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# Letters to Leo

Jamie Jamie

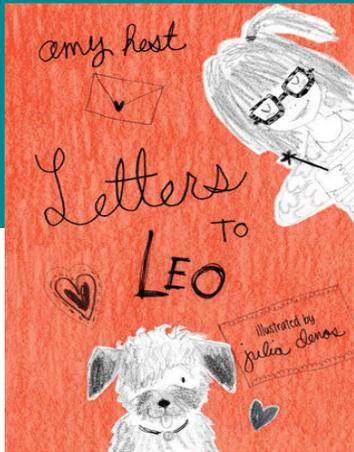
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## Book Review

### Letters to Leo

#### Author

Amy Hest

#### Illustrator

Julia Denos

#### Reviewer

Jamie Greenwood

#### Rating

Outstanding

#### Level

Intermediate

#### Pages

154

#### Year

2012

#### Publisher

Candlewick Press

#### ISBN

9780763636951

Letters to Leo is a collection of letters written by Annie Rossi to her dog Leo. Annie lives with her single father, so Leo helps to keep her company whenever her father isn't around. The letters follow some Annie's struggles, including her desire to succeed in school, her loneliness when her friend Jean Marie moves away, her entry in the school's essay contest, and working on a school project with her biggest classroom competitor. One day, an author and poet comes to the classroom and talks about his poetry and illustrations. Annie is inspired by the poem the author shares in class and writes her own poem along in honor of her departed mother. The book ends as Annie finishes her fourth grade year and heads off to the beach with her father, where Annie's favorite teacher from first grade will be joining them for a visit.

What makes Letters to Leo so delightful are the small details that gives it childlike characteristics. The author has constructed the book with Annie's letters appearing on different kinds of paper, including memos from her father's desk and pages from her school notebook. The text is written using different styles of print and large and wide-spaced lettering to add emphasis on the words that a young fourth grader might have. The language the author uses in her book is likewise indicative of a young child. The pictures look like the kind of illustrations a fourth grader would draw, and thus make the book more realistic. Annie writes in a way that helps readers to understand the grief she feels because of the untimely loss of her mother but also the happy memories of her that help Annie to accept change and move forward. Annie and Leo have a wonderful relationship that speaks to friendship and companionship on a very personal level, which will allow children to better understand the concept of love.