



Battle Bunny

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Encourage creativity with this wildly entertaining picture book mash-up from the minds of Jon Scieszka and Mac Barnett.

Alex has been given a saccharine, sappy, silly-sweet picture book about Birthday Bunny that his grandma found at a garage sale. Alex isn't interested - until he decides to make the book something he'd actually like to read. So he takes out his pencil, sharpens his creativity, and totally transforms the story!

Birthday Bunny becomes *Battle Bunny*, and the rabbit's innocent journey through the forest morphs into a supersecret mission to unleash an evil plan - a plan that only Alex can stop.

Featuring layered, original artwork that emphasizes Alex's additions, this dynamic exploration of creative storytelling is sure to engage and inspire.

Battle Bunny Details

Date : Published October 22nd 2013 by Simon Schuster Books for Young Readers (first published September 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781442446731

Author : Jon Scieszka , Mac Barnett , Matthew Myers (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Humor, Animals

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From Reader Review Battle Bunny for online ebook

SheriC (PM) says

I don't remember where I saw the recommendation for this book, but thank you, unknown book reviewer, for introducing me to this stinkin' adorable, yet subversive, little children's book.

The book is presented as a sickly sweet kiddie book about a birthday bunny who wanders sadly around the forest, meeting various friends who don't seem to care that it's his birthday, until *surprise* they have a party for him and HEA. Except that Alex has no use for this gift book from Grandma, and he "improves" it with his own story, turning Birthday Bunny into Battle Bunny and his birthday quest into an evil plan for world destruction that must be foiled by... superhero Alex!

I so want to get this for my little great-nephew, but am unsure when it would be age-appropriate for him, as it clearly requires a kid old enough to get the joke. The cover indicates ages 5-9 and he just started kindergarten, so... maybe for his next birthday?

Betsy says

Remember *Duck Amuck*? I am referring of course to that old Looney Tunes short where Daffy Duck came to the realization that his fourth wall is a bit . . . faulty. Watching that short, as Daffy is being rubbed out of existence by an eraser I like to think about those kids seeing the short for the first time. Maybe amongst them there are some kids who feel this is a keen bit of transgression. Maybe some are shocked by the fact that unspoken rules are being broken left and right. Or (more likely) maybe they all just go with it. Kids get over shocks to their systems amazingly fast. But even the most jaded amongst them will have to pause for half a second as they take in the brand new picture book *Battle Bunny* by Jon Scieszka, Mac Barnett, and Matthew Myers. Talk about forbidden territory! Here we have a book that espouses the freedom to create over the old established (and, quite frankly, achingly poorly written) order. Parents and children have fought the disparate concepts of creativity vs. law & order since the first toddler took a crayon in a chubby little hand and created a masterpiece on the dining room walls. *Battle Bunny* just cranks that fight up to eleven.

Open this book and you'll see the following inscription written in a flowery hand. "Happy Birthday, Alexander! To my little birthday bunny on his special day. Love, Gran Gran." It quickly becomes apparent that Gran Gran's present to Alex, a poor man's Little Golden Book-esque bit of schlock called *Birthday Bunny* was evidently not doing it for her beloved grandson. The entire book looks as though it has been scribbled with a thick black pencil. These aren't random scribbles though. Oh me, oh my, no. Alex has vastly improved what once was a limp tale about a bunny that thinks everyone has forgotten his very special day. Under Alex's hand sentences are reworded, illustrations are updated, and the new plot concerns a bunny supervillain bent on world destruction. The only one who can stop him? A boy conveniently named Alex who is the only one with sufficient chops to take the bunny down.

Barnett has always tended to follow in the footsteps of his mentor, Mr. Scieszka, which is to be expected. He burst onto the scene a couple years ago with picture books that worked to upset the standard expectations. Guess Again mocks the guessing game picture book, Count the Monkeys does the same with counting books, and Chloe and the Lion makes fun author/illustrator collaborations. Scieszka himself is the merry jester of the form, taking picture subversion to a whole other level with books like *The Stinky Cheese Man* and *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Put the two together and where does that get you? Well

apparently what happens is that the two get bored with the whole fourth wall idea. Apparently it's not GOOD enough for them anymore! They want to go bigger and bolder. They want to incorporate 21st century mash-up culture with this new generation of visual learners so as to make a book that becomes interactive in whole new ways. End result: *Battle Bunny*.

