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Lizard From The Park



Synopsis

A lonely boy's new pet grows into a rather large dilemma and a Thanksgiving parade offers an uplifting solution in this charming tale from the author of *The Boy and the Airplane* and *The Girl and the Bicycle*. When Leonard takes a shortcut through the park, he finds an egg and takes it home, where it hatches into a lizard (or so Leonard thinks). Leonard names his new pet Buster and takes him all around the city: on the subway, to the library, to a baseball game, and more. But Buster keeps growing and growing and Leonard gets the sense that Buster is longing for something Leonard can't provide. Before long, Buster becomes too big to keep, and Leonard realizes he needs to set Buster free. So Leonard comes up with an inventive plan, one that involves all the balloons Leonard can find and the annual Thanksgiving parade, in an imaginative plot twist that will spark readers' imaginations and touch their hearts.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD580L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers (September 8, 2015)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 11 x 0.4 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #305,289 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #122 in [Books > Children's Books > Holidays & Celebrations > Thanksgiving](#) #196 in [Books > Children's Books > Animals > Reptiles & Amphibians](#) #4328 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship](#)

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

PreS-Gr 2 • One day Leonard decides to take a shortcut home from school through the "deepest, darkest part of the park" and spots a big egg, unlike anything he has seen before. He takes it home to his top-floor apartment and plays with it all afternoon. Eventually, he snuggles up with it as he goes to bed. The next morning, the egg hatches and a lizard bursts through the shell.

Leonard dubs him Buster and together, the friends travel all over the city, ride the subway, read in front of the New York Public Library, and visit the Museum of Natural History. However, Buster is getting larger and larger and seems less happy than before. Leonard tries many things to help Buster fit in and enjoy the city, but Buster continues to grow and grow; he needs to be with his family again in the "deepest, darkest part of the park." In the fall, Leonard gathers up all the balloons he can find, joins the Thanksgiving Day parade and floats Buster back home. Leonard still cuts through the park sometimes, but along the way he discovers a new friend, one who has cleverly been hidden on the book's pages watching the action all along. Created with charcoal and painted digitally, the illustrations are softly drawn, and the layout of the text is easy on the eye. VERDICT A sweet and subtle offering that lets readers discover new things about the story on each rereading. — Roxanne Burg, Orange County Public Library, CA

"As independent as Max and Ruby, as creative as purple-crayon-wielding Harold, and as dedicated a friend as Charlotte's Wilbur, Leonard will delight kids of all ages, regardless of habitat." (Kirkus Reviews [STARRED REVIEW]) "A sweet and subtle offering that lets readers discover new things about the story on each rereading." (School Library Journal) — "A sweet story of friendship and life's hidden wonders." (Booklist) "Youngsters will want to sit with this book and read it often. The illustrations will have them looking closer at the story and discovering new things with each reading." (School Library Connection)

Very rare to have a male person of color as the protagonist of a children's story, so when I stumbled upon this gem, I jumped on it! The story tells of Leonard who one day walks through the park on his way home from school. He finds an egg and they become inseparable, even when that egg eventually hatches into a lizard that keeps growing and growing. Leonard must come up with a solution to Buster's growth issue. The story is the perfect length to read to a 3 year old at bedtime. Not too long and not too simple/short. Some pages have one sentence. Others have two to three, and no more than four sentences on a page. I've seen picture books with multiple paragraphs on a page, which isn't really going to hold a toddler/preschooler's attention. Older children who are beginning to read should enjoy this too. I loved the illustrations! Soft, but represented "the city" very well. It was nice to see a major city represented as something not scary, tough, and mean. I should emphasize that isn't a story about an African-American little boy, but rather a story about a boy who just so happens to be African-American. The story wouldn't change whatever race Leonard was. It's just nice to have diversity in our home library for a change.

I'm impressed by how Mark Pett brings an unstudied gentleness to a topic that is usually pretty strong: dinosaurs. Having a kid find a dinosaur egg and hatch it is not, in and of itself, a completely new idea. But the way it's handled in Pett's book certainly is. For one thing, I love that there's a deep, dark part of Central Park where dinosaurs roam and no one has even noticed. The subtle humor continues as Leonard brings the egg back to his apartment tower home: "In his room, Leonard and the egg played together for the entire afternoon." Then there are the disguises, and Buster's sadness, which grows along with his lizardy body. Not to mention the shadowy follower you may not even notice till you flip back through the pages. Along the way, the book is also a love letter to NYC (yay, library lions!). And best of all, we come to an astonishing solution to the problem of how to get Buster back to the park now that he is really big and really green. Like Pett's earlier book, the wordless *The Girl and the Bicycle*, *Lizard from the Park* is tender without being saccharine. The illustrations are beautifully done, too. I like the design on pages such as the spread where Leonard is walking through the woods on the left, and an inset on the right shows him finding the egg (still surrounded by the trees in the larger image). Or the next page, where the apartment tower is shown at the far right in a way that balances nicely against the image of Leonard walking along the city street, an image that carries across the gutter for about 3/4 of the spread. Well, you just have to take a look! The illustrations remind me a little of Bob Graham's work (one of my favorites) and a little of Calvin from *Calvin and Hobbes*--if Calvin were a nice kid. I recommend you explore New York City with Leonard and Buster. Especially the deepest, darkest part of the park.

This is such a cute book with cute pictures. We enjoyed it.

My 3 & 5 year olds love this book and want to read it often. It has very nice illustrations and a cute story that captures their imagination. We brought it on a beach vacation with another family and their kids seemed equal enamored.

I love this latest book by Mark Pett. His work is fantastic and the story is laugh-out loud delightful! This is a perfect book for kids of all ages. My eight year old and I enjoyed this book so much that we are buying copies for the K-3rd grade classrooms at our public school.

Fun read for the kids

Excellent book

Cute story about friendship with sweet illustrations. Love it!

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