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Rodeo Ron and His Milkshake Cows

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Clifford, Rowan. *Rodeo Ron and His Milkshake Cows*. Illustrated by Rowan Clifford. Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. ISBN 0375931953. 15.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Cowboys--Juvenile fiction; Milkshakes--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Rodeo Ron rides into the town of Cavity with four unusually colored cows. He soon learns how the town earned its name. All the citizens of Cavity drink nothing but soda. As a result they burp all the time and have rotten teeth. The purveyors of the local Soda Bar challenge Rodeo Ron to see who can create the best fruity flavored drink. The challengers mix sugar and chemicals to create fruit flavored sodas. Rodeo Ron's brightly colored cows shake and dance and produce fruit flavored milk shakes. Rodeo Ron wins the "Shake Off" and convinces the town folk to drink milk instead of soda. As a result, the citizens of the town soon have healthier smiles.

The message of this entertaining picture book is well meaning: it is better to drink milk than sodas. However, the inference that milkshakes do not rot teeth while sodas do is tenuous at best. Despite this weakness, this book has much to offer. Clifford's text is lively and well suited for reading aloud. The repeated "SHAKE, SHAKE, SHAKE" of the cows invites listener participation. Some adults may not be comfortable with the abundance of burps in the book, but children will probably be delighted by the irreverence. Clifford's brightly colored cartoon illustrations add fun to the story. Especially enchanting are the cows that Clifford imbues with a great deal of personality. Both text and illustration are complimented by creative type choice and setting. This book could be a good resource for discussions about dental care if parents or educators will remind children that, whether drinking soda or milk, it is important to brush and floss regularly to prevent tooth decay!