



## A Perfectly Messed-Up Story

*Patrick McDonnell*

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In this interactive and engaging read-aloud, bestselling author and award-winning artist Patrick McDonnell creates a funny, engaging, and *almost* perfect story about embracing life's messes. Little Louie's story keeps getting messed up, and he's not happy about it! What's the point of telling his tale if he can't tell it perfectly? But when he stops and takes a deep breath, he realizes that everything is actually just fine, and his story is a good one--imperfections and all.

## A Perfectly Messed-Up Story Details

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Author : Patrick McDonnell

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## From Reader Review A Perfectly Messed-Up Story for online ebook

### Tahani says

You gonna love it..

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### Jason Koivu says

#### \* \* \* Read & Reviewed by Me and My Niece Emma \* \* \*

More like...A Perfectly AWESOME Story! I can't believe Emma didn't want to get this. When I found it at the library and suggested it, she gave me her scrunched up, "Whaaat? Really? I don't know..." face, but I persevered. Something about *A Perfectly Messed-Up Story* had her name written all over it.

VINDICATION! She *loved* it! Granted, I had to "play it big" in my reading, going over the top as the main character, Louie, a Casper-pale midget with a bad comb-over sporting a yellow onesie, who attempts to tell his perfect story only to be foiled by huge globs of peanut butter and jelly and the like dropping on to the page from some imagined reader above.

*"Once upon a time, little Louie went skipping merrily along,"* begins the story which worryingly continues on in such a staid manner, threatening to bore young readers/listeners. But then on page three, like most kids books do, the author throws in his monkeywrench, and soon enough Louie is being bombarded by all manner of sticky messes, impertinent fingerprints, and various sorts of stains. He becomes so exasperated that he gives up, but just when it seems there's no hope for this book, the story begins again, Louie makes it all the way through without a single droplet of PB&J, and all is right with the world!

Emma's favorite part, and mine too, was when the peanut butter plopped right on Louie's face. Many a giggle ensued!

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### Nancy Kotkin says

This is Louie's story, so he gets upset when the book encounters all sorts of messes and spills. But Louie grows to realize that he loves his story, messes and all. This humorous meta-fictional picture book reminds readers, regardless of age, to embrace all the messes in our own stories. The illustrations extend the text extremely well. The peanut butter and jelly look quite real, as do the fingerprints and paper towel.

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## **Amy says**

So great! Teaching kids to take care of books? This should be your go-to read-aloud.

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## **Cristal Martinez says**

A perfectly messed up story by Patrick McDonell is a picture book about the narrator attempting to read a story about a little boy named Louie, but as the story keeps going Louie says that it is his story as he tried to attempt to read it, but a jelly stain, peanut butter, finger print and other messes got on the book and it makes Louie feel sad.

My impression of this picture book is that I thought it was humorous and enjoyable to read because of all the silly little things that happen as the story continues, with the jelly stain on there and peanut butter they all look so realistic and Louie licking the jelly is just hilarious, I would definitely read this story to my students in class.

The protagonist in this story is Louie we can see his personality traits and how he is feeling from the beginning to end of the story. We can see that he starts of happy in the story because he is happily walking along singing, in the illustrations he has a happy face on. Throughout we can see he gets upset by the jelly and peanut butter stains and fingerprints. We can see when he is angry when he says "Orange juice! ARG! My story is getting all messed up" with his hands in the air and his face frowning and mouth open. We can also see when he is sad when he says "I'm in a messy old book that will end up in a garage sale, a book NO one will ever want to read or love." The illustrations also shows he is sad because he is sitting down with his head hiding behind his arms crouched down.

The point of view in this story is 3rd person and first person. Third person point of view because it starts off with the narrator saying "Once upon a time, little Louie went skipping merrily along." And "Tra-la-la-la he sang." I say first person point of view also because then as the story goes along little Louie has talking bubbles and him saying "Who would eat a jelly sandwich reading my book?" and "My story is getting all messed up."

A visual element I noticed is the different text, it has the traditional once upon a time starting, but then it has the talking bubbles like a comic would have. As the story continues there is also a lot of white space where only the character Louie and his talking bubbles are present. I believe the author did this so we can see the different metafiction strategies being used for being a post-modern picture book.

Another visual element I noticed is that the illustrations some look like a very traditional illustration a traditional tale would have but then as it went along the illustrations had very realistic things like the jelly, peanut butter, fingerprints and orange juice look very realistic.

This is a post-modern picture book because it has the different traits one would have such as different points of views and different types of illustrations, and the character Louie is very aware that someone is causing all those different stains on his story.

