

March Village School Children's Book of the Month

*A Sick Day for Amos McGee* by Philip C. Stead, Illustrated by Erin E. Stead

Reviewed by Sofie Viera, Preschool teacher

Winner of the Caldecott Medal for outstanding illustrations, this sweet tale depicts the everyday routine of an elderly zookeeper named Amos, while highlighting the loving relationships he has with his friends, the animals at the zoo. The book begins with Amos waking up at home, and we witness this early riser's routine of preparing his breakfast and heading out the door to the bus. Amos takes this No. 5 bus to work, remarking upon his arrival to the zoo that although he has a busy day ahead, he always has time for his friends. Amos then sets out to engage with each one of his animal friends doing the things they like best. He plays chess with the elephant, runs races with the tortoise, sits quietly with the penguin, lends a handkerchief to the rhinoceros and reads stories to the owl.

We are then transported back to Amos's home at the start of a new day. This morning though, Amos has the sniffles and the sneezes and the chills. He isn't going to work today, and as a consequence, his animal friends wait for him, preparing their usual activities in anticipation of his arrival. Fed up with waiting, we watch the zoo animals leave the zoo and wait at the bus stop, presumably on their way to go visit Amos. Sure enough, the No. 5 bus comes and the animals file on for a ride to their friend's. They arrive at Amos's, to his surprise and glee, and the roles are reversed as the animals take care of Amos in his time of need. The elephant prepares a game of chess, the tortoise accommodates Amos's fatigue and plays hide and seek instead of running races, the penguin sits quietly while Amos naps, the rhinoceros fetches handkerchiefs, and the owl makes tea for all the friends. We then watch as the friends climb into bed with Amos as they all fall asleep for the night.

This tale, appropriate for 2 to 6 year olds, but to be enjoyed by all, is endearing, heartfelt and with a matter-of-fact message about friendship. Children can delight in the surprise of the animals' human capabilities while witnessing the mutual kindness Amos and his friends practice. Stead's illustrations are detailed and soft, perfectly carrying out this tender display of what it means to look out for one another. Surely a bedtime favorite, this book is one not to be missed!