



The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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In this humorous poem, Custard the cowardly dragon saves the day when a pirate threatens Belinda and her pet animals.

The Tale of Custard the Dragon Details

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Author : Ogden Nash , Lynn Munsinger (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Tale of Custard the Dragon for online ebook

Cheriee Weichel says

I've read this poem and book more times than I can count. It has been fun this week sharing it with groups of primary students at the school I am working at.

Custard looks like a regular dragon, but at heart he is a timid creature. The contradiction between his appearance, who he is, and how he is treated by his housemates is what makes this book such a delightful read.

Miriam says

Would've liked better if the others hadn't continued putting Custard down.

Matt Garcia says

Not a bad little story. The illustrations and narrative were fairly average.

Connie says

I saw this in the store and had to pick it up. Ogden Nash had a real ear for language, I tell you. The story flows along at a nice, bouncy, evocative pace, and the illustrations complement it nicely.

A few reviewers elsewhere have commented that they find the non-dragon characters mean-spirited - they "tickle Custard unmerciful", "rudely call him Percival", and after the danger is past and gone (gotta love a book where a dragon eats a pirate!) they declare that THEY were really braver than Custard after all!

I see the point, though I see their teasing as more familial than mean-spirited. However, if this is a concern to you, you should definitely read the poem before buying the book - it's easy enough to find on Google.

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Dolly says

The illustrations on the cover got me hooked on this book right away. I could tell that it was a short story with a rhyming narrative and I figured our girls would love it. It wasn't as big a hit as I thought it might be,

but they did enjoy listening to me read it.

The dragon was funny and reminded me of Courage, the Cowardly Dog on Cartoon Network. The illustrations are particularly fun and really helped to liven up the story.

Asho says

I had this poem in an illustrated children's poetry book when I was a kid and I would read it over and over again. I was excited to come across this in the library. My kids read it with their grandma, who loves it as well. The illustrations aren't as great in this book as the illustration was in the poetry book I had as a kid, but the poem is just so fun to read.

Marissa Burkey says

Custard is not very brave, but when a pirate threatens his friends, courage abounds as he steps in to save the day. May be a little long for Storytime.

Tim Robinson says

Belinda was brave as a barrel of bears.

S.S. says

This is an amusing little poem about a cowardly dragon called Custard! He lives with his owner Belinda and a passel of other animals who make fun of him for being cowardly. (bless him.) He gains courage enough though to eat a pirate and save the day, hooray, although he still returns to being cowardly in the end, though, bless. It's a good lesson to us all to prove we don't have to be brave all of the time, just when it matters. This was great fun to read and made me laugh. This is something I'll enjoy re-reading in the future.

Bianca Orellana says

Adorable

Tabby says

So cute and funny! I hope my boys love Custard the Dragon as much as I do because this book is going to become a regular in our house.

David Ward says

The Tale of Custard the Dragon by Ogden Nash, Lynn M. Munsinger (Illustrator) (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers 1959) (Fiction - Children's). This rhyming poem from Ogden Nash has delighted children for over fifty years. It tells the tale of the cowardly dragon Custard, who lives with Belinda and her pets. Custard is not brave at all; the other pets and toys scare him, so Custard the cowardly dragon just hangs his head and cries. One day though, pirates come to terrorize Belinda and her pets, and Custard finds the courage to save the day! This is a wonderful romp that will have your kids demanding to hear it over and over again. My rating: 9/10, finished 1960.

Shanna Gonzalez says

The Tale of Custard the Dragon is a whimsical fantasy in verse about Belinda, who lives alone in her house with four pets, a dog, a cat, a mouse, and... yes, a dragon named Custard. All the other denizens of the house pride themselves on their fearlessness at make-believe games, and they deride poor Custard for his timidity. However, when a real danger arrives in the form of a burglarizing pirate bent on mayhem, only Custard is ready with a suitably ferocious response. After the danger is past, everyone begins to boast again about their courage, and Custard agrees that everyone else is braver than he is.

