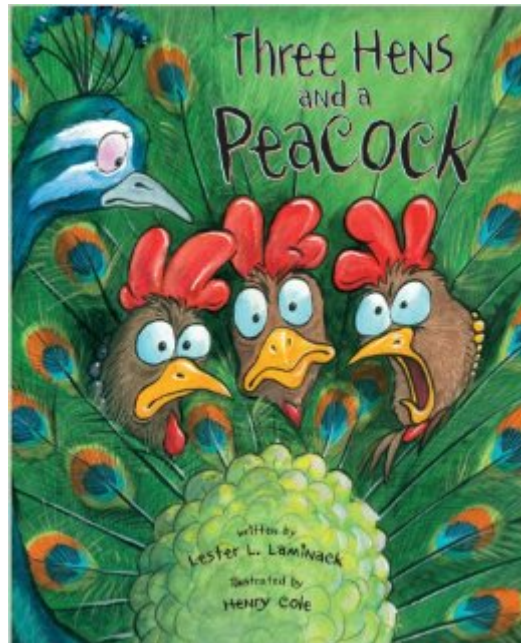


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Three Hens And A Peacock



Synopsis

The Tuckers' farm is a peaceful place: cows chew their cud, hens lay their eggs, and the old hound rests on the porch. Everyone has a job and no one complains. That is, until a hapless peacock suddenly falls off the back of a passing truck and stirs things up. Soon, customers are flocking to the farm to see what all the fuss is about, and business is booming. But the hens don't like the newcomer getting attention while they stay cooped up doing all the hard work. The wise old hound sees the problem and helps his feathered friends orchestrate a job swap. What follows is the hilarious tale of three hens who get in way over their feathered heads, and one very distressed peacock who just can't figure out how to lay an egg. Popular author Lester L. Laminack has created a comical look at what happens when we underestimate the value of others' work. Henry Cole's delightful illustrations heighten the story's humor and will have readers of all ages laughing out loud.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (94 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

The gorgeous pictures in this book were the first thing that caught my five-year-old's eye; the "be careful what you wish for" story held her attention and elicited a few giggles. The story begins when a peacock arrives at the Tucker family farm. He's soon attracting visitors to the roadside produce stand--and arousing jealousy among the hens. When the old hound dog (whose name could be Solomon) overhears the hens complaining and the peacock wishing he could be more useful, the dog offers a solution: Trade places. As you might predict, the peacock has no luck laying eggs and

the hens don't attract a single customer. They do look cute trying, and they eventually learn the intended lesson about contentment and shining in their unique roles. This is a nice read-aloud option for preschool and early elementary-aged kids, and it might generate a conversation about wanting what others have and making a contribution. The illustration on the final page keeps the narrative going after the text ends. (Is that an ostrich falling off that truck?) And check out the tailfins on one of the cars speeding past the hens.

When I read the opinions of Ammy and Starsurfer about *Three Hens and a Peacock*, I wasn't sure whether to feel shocked or to laugh out loud at the absurdity of what I read. I was glad it was morning and I was off to teach, so I was unable to write a reply. I knew I wanted to think about what I would say. So now here it is. I know Lester Laminack, having met him when he came to Vermont to present on two different occasions. On the second occasion I got to spend more time with him, when a small group of us had dinner with him and I later drove him to the airport. In that short time I felt as though I had met a true friend and one of the kindest, most caring, and gentle individuals I have ever known. I have read all of his books multiple times, including his professional books (e.g., *Reading Aloud Across the Curriculum*, *Learning Under the Influence of Language and Literature*, *Cracking Open the Author's Craft*, *Unwrapping the Read Aloud*) and his picture books (e.g., *the Sunsets of Miss Oliver Wiggins*, *Saturdays and Teacakes*, *Trevor's Wiggly, Wobbly Tooth*, *Snow Day*) and now *Three Hens and a Peacock*. I even have multiple copies of these books because they are loaned out so often I can't seem to keep them on my shelf. When I say that I have read these books multiple times, let me explain. I have been a Literacy Teacher Leader in my district for eight years, and have taught a total of 29 years. I have shared a lot of books with children of all ages and Lester's books are some of my most favorite of all to share. When I read a book to a class and the children are so enthralled with the writing that they break into applause when the book is done, I know it is a good book. When those same children can bring that book up months later, as an example of right and wrong, I know it is a good book. This has been the case with many of Lester's books, and most recently with *Three Hens and a Peacock*. Children LOVE this book! I LOVE this book! Every teacher and adult that has been present in a classroom or gathering where I have read this book has LOVED this book! Everyone of them sees and understands the wonderful message *Three Hens and a Peacock* sends, and they respond. It is a book that says, we are all special in our own unique way, and we each ought to use our talents to the best of our ability. Children see another message, though. Besides that message, they also carry away the message that you shouldn't say unkind things about someone because sometimes that person may overhear you. Are

these bad messages for children to hear? To say that this book is "sexism masquerading as a moral tale," or that this book promotes stereotypes makes me wonder whether we read the same book. Seriously? Presently Lester Laminack and Reba Wadsworth are working on a professional book about bullying that I believe is due out in August. I can't wait to get ahold of that book. I know it will be an incredible resource because although I may not have known Lester when he wrote many of his books, I can feel the passion he has for every character in every one of his books, whether person or animal, and I know from hearing him speak and from getting to know him over the last year or two that he is passionate about improving the world for children. I know from reading his professional books that he would never (consider that word underlined at least five times) write or promote a book that would harm or warp any child's view of the world. So ladies, I have to say that I feel angry on Lester's behalf over these two reviews. I feel that I read attacks that were paramount to bullying, and that you ought to be ashamed of yourselves (that's the teacher in me coming out). I believe you need to stop looking for ulterior motives where there are none, because believe me, you've got this one all wrong.

