

Funny books provide more than just laughter

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We've all heard it, and we'd all agree: "Laughter is the best medicine." But why is that?

Studies by neuroscientists and psychologists have shown that laughter increases the release of endorphins — those awesome chemicals in the brain that make us feel good. But laughter isn't just about feeling good because we find something to be funny. Laughter actually boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces tension and can improve cognition.

Reading funny books together is always a great way to spend productive time together, but who would have guessed how many benefits laughter can really bring to our lives? No time like the present to get started. The books reviewed below are certain to elicit giggles and laughter. Ask your librarian and bookseller to point you in the direction of others. Obviously, the more we laugh every day, the better off we will be, in many important ways.

Book to Borrow

"Duck at the Door" written and illustrated by Jackie Urbanovic, HarperCollins, 32 pages. Read aloud: age 4 and older. Read yourself: age 7-8.

Irene lived in a house full of all kinds of animals. Late one night when everyone was fast asleep, the animals awoke to the sound of someone knocking on the door. Who could it be? The animals were frightened, but when Irene came to the rescue, they all saw that it was a duck, standing cold and shivering in the snow.

Irene brought the duck inside. He introduced himself as Max, and explained that when his flock flew south for the winter, he decided not to join them, thinking that winter would be fun. Now, Max was just cold and lonely, and Irene invited him to stay. Little did Irene and the other animals know what they were getting into ...

Hilarious from start to finish, this wonderful tale is sure to delight children of many ages.

Librarian's Choice

Barrett Paradise Friendly Library, 6500 Route 191, Cresco

Choices this week: "I Took My Frog to the Library" by Eric A. Kimmel; "The Cow Who Wouldn't Come Down" by Paul Brett Johnson; "Could Be Worse" by James Stevenson

Books to Buy

"Timmy Failure: Now Look What You've Done" written and illustrated by Stephan Pastis, Candlewick, 2014, 288 pages, \$14.99 hardcover. Read aloud: age 8 and older. Read yourself: age 9 and older.

Overly confident and completely inept, Timmy Failure returns for a second side-splitting adventure.

Self-proclaimed best detective in the world, Timmy is certain he will easily crack the case of the missing school globe and win the \$500 reward. But there are obstacles everywhere that must be dealt with, and Timmy being Timmy, blames those "shenanigans" on everyone but himself.

The colorful cast of characters (arch-enemy Corrina Corrina, love-sick Molly Moskins, friend Rollo Tookus, Timmy's 1,500-pound polar bear assistant named Total, and others) is further enhanced by Timmy's eccentric Great-Aunt Colander — equally incompetent as Timmy but a woman full of belief in him.

Thoroughly hilariously in every way, the clueless Timmy Failure will capture the hearts of readers everywhere.

"The Adventures of Jo Schmo: Pinkbeard's Revenge" by Greg Trine, illustrated by Frank W. Dormer, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013, 122 pages, \$12.99 hardcover. Read aloud: age 6 and older. Read yourself: age 8-9.

This fourth book starring Jo Schmo, her sidekick drooling dog Raymond, and her retired sheriff grandpa, is certain to capture readers from start to finish.

Jo Schmo and Raymond were having a great day. After all, they had just saved a bunch of people and the Golden Gate Bridge from being blown up by a huge amount of dynamite. But their good day quickly turned the other direction. Not far from San Francisco was a prison filled with bad guys who had been captured by Jo and Raymond, and two of those prisoners — Dr. Dastardly and Numb Skull — were plotting their prison escape and revenge on Jo and Raymond.

To further complicate the situation, a band of time-traveling pirates headed by Pinkbeard the pirate land in San Francisco and join forces with Dr. Dastardly and Numb Skull with a united, evil plan to get Jo and Raymond, once and for all.

Fast paced, loaded with laughs and absurdities, kids will love this new adventure of Jo Schmo.

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