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Barely Behaving Daughters

Kiersten Carr

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Book Review

Title: Barely Behaving Daughters

Author: P. M. Neist

Reviewer: Kiersten Carr

Publisher: Mardick Press

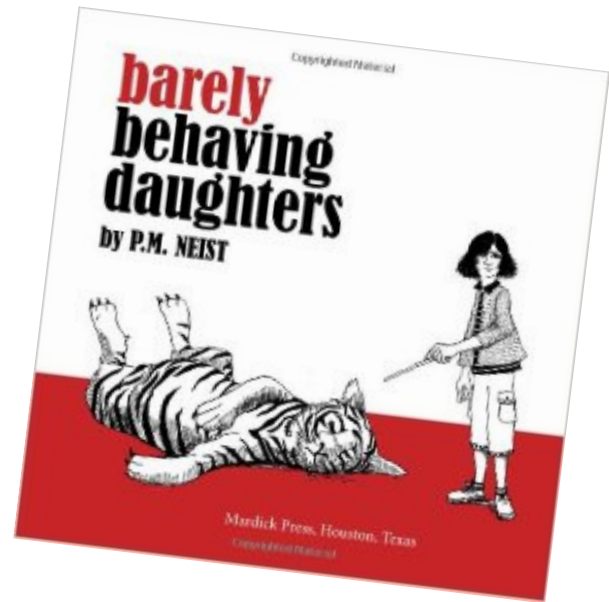
Publication Year: 2013

ISBN: 9781940413006

Number of Pages: 32

Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Significant Shortcomings



Review

In this off-beat, provocative alphabet book, 26 young ladies romp through the alphabet committing alliterative crimes against animals. From Annette and Beatrice to Yanicka and Zoe, each letter of the alphabet is demonstrated in a series of captioned pictures showing the titular “barely behaving daughters” shaking things up with a variety of animals from A to Z.

P. M. Neist has a French background, and some of her humor gets lost in translation. Some of the abecedarian episodes are jarring, such as when Dorothy has “dangled a dodo” over an open crocodile pit or when a pair of Hannas have “halved a hyena.” If the reader can roll with the off-beat sense of humor, however, there is a certain whimsy to the black and white illustrations and careless abandon of the girls. Neist’s artistic style is highly reminiscent of Edward Gorey, who also has published a humorous, off-beat alphabet book. The difference between “Barely Behaving Daughters” and “The Gashlycrumb Tinies,” however, is a matter of consistency. The girls in Neist’s book have none. They may dismember an animal on one page and take an animal for a walk on the next, creating a series of seemingly unrelated episodes for each letter. As a reader, it gives one the feeling that there is a joke you’re missing, and it is hard to see why the epigraph “Disobey often and well” applies to what is actually happening in the book.

*Contains implied violence and cruelty to animals.