



The Children's Book Review

Growing ReadersSM

First, You Need Pajamas

Written by David E. Smith

Illustrated by Gennel Marie Solano

Ages: 3 and up | 38 Pages

Publisher: Authorhouse (2024) | ISBN: 979-8823033985

What to Expect: Bedtime battles, family teamwork, repetition and rhythm, toddler antics, and disability representation.

The universal struggle of getting a determined toddler to bed comes to life in this charming picture book that captures the chaos and comedy of the nightly bath-to-bed routine gone awry.

When Danielle decides she has other plans besides going to bed, her family springs into action to redirect her back on track. But as any parent of a toddler knows, it's never quite that simple. Readers follow along as the family encounters one stalling tactic after another, each met with the refrain that's sure to become a household favorite: "But first, you need pajamas." Every family that has navigated the seemingly endless bedtime negotiations will recognize themselves in these pages—the diversions, the delays, the teamwork required to accomplish what should be a simple task.

Through digitally rendered illustrations and the repetitive refrain, Smith and Solano capture both the exasperation and the tenderness of these moments with authenticity and humor. The repetitive structure serves the story well, creating a rhythmic quality that makes it fun for read-alouds while also helping young readers anticipate what comes next. The sweet, full circle ending ties up the refrain beautifully, providing satisfying closure while reinforcing the book's gentle message about routine and family cooperation.

Also, something to note is that Danielle's big sister, who uses a wheelchair, integrates disability representation into the family dynamic without being called out or made "special."

First, You Need Pajamas makes for an amusing addition to the bedtime bookshelf—ideal for families in the trenches of toddler bedtimes or those who simply appreciate stories that celebrate the challenging, adorable, and utterly exhausting reality of parenting young children.

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