Bunny's Book Club Book Review
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ABOUT EVALUATING CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS:

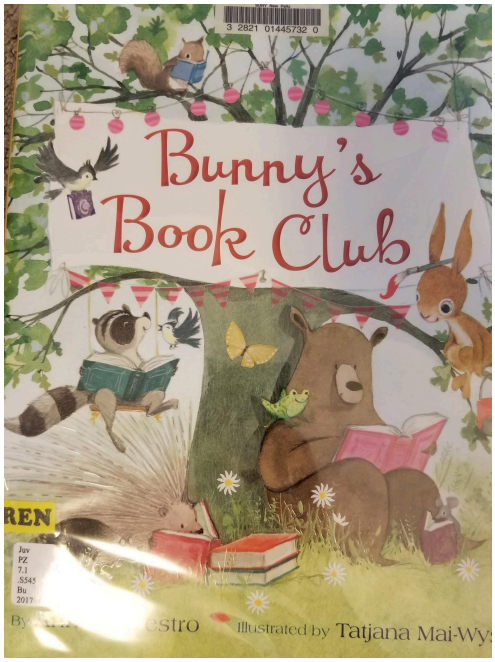
When I participate on book nomination committees, I usually start my pitches by reviewing the criteria by which we are supposed to judge the books. A good way to judge children's picture books is by the criteria set forth by the committee who chooses the annual Caldecott Medal and Honor books. Another great resource I've come across in my studies at SUNY Albany is *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books* by Kathleen T. Horning. (Thanks, Shannon!)

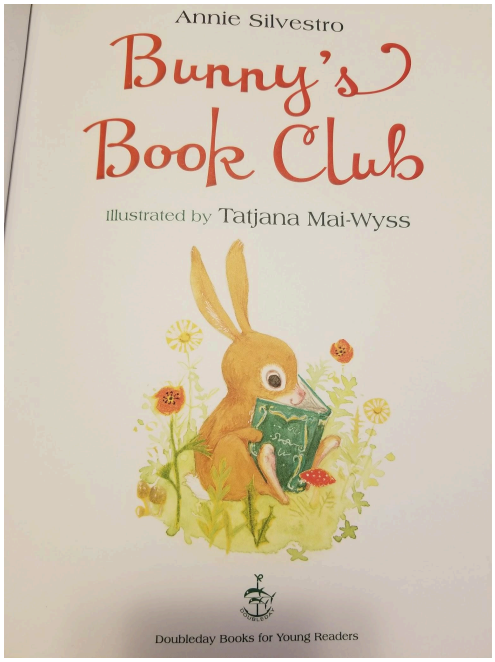
In reviewing *Bunny's Book Club* (2017) by Annie Silvestro, illustrated by Tatjana Mai-Wyss, I kept a few points from these two sources in mind. According to Horning, picture books are "meant to be read aloud while children view the illustrations" (85). So, it is not so necessary for children to be able to read the text of a picture book as it is for them to be stimulated by the aural story and the illustrations. Though the Caldecott Medal terms do state that the award should go annually to the *artist* of the most distinguished American picture book (meaning, *published* by an American publishing company) for children, the criteria section states that other components of the book are also to be considered (2008). Horning stresses that, when evaluating picture books, a critic should consider both the artwork *and* the text, and how the two elements work together (85).

ABOUT *BUNNY'S BOOK CLUB*

The story of *Bunny's Book Club* is one that most children would find engaging, and the illustrations are most certainly worthy of a Caldecott Medal. This picture book, published in

February by Doubleday Books, is meant for children 3-7 years old.





The story is very quaint! It follows a bunny who enjoys sitting outside the library listening to story time with kids, but when story time moves inside due to colder weather, Bunny breaks into the library after-hours through the book drop (below, left). Having the library all to himself, Bunny grabs a bunch of books from the adventure section, shoves them through the book drop, and brings them home (below, right). What a little bandit!





One evening, a porcupine stops by Bunny's burrow, and Bunny decides to bring Porcupine to the library after-hours. Bunny then starts a secret book club in his burrow for all of his animal friends, but the animals soon want to read even more books. So, they all take a field trip to the library, again breaking in through the book drop (even a bear squeezes through!). When the librarian finds them, all the animals tremble in fear. Instead of kicking the animals out, however,

the librarian tells the animals that all libraries have rules, and the first rule is that every book lover must have a library card (what a twist!). Once she sets them all up with library cards, she tells them they can keep coming to the library for their book club. As could be expected, all of the animals are delighted at being accepted by the library.

A LIBRARIAN'S BOOK REVIEW:

According to Horning, "beyond telling a compelling story in a few words, a good picture book has a distinctive structure based on familiar patterns" (88). The story is clearly compelling to both adults and children. It relates directly to what the child-reader is doing—reading a book. It also includes a bunch of cute, kid-friendly animals, and it depicts the library as a warm, welcoming place. What kid wouldn't enjoy this book?

The text is also very rhythmic, with pleasing sounds and questions throughout. It's a comforting story, not only because it depicts the library as a supportive place, but because children will find solace in its predictability. Children will also find joy, however, in the surprises Silvestro works into the story. For example, it's pleasantly surprising that the librarian welcomes all of the animals into the library for their book club.



The text of the story interacts with the illustrations well, which is the most important part of the text evaluation for a Caldecott nominee. Silvestro paces the story with her compositions. At some points, she breaks up the text, slowing down the story, with delicate illustrative vignettes (see above). At more dramatic/exciting scenes, Silvestro creates vibrant, fast-paced, two-page

spreads, breaking up the text within the illustrations themselves in a way that portrays a sense of forward-moving rhythm (see below).





The illustrations are just as quaint as the story: Silvestro uses watercolor paints, slightly abstracted but still recognizable shapes, muted, gradient color, and wispy lines to create soft

textures that convey a sense of coziness parallel to the comfort felt when cuddled up with a book inside a library or at home with your book club (see below).





Overall, the book exudes a gentle, nurturing love for reading and libraries through the charming story and picturesque illustrations. Not only will this story be soothing for a young child, it will instill in them the desire to go to the library in times of need, for both comfort and for inspiration.

PRAISE *FOR BUNNY'S BOOK CLUB*:

"Silvestro's debut picture book is a love letter to the pleasures of reading and libraries, and Mai-Wyss's colorful illustrations are endearing and comforting...A lovely and fun addition for every library." - *School Library Journal*

"[Silvestro] makes the pleasures of reading abundantly clear." - *Publisher's Weekly*

"Author Annie Silvestro and illustrator Tatjana Mai-Wyss tell a cozy tale guaranteed to draw in readers and book lovers of all ages." - *Bookpage*

"Mai-Wyss's soft, muted watercolor scenes sprinkled with charming, expressive cuddly animals is the perfect complement to Silvestro's enchanting story about the love of books." - *Booklist*

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