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## **Rylie says**

A Perfectly Messed-Up Story written by Patrick McDonell is a book about a little character named Louie. He is trying to get his story started when plop....a huge goop of jelly comes out of nowhere and splats on his book page. As the book goes on, the character starts to notice more things that are appearing on his page due to the reader. Louie then starts to interact with the reader on how they can fix the problems of what is

happening to the page. Then he comes across scribbles that only get worse when you try to clean them. That's it, and he gives up. Only until he realizes that everything is just fine and his story is not ruined. The illustrations in this book are expressive and the word bubbles add so much richness to the storyline. You can see that Louie is addressing the reader because the word bubbles and eye contact indicate that he is straying from outside the normal text. One element of the illustrations was the reoccurring background. Aside from the jelly, orange juice, coffee stains, etc. the background remains the same. This helps to add the interactive element of the book, where the reader is creating the story with their spills. Another element was the level of salience that was portrayed through Louie's bright yellow onesie. The background remains the same though out a majority of the book, this leaves Louie and the reader to add change and motion to the story. Having Louie be illustrated in a bright, eye popping color really supports the significance of this one character.

Louie is the main character, and he loves to make that very well known throughout the book. He make claims like "My story is ruined." and "My story is getting all MESSED UP!" Along with Louie, another main character is the invisible character, the reader. The story is being pulled along by the jelly stains and orange juice spills. This book showcases the different characteristics of post-modern picture books with recognizing that he is in a story and that there are interruption that keep preventing him from telling us is story. For example some devices in this text includes the book is self-referential, addresses the reader, does not really follow any sort of organization, references the story process, language playfulness, and indeterminacy. It has self referential because throughout the story Louie is saying things like "somebody's fingerprints are all over this" making it clear that he knows he is a story in a book. You can see a clear connection between the reader and Louie between the high amounts of eye connection. You can see on many of the pages that Louie is addressing the reader's mistakes in text while his eye contact is reassuring this relationship. I thought that this story was so cute and fun. I have really seen a new side to literature with this postmodern style. I love how the reader and characters are so involved, it adds a fun to element to reading.

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### **Beth says**

A laugh-out-loud funny story about a picture book protagonist who is having a tantrum over the fact that the owner of this particular book doesn't appear to take very good care of his belongings. It's sort of the meta-picture-book version of "And this is why we can't have nice things!" :)

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### **Carrie says**

Cute.

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### **Maria Zuppardi says**

One word: inspirational.

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### **Laura says**

A Perfectly Messed-Up Story by Patrick McDonnell gets well....a little messy. :D

Between blops and blobs of peanut butter & jelly, drink rings and more--Louie tries to tell us his tale. A tale that shows readers of all ages that messes and mistakes happen in fiction and life. Life gets messy. It's not perfect. That's what makes it interesting. The story, our story must go on! Through the stickiness! Through the drops, stains, and smears! Work through and with the messes in life.

My nephew absolutely loved this story. Louie's reaction to the messes and attempted clean-ups made him laugh and laugh. A very fun read that pulls kids into the story and mess.

A joy to read out loud. Highly recommended.

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### **Kristen says**

Every children's librarian and media specialist needs this book. It may become my new go-to read-aloud for library tours. Louie is enjoying his story in the book until he encounters a blob. Sniff sniff, lick lick - it's jelly?! And then a blob of peanut butter. And fingerprints and orange juice.

"We need to show some respect here. Books are important." Louie says.

(Can I get an amen?)

In the end, Louie realizes his story is still a pretty good story, "messes and all" and the reader is still reading. Good one!

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### **Mia Bakhthiar says**

Despite being a picture book, this was so uplifting, and was just what I needed.

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### **Mischenko says**

Pour little Louie! His story keeps getting messed up. Or does it? Cute for little ones to read. A nice change from traditional stories. 4\*\*\*\*

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### **Kelly says**

Would it be over the top to say that Louie and I are connected across the astral plane? Perhaps. I will say that a picture book hasn't hit me in the feels like this since Baby Bear.

To begin with, consider the fourth wall obliterated. Personally, I'm not a fan of photoshopping real-world objects over ink/paint illustrations, but here it actually works and doesn't just look creepy! (I'm looking at you 17 Things I'm Not Allowed to Do Anymore--that one still gives me the heebie-jeebies.) According to the "About This (Messed-Up) Book" blurb Jeff Schultz takes responsibility for the messes, and the rest is done

in pen & ink, brush pen, crayon, and watercolor.

It definitely has that Patrick McDonnell flair, a combination of whimsy and quirkiness, and (un)surprisingly potent emotional content (one time, on the info desk Me...Jane made me cry.) A Perfectly Messed-Up Story is no different. My favorite little flourishes are the "This book belongs to Me" on the front pages, and opening the story up with "Once upon a time," and going from the watercolor scenery to the white, blank background is a striking visual cue. Along with a good dose of humor, we get the idea that even though life isn't always a fairy-tale, we're all still here and that's awesome.

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### **Sandra Couch says**

**Summary:** Little Louie is trying to tell his story when he keeps on getting interrupted. First, by a big drop of jelly on the page, then with peanut butter! When he starts up his story again someone drew in the book and completely throws him off task. As he is ready to give up, he discovers something about himself and his story.

