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A Very Marley Christmas

Samantha Bullock

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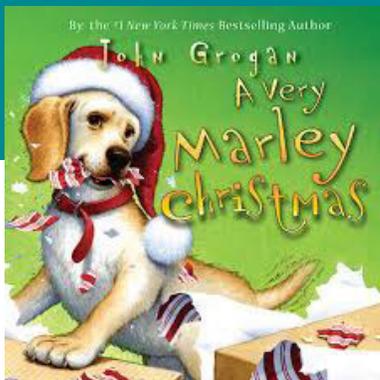
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Book Review

A Very Marley Christmas



Author

John Grogan

Illustrator

Richard Cowdrey

Reviewer

Samantha Bullock

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool

Pages

32

Year

2008

Publisher

Harper

ISBN

9780062113672

Everyone in the little house on Churchill Road is excited for Christmas--especially Marley, the family's playful puppy! Marley is determined to make his first Christmas a success by helping his family get ready for the big day. Unfortunately, his efforts are decidedly unhelpful. From saving young Cassie from a snowflake chain (how was Marley to know it wasn't a serpent?) to christening the Christmas tree, Marley unintentionally sabotages every stage of Christmas preparation. Luckily he ends up redeeming himself by alerting the family to the one thing they haven't been able to bring about themselves: a beautiful Christmas snowfall! Everyone is happy that Santa brought the snow they had been hoping for--especially Marley.

Anyone who has had an excitable puppy can relate to the mishaps of Marley and his patient family. The comedy and strength of the story lies with the author's ability to showcase the challenging yet innocent nature of a dog who doesn't understand what this new, exciting time of year is all about. The book subtly points young readers to the truth that the decorations and preparations are less significant than spending family time and reveling in the simple joys of the season, such as experiencing the fun of togetherness and the majesty of winter, stressing the enjoyment of the long-anticipated snowfall on Christmas morning and not even mentioning gift opening. The detailed watercolor illustrations successfully depict Marley's liveliness, giving him facial expressions all too familiar to dog owners with Marley-type canines of their own. *A Very Marley Christmas* is engaging and funny enough that it would make an attention-grabbing holiday read-aloud for a small group able to get close enough to observe the subtle details of the artwork.