The selection of Matthew Myers as artist was particularly interesting to me here. He's not a usual suspect when you think about other Scieszka and Barnett collaborations. Normally those guys are far more likely to be paired with a Lane Smith or an Adam Rex or maybe even a David Shannon. But looking at what Myers has done in the past, the choice makes a certain amount of sense. It was Myers who illustrated Erin Cabatingan's two Musk Ox books (both titles unafraid to muck with the picture book format right there). Here he creates art that could be best described as Garth Williams meets Dav Pilkey. The meticulous level of detail is honestly insane. Even when you turn the book over and look at the back cover you can see that every single tiny bunny gracing the top of the cover has been gracefully perverted into a killer, a spy, or a fart machine. Even the first shot of the bunny hero of this book, which an initial glance would appear to be free of Alex's shenanigans, hides a couple "improvements" here and there. Let's just say Beatrix Potter would not approve.

It's also hard not to enjoy a book where the creators are having such a bloody good time. What's evident from the cover onward is how much Scieszka & Co. are enjoying their jobs. First there's the question of coming up with a picture book plot worthy of tearing into proverbial shreds. As a children's librarian I can assure you that the old everyone-forgot-my-birthday-oh-wait-no-they-didn't shtick is as old as the hills and twenty times as saccharine. If Scieszka and Barnett are ever inclined to write a sequel to this I suggest they deface a story about a little bunny that wants to dance ballet but all the forest animals tell him he can't. That would be the OTHER overdone picture book plot out there. So you've the subject matter as well as the actual writing and overwriting itself. The book had to be believable and the overlaid text equally so. THEN they had to get an artist on board with this madness. It had to be someone capable of drawing not just a mockery of ootsy-cutesy bunny tales, but also a realistic kid/stick drawing style. Put all those elements together and the end product works. I did find myself wishing I could see the original "Birthday Bunny" pages first, but them's the breaks, kid.

All this begs the question: Is this book good in its own right or is this just a case of cleverness for cleverness's sake? Because clever it most certainly is. Not just the concept itself, but the execution. But is it clever with hope that adults will ooh and ahh over the technical aspects of the form, or will kids "get it" too? According to reliable sources, the best way to read this book aloud is to read the "original" cute sections first, then follow it up with a reading of the *Battle Bunny* parts. That gives a really good sense of what's being done on the page. And maybe I'm wrong about this, but this book has the potential to blow their little minds. At its best the book will do precisely what its critics most fear. It will inspire children to "improve" books, websites, photographs, and other forms of media on their own. Directed in the right way this energy could be immensely creative. After all, how far a step is it from the child who updates preexisting narratives to the child to makes up stories of their own. You heard it here first then: *Battle Bunny* is fan fiction for the elementary school set. Admittedly one wonders how many kids will repeatedly read *Battle Bunny* after the first thrill. Still, the violent storyline is enticing in its own way and certainly some readers will pore over the changes, marveling at how sentences and scenes could be changed so dramatically.

Not since *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* has there been a book so prone to accidental weeding in libraries nationwide. *Book Eating Boy* has a bite taken out of the corner of its cover, and we librarians spent half our days rescuing that title from the discard box thanks to our overly enterprising pages. *Battle Bunny* is doomed to suffer this same fate. Just look at it. Tell me that those unfamiliar with its cheeky subtext won't be tossing it in the trash upon spotting it on a shelf. Pity the occasional child who will be interrogated by a clerk about how this book came to be so horribly defaced. Consider too the parents, librarians, teachers, and more who will object to this book on moral grounds. A book that encourages drawing in books? Horrors! Maybe it's crazy that I don't feel the same way. I dunno. Reading through it, the lesson I took away was that insipid

picture books that talk down to their audiences deserve what they get. If a book doesn't respect the child reader, kids will know and they'll resent the book for it. Barnett and Scieszka strike that immensely difficult balance between what kids enjoy and what adults enjoy. They respect their readers' intelligence and end up with remarkably interesting books as a result. Whether or not *Battle Bunny* takes off and inspires copycats or disappears without some much as a whisper remains to be seen. At the very least, it's gonna blow a few minds. And that's gotta be worth something right there. A pip.

For ages 4-8.

Cheryl says

4.5 stars rounded up. The concept is so very brilliant, but the strain of reading the book doesn't yield a big pay-off for me. But then, I'm not an eight yo boy. I'm unsure, too, if this has shelf appeal, because it looks *exactly* like an old, scuffed, defaced baby story. Alex, the main character, is going places, though; he's so imaginative and talented.

And you and your kids can, too. Go to www.mybirthdaybunny.com and make your own version. Or go to a thrift store and find your own re-writable story book.

Ronyell says

After reading Jon Scieszka's famous children's books "The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales" and "The True Story of the Three Little Pigs," I was really excited to check out some of Jon Scieszka's latest works! Lo and behold, I happened to stumble upon one of Jon Scieszka's most recent children's book "Battle Bunny (or Birthday Bunny)," co-written by Mac Barnett along with illustrations by Matthew Myers (along with some help from Alex) and this was a pretty interesting read!