Nash's hilarious wordcraft and sly humor will amuse children and adults alike, and Lynn Munsinger's whimsical illustrations merrily evoke the mood of the poem, while bringing the rather complex vocabulary into reach for kids. Younger listeners may not immediately grasp the central irony, and a brief explanation may be necessary for them to appreciate the joke. This book is probably best introduced as a read-aloud, although confident readers will also be able to enjoy it.

Purists may also want to check out Custard the Dragon, the earlier version illustrated by Linell Nash Smith, Ogden Nash's daughter, although it's out of print and hard to find.

Janet Luch says

Custard is a dragon who is considered a coward by himself and those who live with him. However, when danger suddenly arrives in the form of a pistol-packing pirate, everyone runs except Custard. Custard eats the pirate and saves the day.

I liked the descriptive phrases in this book, such as realio, trulio that describes what the reader is supposed to consider as true. The full-color pictures by Lynn Munsinger allow children to tell the story even if they cannot read the words. The toddlers that I read the book to were unfazed by the fact that the dragon ate the pirate.

Big Bad Bruce is another book that lets young children see that life is fair and bad people are held accountable for their actions, although maybe in surprising ways.

Elizabeth says

The Tale of Custard the Dragon by Ogden Nash is the story of a cowardly pet dragon and his owner,

Belinda. While Belinda is as brave as a "barrelful of bears," Custard would like nothing better than to hide in a nice, safe cage. Together the two make an interesting pair, defeat a pirate, and return the household to its everyday status.

However, Ogden Nash's story is an unusual one. While it is full of rhyming words and memorable illustrations, the main character, Custard, does not change. Nash's story serves as a reminder that appearance isn't everything and that everyone (even dragons) can struggle with self-esteem. It also teaches you that not every story has a happy ending. For these reasons and the nature of the story, I would be hesitant to read this book to younger readers.

Katherine says

When I was small, my grandmother used to read me Ogden Nash's Custard the Dragon so I was delighted when my father bought a copy for my son. I'm pleased to report that he loves it every bit as much as I and here's why:

"Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little gray mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon."

Unfortunately, as the name alludes, the little pet dragon is rather cowardly, unlike Belinda's other pets who are as "brave as a tiger in a rage." However Custard comes good when a pirate suddenly appears.

The verse is sublime, here's the description of the pirate:

"Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right,
And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright,
His beard was black, one leg was wood;
It was clear that the pirate meant no good."

Thanks to that verse alone we spent one entire summer pretending to be pirates!

This is a fabulous and timeless poem/story for children. Even if you don't get the book, I urge you to find the poem online and read it out to your children. It stands up on its own and doesn't need the pictures. If I could give it 5*Plus I would!

Ann Marie Denson says

Theme: The themes of this book are judgement and courage, as the main character is misjudged based on its appearance for its ability to protect the ones it cares about.

Summary: This poem tells the tale of a misperceived dragon. Belinda described Custard as a big coward with scary characteristics from roaring from head to toe. Custard is shy and sensitive compared to Belinda and her other friends, so he is their constant victim of embarrassment. Then, when the other animals fail to protect Belinda from a pirate, Custard proves to be the bravest of all. He also has the biggest, most humble heart. The cute and simple poem tells of Custard's transformation from intimidating to embracing, and how he was

misconceived based on his appearance.

Personal Response: I am guilty of judging Custard the Dragon at the beginning of the book. I assumed he was going to be the enemy of the story after I saw a picture of his mouth open wide, with sharp teeth and fire bulging out. As I continued reading and found Custard to be courageous and selfless, I realized exactly what the author was trying to convey to kids. Even in a simple children's book, adults can be reminded of life lessons, like not being quick to judge.

Recommendation: I recommend this book for children ages 4 to 7. It is a quick and entertaining read that will bring laughter. The poem should be read with enthusiasm to draw emotions from the child, because the story line lacks dramatic effect. Overall the book teaches a very important message to always get to know someone first before making assumptions of their character.

Jane Irish Nelson says

This is a favorite poem from my childhood. I picked up a copy as a gift for my young great-niece, and had to re-read it. Children should get a real kick out of it. Wonderfully illustrated!

Amber Elby says

This is my favorite book to read to my daughters. The illustrations in this edition open conversations about narrator reliability (Is Custard really a coward?). Share it with your family.
