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Monstergarten

Cynthia Phillips

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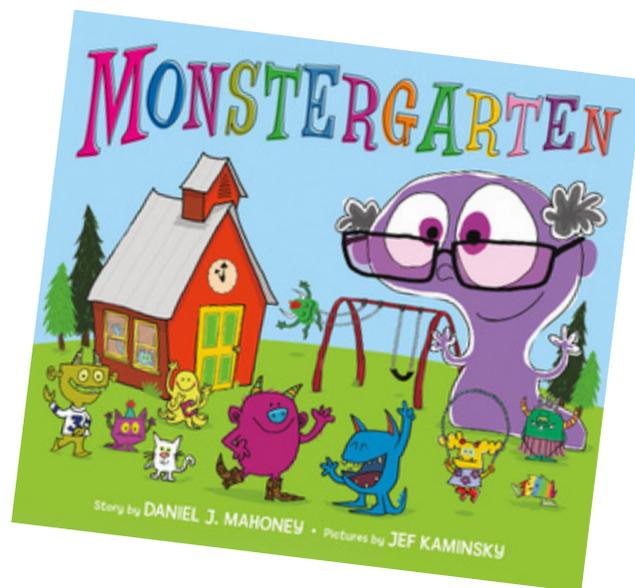
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Book Review

Title: Monstergarten
Author: Daniel J. Mahoney
Illustrator: Jef Kaminsky
Reviewer: Cynthia Phillips
Publisher: Feiwel and Friends
Publication Year: 2013
ISBN: 9781250014412
Number of Pages: 33
Interest Level: Preschool
Rating: Dependable



Review

Being scary is one of the rules of Monstergarten, so that means Patrick only has one day left to learn to be scary in time for school! Luckily his friend Kevin is willing to teach him how. His first scare victim is Kevin's cat snowball. Snowball wasn't scared. Next Patrick tries to scare Kevin's sister and her friend. They aren't scared either. Patrick and Kevin research how to be scary and practice and practice some more. Kevin "of course" is ready for Monstergarten. He's an "expert at being scary." What's a monster to do? Kevin's mom comes to the rescue by telling him to "just be yourself." Turns out Monstergarten isn't as tough as it seemed at first, at least for Patrick. At the end of the book Kevin does not want to leave his Daddy until Patrick scares him and makes Monstergarten a fun experience for him.

Preschoolers and their parents will find they can relate to the pressures of starting school that Patrick feels. This book alludes to the list of kindergarten readiness indicators and the pressure that it may cause to meet the checklist criteria. Filled with colorful monsters of all shapes and sizes the illustrations have visual appeal. The storyline is lacking in depth as it chronicled the practicing being scary for more than half of the book. It did stay true to daily life as paralleled in monster. The end of the book was abrupt and didn't feel quite resolved as the monsters suddenly declare that they "love Monstergarten" and that it's "superscary" but don't show much of how they came to that conclusion or what they did throughout the day. The moral of the story, "just be yourself," is a great reminder to preschoolers that they will do well in kindergarten and they might even learn something new.