Story 1: Birthday Bunny

Today is a special day for Bunny as he realizes that today is his birthday and spends most of the story going to his friends Crow, Badger, Squirrel, Turtle and Bear and telling them that today is a special day indeed! Unfortunately, all of Birthday Bunny's friends do not seem to realize that today is his birthday and Bunny is upset over this.

Will Bunny's friends remember his birthday?

Story 2: Battle Bunny

Today is a special day for Battle Bunny as he starts plotting to take over the world by cutting down all of the trees in the forest! Battle Bunny meets up his enemies Crow, El Tejon the Badger Wrestler, Sergeant Squirrel of the Robot Police Force, Shaolin Bear and Ninja Turtle and he ends up beating up all of them. It seems that no one will be able to defeat Battle Bunny and his plans of world domination until a small boy named Alex steps up to take down Battle Bunny!

Will Alex save the day?

Read this book to find out what happens in both of these stories!

I have actually heard about this book through one of my book friends' reviews and as I was reading their review on this book, I was immediately interested and I went right away to my library to pick up this book! This was probably one of the most creative picture books I had ever read as the format is quite unique from what I usually read from picture books. I loved the way that both Jon Scieszka and Mac Barnett wrote this story as you have the story about Birthday Bunny being the actual story going on here while the story about Battle Bunny is the one that is being written over the "Birthday Bunny" story (with childlike drawings and multiple crossing out of words being shown in loving detail). I must admit that I enjoyed the "Battle Bunny" story a bit more than the "Birthday Bunny" story because well, the "Birthday Bunny" story is your typical "main character is celebrating their birthday with their friends" plot, while the "Battle Bunny" story is full of awesome moments of Battle Bunny battling his enemies while that was the story that was being written over the "Birthday Bunny" story with childlike drawings being drawn all over the pages! Matthew Myers' artwork is truly creative and cute at some parts as the drawings of Birthday Bunny are drawn in a cute and realistic way while the artwork for Battle Bunny are drawn in stick figures and has militaristic accessories being drawn on the birthday bunny characters to make them all look tougher than how they are really drawn.

The reason why I gave this book a four star rating was because there were times where it was difficult to read through this book due to having to read two different stories going on at the same time. Now, this is a pretty creative way to write a story, but this might be pretty hard for some children to read through, especially if they are not used to reading two different stories going on at the same time.

Overall, "Battle Bunny (Birthday Bunny)" is a truly creative story for both children and adults to read as it is full of comedy and action that will last for years! I would recommend this book to children ages five and up since the writing style might confuse some children.

Review is also on: Rabbit Ears Book Blog

Romelle says

My poor disturbed 4-year-old nephew kept asking, "why did someone write in the book?" My 10 year-old son's response to the book was, "That's pretty cool. I want to do that and change the story of a book too. Do you have one I can write on?"

Those two responses can create a problem. Regardless, it's a very funny book. The dynamic duo of Jon Scieszka and Mac Barnett never fails to put on a great show that is sure to entertain!

The story can be overwhelming and confusing to read with all the "graffiti." I suggest reading the book twice. First read the original version, Birthday Bunny, if you can read under the handwritten text, then the edited version (handwritten text), Battle Bunny. It's interesting to see the changes to the story and makes a fun read.

Mathew says

Recommended by someone on Twitter and having already found myself a huge Scieszka fan after *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, I loved this book from the very first page onwards (or even the front cover) for the very clever play it does with form and style.

Originally a book meant for a young boy as a birthday present, it finds its schmaltzy, sickening narrative completely defaced by the owner in which *Birthday Bunny* becomes *Battle Bunny* and undergoes a series of deadly escapades in order to overthrow the stock characters of the book. Equally enjoyable is the idea of celebrating the breaking of the rule of writing/rubbing out/destroying of books. Definitely one for reluctant readers who might like to see that books are not always what they are seen as being.

Kellee says

Full review at: <http://www.unleashingreaders.com/?p=2447>

This picture book would be so much fun as a read aloud (original story than the modified one). Also, I can also picture bringing in picture books (maybe older ones or bought at a used book store) and letting the students modify their own! How much fun!

This book made me laugh out loud! What a perfect insight into the mind of a young boy (reminds me of so many doodles I've seen on papers over the year!). Also, I was blown away by the creativity of Scieszka and Barnett. I wish I was teaching in a classroom because it would have been a book that I would have brought into the classroom to share with kids (yes, even my middle schoolers. Actually, definitely my middle schoolers.) because it is just so awesome!

