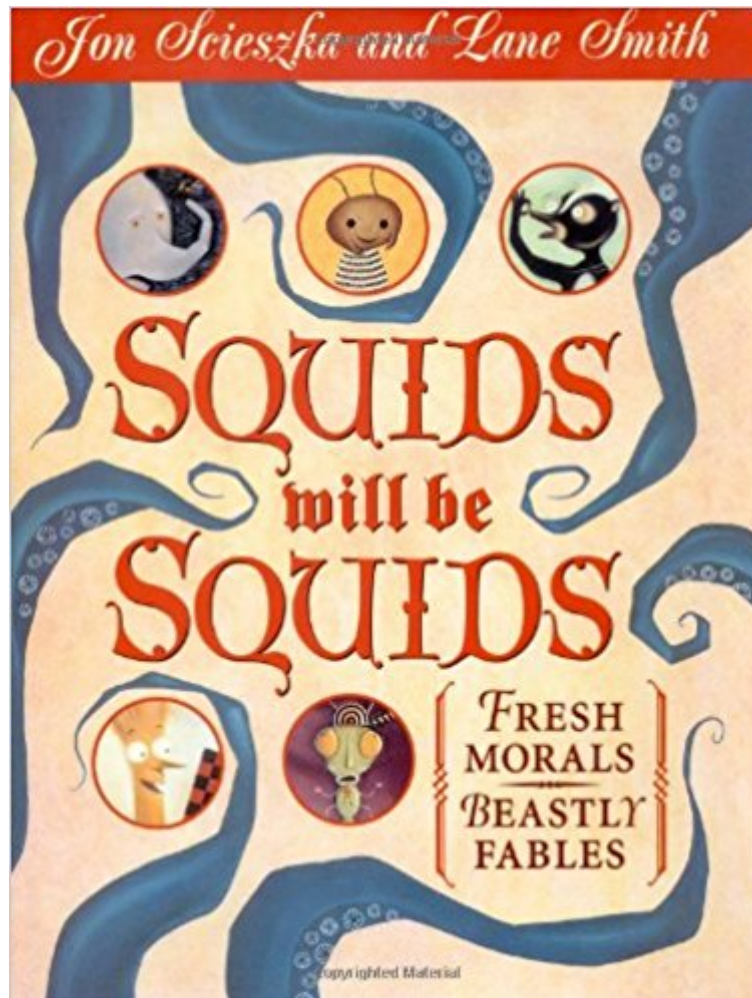




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Squids Will Be Squids: Fresh Morals, Beastly Fables



Synopsis

A Fable There once was an Eagle and a Lion who had worked together on a lot of books. They did The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!, The Stinky Cheese Man, and Math Curse. Everyone is waiting for Science Curse, said their editor, Queen Bee. Okay, said Eagle Scieszka and Lion Smith. So why don't we make a book of weird fables with strange morals and call it Squids Will Be Squids? And they did. MORAL: With these guys, you just never know. Fables have been around for a very long time. Aesop was famous for telling them, although he wasn't the first or the best-looking. Now from the incomparable team who stood fairy tales on their heads with The Stinky Cheese Man, come fables as you've never heard them before. There's the story of Little Walrus, who tells just a little too much of the truth, and the morality tale of the boastful Piece of Toast and Fruit Loops. We read of Slug, so busy admiring herself that she doesn't see the steamroller behind her, and learn the wise lessons of Hand, Foot, and Tongue (Moral: There are some things we don't talk about at the dinner table). In their inimitable style, Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith have created contemporary fables that reflect all the bossiness, sneakiness, bragging and silliness of our everyday lives. Of course, these tales are handled with such tact and sensitivity that we would never recognize a person like ourselves in them would we? Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith are an enormously popular and highly acclaimed author and illustrator team. Mr. Scieszka perfected his keen ear for juvenile humor as an elementary school teacher. He now writes full time. Mr. Smith is a filmmaker as well as a writer and illustrator. He recently designed the characters for the film version of Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach. Jon Scieszka lives in Brooklyn, New York. Lane Smith lives in New York City.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Every once in a while a book crosses our desks that makes us sit quietly delighted--except for a few squeaks of unmitigated joy--and this oversized, energized, stylized, highly prized book of fables is one of them. Jon Scieszka has a simple philosophy of the fable: "If you can't say something nice about someone, change the guy's name to Donkey or Squid." After all, the alleged Aesop did it. *Squids Will Be Squids* offers lessons such as "Everyone knows frogs can't skateboard, but it's kind of sad that they believe everything they see on TV." Sure, it's goofy, but it's also saying to kids, "Don't believe everything you see on TV." In "Duckbilled Platypus vs. Beefsnakstick," the bragging platypus and his beefy buddy teach us "Just because you have a lot of stuff, don't think you're so special." Of course, there is nothing heavy-handed here--morals such as "He who smelt it, dealt it" and "Elephants never forget, except sometimes" satirically prance amid the more heartfelt snippets of sagacity. Scieszka and illustrator Lane Smith are unparalleled in their eccentricity and unrelenting in their boyish, twisted-yet-innocent zeal. In co-creations from *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* to *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* to *Math Curse*, Scieszka's wacko sense of humor and Smith's quirky, always gorgeous artwork thrillingly congeal in Molly Leach's creative, exuberant design. We see many picture books that are better suited for adults than kids, but this fine specimen is truly meant for goofballs of all ages. (Click to see a sample spread. Illustration © 1998 Lane Smith, reproduced with permission of Viking, a division of Penguin Putnam.) (All ages) --Karin Snelson

