

Choosing to read a self published book over a traditional one.

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/turtles-save-the-day-choosing-to-read-self-published-over-mac-barnett/>

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Turtles Save the Day! This is about how and why I found myself choosing to read a self published book instead of the best-selling, very polished book from Mac Barnett - for a book event at the library.

**How a sweet story about a baby turtle saved my book reading event at the library.
Introducing: Lori Samlin Miller.**

Artwork by Mojca J. J.

A couple of weeks ago, [Lori Samlin Miller](#) contacted me.

Lori told me her personal story, how she is a Special Education Teacher and founder of Pomegranate Seeds, a publishing imprint of [Wyatt MacKenzie](#). [Editorial Note: This is a form of self publishing! If you have questions about this, just ask me.]

Miller had written a story about a baby turtle. *Might I read her story to kids at the local library (here in Germany)?* I told her I would need to read the book first, then decide.

Lori sent me a copy of her book, a nice quality paperback. I felt it wasn't as tight as it could have been, but it was a solid story, lovingly crafted, and I knew the kids would love it. I'll explain why in a minute.

The traditionally published book Lori's replaced.

I think it's important to explain here what had been scheduled for the reading event.

I had originally planned to read a very polished publication from [Mac Barnett](#) titled **President Taft is Stuck in the Bath**, illustrated by [Chris Van Dusen](#). This book was on my [list of top books in 2016](#) because it's Mac Barnett, who has banged out some sensational books over the years. Chris Van Dusen is a dedicated and a great artistic talent.

The book is also published by Candlewick. So I thought this just had to be great.

But I don't like the book. My daughter doesn't like the book. As she put it, "It's weird. It's this really fat naked guy on every page." Which is accurate, by the way.

The Fat Naked Guy Book

That's what my daughter has dubbed it. There was no way I could read this story to a group of kids between the ages of 4 and 12. No way.

There was a fat naked guy, somewhat stupid looking, on every page. That isn't a story; it's a situation and reading it would be a *situation*. One I wanted no part of as a teacher.

As a person, I felt in my bones this was a poorly conceived project, probably one that involved no fat people at all.

There's more than enough bullying in schools and fat kids always get the worst end of that. This book fosters that behavior, unfortunately. Do books influence people? You bet.

Why I Read *Lori's* Book

While I did have some back-up books to read instead, Lori's [Stay Where I Can See You](#) was just... lovely. It came at just the right time. I knew the kids would enjoy it, that they would worry about the baby turtle and be happy when the young boy rescued it.

What Lori does really well in this story is build suspense. Even as an adult - and even a writer who could see the story structure, I felt tense reading it the first time.

It's a BABY TURTLE! Come on!

At the end, when a little boy safely brings the baby turtle to his family and places the baby on the mommy turtle's back, the kids actually cheered. They *cheered!* I've never had that kind of response in reading a story to children before, and I've been doing this for 5 years.

I wondered if maybe it was *the day*, or *the mood* I was in, or *the particular group* of kids that came to the event. So I decided to test the book again, and yesterday (this Thursday, March 2), I read it to a 9-year-old girl I'm privately tutoring.

The little girl cooed and clapped her hands just at the same happy moment. She couldn't even help herself.

So this is just a gift, this storybook.

The Turtle Crafts Project

I found this crafts idea at [NoTimeForFlashcards](#).

After reading the story, I led the kids to the large blue table for a crafts project. This is tradition at the library. My prototype is something I leave behind at the library for the display case.

The kids get to take their project home, and over the years, I've heard from parents how the kids played with their projects on the way home, at home, in the grocery store, at the park, etc. It's very gratifying. **So if you're not sure about involving crafts with kids because of the mess, let me assure you that it's well worth it.**

This time, we made baby turtles out of walnut shells. When I explained that baby turtles are even smaller than half a walnut shell, the kids were amazed!

All the kids did a fantastic job of making their turtles, and one little girl was inspired to also build a backdrop for the turtles.

Reading Joy

When you're crafting your storybooks, always remember who will be reading. It might be a parent, a grandparent, a teacher or librarian - or me.

If kids are listening to your story, then think about the type of story you're creating for them. A story can be funny – of course! But it should also be conscientiously crafted.

Books make us better people by showing us who we are and who we could be. They should make us clap gleefully, they should make us cheer when those in need are rescued and returned safely home, to Mommy. That is the purpose of great stories - to move us to be better people.

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What is a storybook that took you by surprise by being more than a simple little story? Write below, let everyone know – or, as ever, send me an email. I'd love to know what you're reading and how it's inspiring you.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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