Carrie Gelson says

This title gets full points for its highly appealing "revision" to make a book absolutely kid appreciated. Mind you, not just kid, as my husband read it and instantly wanted to buy a copy for his father for Christmas! It is the creative license that this book celebrates - the humour, the scribbles, the reinventing of a character . . . that I love. Also worth noting - I showed the book trailer to my class and they ask me about 15 times a day if I have bought the book yet! (Can't wait to book talk and let this book loose into the hands of my classroom full of readers who will energetically devour it!) I think this book delivers the message that we can all be writers and imagine characters that we can bring to life. SO MUCH FUN.

John says

Brilliant "altered" book that turns a sugary sweet birthday book into a violent quest for absolute power. Fun for all ages.

Kristina says

Again, another children's book beats almost all the other fiction books I've read this year. *Battle Bunny* by Jon Scieszka and Mac Barnett and illustrated by Matthew Myers is great. Jon Scieszka writes kids' books that are creative, inventive, and funny. He takes traditional tales and subverts them to be smart and appealing to both children and the adults who have to read them to children. *Battle Bunny* is the story of a Bunny who is sad because his forest friends haven't recognized that today is his birthday...at least, that's what the story was about until Alex, the child reading the book, changes it by turning "Birthday Bunny" into "Battle Bunny" and re-writing and re-drawing the story. The pictures are cute and funny without being sappy and while I don't agree with Battle Bunny's plan to slice up Mount Everest, knock over the Eiffel Tower, rip off one of the Statue of Liberty's arms *and* to drain all the power from the sun, I do admire his energy and ambition. Battle Bunny leaves me with this thought: "Everybody needs an Evil Plan Place where they can launch their Evil Plans. Where is your Evil Plan Place?" I don't know, Battle Bunny, but darn it all, I'm going to find one. I could use a few Evil Plans.

karen says

this is a wonderful idea: take a sappy book with a trite story and a heartwarming message and MAKE IT SO MUCH BETTER BY ADDING WEAPONS AND ESSPLOSIONS!!

this ~~is~~ was a story about a little bunny on his birthday. he woke up soooo excited that he was going to see all his friends and they would throw him a party and he would get presents and everyone would shower him with attention and cake. but oh no! looks like everyone forgot it was his birthday because they have other things going on in their lives, which might be for the best, because i think a bear's present to a bunny would be a trip to digestion alley. but so bunny is all sad and mopey BUT THEN! HAPPY DAY! unlike molly ringwald's family, the other animals were only foolin' and actually HAD remembered bunny's birthday and it was all a big giant surprise at the end YAYYYYYYY!

barf.

but - in the hands of young alex, that pap got so much better.

NO MORE BEE!

and now rather than being a story about some sad sack bunny feeling sorry for himself for like 20 pages, it is about a bunny who will take what is his. with fire and blood.

other animals get some shots in, too

but it's mostly about battle bunny. and alex. and their eventual showdown. which made me really happy because, like alex, i know how rough bunnies can get.

and this book gives me hope.

NO MORE BEE!

Kathrina says

Both a fun story that most young children will enjoy for its irreverence, and also a sly critique on contemporary literacy. Like a picture book version of JJ Abrams's *S.* Dual narrative, each informing the other, creating a third story-space that belongs to the reader. So much food-for-thought here...

Wendy says

So, so funny and clever. Laurie, I was thinking of giving this to Iris for her birthday but since I decided on something else in the end, now you guys should get it from the library if you haven't already. You will all love it.

I think format stuff will probably keep this off both Newbery and Caldecott lists, and probably Geisel too, but it deserves a wide readership.

Donalyn says

Brilliant. I can imagine bringing in Little Golden Books and inviting my students to revise the book into original stories.

Lisa W. says

Booklist Reviews

Starred Review This deliciously subversive piece of metafiction skewers—with a sharp wit and a sharper pencil—the earnest, purposeful literature so popular in the middle of the last century. The fun begins with a facsimile of something akin to an antique Little Golden Book, *Birthday Bunny*, complete with worn cover, yellowed pages, and wholesome message. But the book has been "improved" in story and pictures by a child named Alex wielding his trusty no. 2. The cover, retitled *Battle Bunny*, now features rockets, planes, bombs, and a general promise of mayhem. And Alex keeps that promise, transforming the insipid story of a sad bunny being cheered by his friends on his birthday into a raucous adventure wherein an evil bunny unleashes a tornado of destruction on the unsuspecting forest until the president is forced to call in one Agent Alex to save the day. Alex's "edits," including a complete reworking of the text and plenty of pictorial embellishments, are soaked in testosterone. The animals of the forest become luchadores and ninja warriors; Air Force One and a few presidents (Obama and Lincoln) make appearances; and just about everything

explodes. In the end, Alex is victorious, Battle Bunny is vanquished, and the world is safe. At least until Alex and his pencil ride again . . . Copyright 2013 Booklist Reviews.