Scieszka and Smith, creators of *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, turn their attention away from fairy tales to reinvent the fable, thinly disguising sage bits of advice as pithy morals. Foxes and grapes are too pedestrian for these veteran absurdists, who tackle boastfulness in "Duckbilled Platypus vs. BeefSnakStikR" and who denounce vanity in the story of a skateboarding frog. Unusual characters notwithstanding, each piece highlights an everyday, modern situation in the manner of Aesop's classics. Topics in these 18 tales hit the bull's-eye, running the gamut from the toxic clique (Shark, Wasp and Bacteria wonder why no one eats lunch at their table; "Moral: Think about it") to the dynamics of a group

project (Rock, Scissors and Paper all blame one another for their bad grade; "Moral: Shoot") to handling friends and family. In "Termite, Ant, & Echidna," for instance, foolish Ant throws aside his best friend when he meets a new playground pal, realizing too late that "Echidna is another name for Spiny Anteater." Scieszka ventures deep into child appeal territory, as in a gas-passing anecdote about a skunk, musk ox and cabbage ("Moral: He who smelt it, dealt it"). Smith ardently keeps pace with Scieszka's leaps of fancy, lending credence to a talking piece of toast, a walrus with a phone and a spiny, spiteful blowfish. In one full-bleed painting, little green Grasshopper cowers in the giant shadow of his mother as she grills him about his homework; strokes of eggplant-colored paint extend the sweeping size of her tentacle-like appendages, while splatters of softer shades suggest the sweat from her brow. In another, the titular fable, Smith utilizes a cartoon-like progression of panels to contrast the animated expressions of Deer, Mouse and Rabbit as they enthusiastically attempt to plan an outing with that of the deadpan, naysayer Squid. Meanwhile the design, with text printed in three typefaces of multiple sizes and colors, drives home each moral. The oversize format allows for a variety of page layouts, not to mention an in-your-face attitude that will hold readers' rapt attention. Unlike Paul and Marc Rosenthal's satiric effort in *Yo, Aesop! Get a Load of These Fables* (Children's Forecasts, Mar. 23), this crafty volume pays tribute to the original fables' economy and moral intent. Scieszka and Smith thriftily present one tale per spread, and beneath this duo's playful eccentricity readers will discover some powerful insights into human nature. Ages 7-9. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is hilarious. It is so snarky. I'm a big Jon Scieszka fan, have been since I was little, and want my son to have his books. My son is 6 and understood most of the humor in this book, but he is an old soul. I'd say this book would be better suited for 8 and up. The tales are hilarious, the humor is unique, and the artwork is AWESOME. The book is made up of numerous stories, about 2 pages long each. The characters in all of them are crazy looking...almost Tim Burton-like. The stories are enjoyable for both kids and adults. Overall this is a really fun book for anyone who likes off-the-wall humor.

This is very funny indeed. I've been a fan since his true story of the 3 little pigs, and even more since the "Stinky Cheese Man". This one is great. Some of the fables are a bit subversive; some are just twisted albeit probably accurate... and they are all a lot of fun. I enjoyed it a lot myself, and will be giving it to some parents I know who I think will also like it for their kids.

Great book for teaching rhyme and fables to students.

A favorite book for many years now. Reading it with my grandchildren, I used and encouraged much inflection and varied voicing for different characters. Each story is unique and wonderful fun, though some are a bit gross. We still quote the title story, "Squids Will Be Squids," in our communications in person, by texts, and on Facebook -- "Great!" said deer will elicit always "Great!" said mouse.

This is the best story of morals ever written. Ridiculous meets hilarious.

Our family loves this book! It has been a favorite of all my children growing up.

I don't really understand the reviews here: firstly, who says that "children's books" are only for children? If you (the adult) enjoyed it, seems like money well-spent to me. Secondly, there seems to be a large number of humor-challenged adults and children. My wife and I (who are not children) think it is funny, and so does our two year old son, who also LOVES *Cowboy and Octopus*, which has the same sort of off-kilter sensibility. The comments that the "morals are not appropriate" are really strange to me -- the morals are the punchlines to what are extended jokes (which are funny, because the authors are quite observant).

In children's literature, the main character usually is the cover subject and title such as "Charlotte's Web," "Froggy Plays Soccer," and even "Harry Potter," because the targeted audience is assumed not to be sophisticated enough to interpret indirect meanings. Then there is the trio of Jon, Lane and Molly, who, like Maurice Sendak, love to thumb their noses at convention. "Squids Will Be Squids," (a play on "it is what it is," perhaps?) is not about the ocean life of squids - it is a collection of wacky stories with morals. Apparently young readers were sophisticated enough to figure that out using the cover art and cheeky tone as their guide. The five and nine-year old I read this book with laughed with abandon even if they didn't always get the inside jokes behind the stories or the morals. Bathroom humor like "He who smelt it dealt it," was a big hit as was "It takes one to know one." I wasn't crazy about this work but I did love the title, and its exuberant, devil-may-care attitude and the numerous double entendres. The layout and design are extraordinary. There's plenty in here to entertain little and big readers. This is not a read alone book, though, even though it's geared for the read-alone age group of 4-8. The power in this work comes in sharing the experience. Otherwise I think it will fall flat. The moral to this review of "Squids will be Squids: Fresh Morals Beastly Fables"

is "Never judge a book by its cover."

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