**Theme:** I think the theme of this picture book is to never give up. Throughout the story, we see Louie work hard and overcome a lot of obstacles in order for him to make it through to the end. For example, after he encounters jelly and peanut butter splatters on the page, he gets discouraged and wants to give up with telling his story, then he realizes that even though there are messes on the pages, it is still a good story and that the reader is still reading the book so he becomes very motivated to finish telling his story. This contributes to the story because without the conflicts that Louie encounters, he wouldn't be able to realize that he is able to overcome them and continue on. Also, his feelings contribute to the theme as we see him become angry and frustrated with being unable to share his story in his book. Without these things, the theme wouldn't be evident. I think the author included this theme because it can be easy for kids to relate to and want to give up on something if they are having a hard time accomplishing it. Kids will be able to connect to a time where they felt like giving up but didn't and were able to achieve their goal.

**Tone:** This book has a very a dramatic humorous tone. For example, we are introduced to Louie as a glob of jelly drips onto the page and he exclaims, 'Hey, wait!' Curious as to what it is, he begins to lick the glob and figures out that it is jelly. He begins to explain how this is ruining his story. As the book continues other things get in the way of his story and he dramatically tells the reader that they are showing no respect to the pristine white pages. He also encounters crayon marks on one of the pages and freaks out and says that it's the worst thing ever! Louie's exaggerated reactions contribute to the story in the way that we are able to better see and feel when he is mad or frustrated. This tone serves as a reminder of the theme to keep it together and never give up in situations that are discouraging.

**Media:** The illustrations in this book is amazing! The illustrator uses a combination of pen and ink, brush pen, crayon, and watercolor on watercolor paper. It also looks like he uses photographic elements (ie the peanut butter and jelly) which all work very nicely together. The author also uses the negative space around the frame to highlight the orange juice spill and fingerprints. The different types of medium really makes it feel like the person reading the story is involved and that they caused the mess on the pages. For example, Louie reacts to the peanut butter plopping on the page by saying, "Jelly AND peanut butter! AUGH! The chunky kind!" When I look at the illustration of the peanut butter it looks very real you can even see the chunks in it! I was able to easily visualize this happening and I am reminded how often I ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as a kid. This contributes to the story because the type of media that is used adds to the overall experience of the reader being a messy child who color, touched everything, loved peanut butter and

jelly sandwiches and needed their parent to clean up their messes (as we can see with the paper towel smear). The drawings are relatively simple but they reveal Louie's vast emotional range. This allows children to recognize themselves in the character's reaction and in the spills that happen.

Colors: Throughout the book, we see Louie's experiences a variety of emotions. The book uses plenty of bright crisp colors before the conflict occurs. For example, in the opening scene Louie is walking along wearing yellow indicating that he is happy, as we can tell from him singing too. As he approaches the dark red of the jelly, which is associated with rage and anger, which allows us to get sort of a foreshadowing that the conflicts will make him angry, which they do. This contributes to the story because the use of colors allow us to connect with Louie's emotions. For example, when the black fingerprints first appear on the page, I felt a sense of mystery not knowing what other messes he was going to encounter. The color black is associated with mystery and the unknown. This influenced my mood in the way that I started to feel bad for him. Ironically, the following pages reveal Louie didn't know what to expect next either.

Postmodern Explanation: It is very evident that this book is of the postmodern genre. For example, the book is playful, and breaks the traditional storytelling rules. We see this in the way that the character comments on his own story. For example, when Jelly first stains the page he comments, "Who would eat a Jelly Sandwich while reading MY book?". Another reason is that it is hinted that he addresses the narrator. For example, he says, "We need to show some respect here. Books are important. They Teach us stuff and they inspire us." This is said while looking at the reader and after peanut butter, jelly, orange juice and fingerprints interrupt his story. Also, there are breaks and interruptions in the telling of the story. We see this in the way that Louie doesn't even get to tell his story by the end of the book.

Opinion: I really liked this book. I thought it was very engaging to read because I felt like I was a part of the story which really drew me in. For example, when he says "Now can I PLEASE get on with MY story? Thank you." We know that he is talking to the reader after hinting that the reader caused all the messes and ruined his story. Involving the reader in the story made it fun to read because I was able to reminisce on my days of being messy as a child. When I first encountered the book the bright colors on the cover made me very intrigued. As I flipped through the pages, the illustrations made me even more curious about what was happening. Upon reading the book, I have gained a new liking to this genre because these books are much different than the traditional ones and put a new spin on books for kids. I definitely plan on including postmodern picture books in my classroom because I think that involving the reader makes that book more memorable for a child. For example, when I was a kid my favorite book was The Stinky Cheese Man and to this day I still remember it. I especially liked it because the characters spoke to me as the reader and as a kid I never encountered a book that did that before. I felt very engaged in the book.

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