This is a cross post from a Goodreads review I have done for THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK I've enjoyed THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK when it first released in 2011, but I wanted to look at the book again after reading some reviews that I thought were not only misguided but unfair to the collective work that Lester Laminack has been doing. With full disclosure, Lester is someone I consider a mentor--a friend, if you will--and you could hold me to a certain amount of bias in writing a review that not only serves as a response to other reviews but as another way of looking at a picture book that is probably most transparent in its message. And while those looking to see something in THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK are few (and as few as the other contributions they have made to the or the overall reading community found within the social media platforms), the negative reviews of THE HENS AND A PEACOCK are misinformed. As has not its way clear to remove these reviews, those who have enjoyed and have used Laminack's title should respond and return to the praise that began the thread of reviews here at . At Goodreads, I see nothing but praise for Laminack's work. Lester Laminack has worked tirelessly to provide resources to elementary, middle, and secondary teachers with his professional development texts. I'm proud to say that I have all of these in Room 407. I am really looking forward to seeing Lester's new work with the subject of bullying that is due to release in the fall of 2012. If one were to spend a moment with Lester or hear him deliver a keynote address, they would quickly find that likening THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK to "poison" is as insipid as referencing Virginia Lee Burton's THE LITTLE

HOUSE as an early comment on the Occupy Movement or Russell Hoban's BREAD AND JAM FOR FRANCIS as an attempt to suggest, subliminally, a mandate regarding--pre-Mayor Bloomberg--dietary intake of a community. We can find these ludicrous interpretations because "deep readers" can find multiple lenses through which to look into a book or a story. THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK demonstrates how words and images come together to create a sense of comic timing. The first example of this approach is when we first see the peacock standing alone on the page under the arched words ". . .that peacock showed up." Another example, with the hens as feature, finds the three stacked on top of one another doing their very best to attract the attention of the cars passing by. What we really have--for secondary readers in a writer's workshop model--is an example of the classic comparison and contrast set-up. This one does this, while the other does that. Helping younger readers think about author/illustrator intent and design (as well as drawing inferences), lead learners may ask students to consider when characters appear on the page by themselves. Readers may be invited to think about why the author and illustrator decided upon this approach. The peacock's job looks so easy. The hens make the comment that they do all of the work. It's the wisdom of the hound dog (and here too is another lesson in use and design--ask younger readers why those words are italicized in what the hound dog says) that brings both parties to a deeper understanding of personal and collective contribution. I've worked with two gifted and talented students over the past two years who have been "tagged" by their peers as being "perfect" and as doing everything "perfectly." Listening in from outside the fishbowl, it was often difficult to determine when a comment that might look like praise on paper became a sort of attack when the words hit the air. A kind of bullying we might be missing is when students use praise in a sort of attempt to either one, find comfort with their own level of performance, and, two, attempt to level the playing field by clipping the feathers of another. I can tell you from what I observed of these two young ladies over the past two years, that their position of "perfect" was not something they had selected for themselves nor was it a comfortable position in which to find themselves. The continual pushing and pulling upon these two has been the best instance of tenacity I have seen a student exhibit in my experiences. Lester Laminack encourages readers with THREE HENS AND A PEACOCK to consider not only the perceived strengths of others in a group, but to celebrate their own contribution to the daily successes of a community. It's very easy to undersell our own talents and contributions sometimes, but learning communities that continue to promote group work and synthesis are what I consider to be the best approach to helping students to see the value of their own contribution. This is the reflection piece that needs to be a part of any group project or small group meeting. These reflection pieces help to put words to these feelings that often go unspoken.

This is an important lesson within learning communities. Each student must feel that they have something to offer to the overall community. This is probably where classroom management breaks down the most. For secondary readers, look to the archetypes within the book vs. the anthropomorphism. One of the qualities of anthropomorphism and personification is that the archetypes are presented in a package that is removed from our "human-ness," so that we can see how these operate without our own intrusions. When a peacock is dropped off at Tucker Farm, we see the classic "Innocent/Orphan" archetype in action. The Hens give us the classic presentation of "Creator/Destroyer" traits. The hound dog given to moments of great wisdom coupled with moments of leisure and repose present the "Sage/Fool" pairing. Now. See? I am doing the same thing that the reviews I am responding to have done. . .but this is the point: we can see what we want to see, but in the end, Lester Laminack's body of work and ideals don't seem to warrant the claims of other reviews that wish to reduce his work to something meant to mislead younger readers.

My Review: The Hens were not happy that they had to do all the work while Peacock gets all the attention. Lesson learnt - Be thankful for the gift you have. Don't ask for somebody else's gift because you may not have the skills to do what they do with their gift. Henry Cole did a great job with the illustration. The looks on the Hens were really funny looking. Disclaimer: As per FTC guidelines, I received a copy of this book from Peachtree Publishers in exchange for my honest review. I received no monetary compensation. All opinions expressed here are mine and mine alone.

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