



Cupcake

Charise Mericle Harper

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Poor Vanilla Cupcake. He's feeling a bit drab next to his fancy brothers and sisters. But when his new pal, Candle, comes along with some fresh ideas, the two hatch a plan to become the snazziest duo ever found on a plate!

With an undeniably adorable hero and eye-catching design, *Cupcake* is sure to appeal to the sweet tooth in young readers everywhere.

Cupcake Details

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Author : Charise Mericle Harper

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From Reader Review Cupcake for online ebook

Jenn Swanson says

Cupcake was born in an oven. It was not like it's brothers or sisters that were all fancy and colorful...in fact this cupcake was rather vanilla. It makes a friend in a small green candle and they try to figure out how to get someone to pick them. One would think that the candle would be more "bright" and figure out how to accomplish this. My daughter enjoyed looking at all the different cupcakes in this book. I, however, did not like how the ending was left open. Did they get picked or not? This story is adorable though and I would recommend it.

Ccl Children's says

After cupcake is born from a warm oven, he is excited to meet his fancy brothers and sisters. But being a plain vanilla cupcake becomes a problem when he doesn't get chosen. Luckily, candle comes to the rescue with some inventive and silly toppings to make cupcake stand out. This is a great book that invites extended conversations about favorite flavors, good toppings and not so good toppings(pickles, anyone?). This book is sure to be a hit with the under 6 year old crowd! ~Miss April

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Kristen says

Cute and yummy - the art is what gets me.

Rosa says

I saw some negative reviews on Amazon about how this (hilarious) book fails to teach an important life lesson - who are these people? There are about 7 billion (more boring and obvious) children's books out there that espouse Loving Yourself for Who You Are - people spend vast lifetimes attempting to achieve this goal, and Harper is smart enough to know that a book about a vanilla cupcake read at the age of 4 is probably not going to do much to pave that way. This book is wonderful and refreshing precisely because instead of doing the boring/obvious lesson route, it goes for the funny instead. And anyway, if we're really going to get serious about the educational value of kids' books, I'm a firm believer that it's not the dry knee-jerk homilies that kids really need, but rather, developing a sense of humor and an appreciation of the absurd is what will best equip our kids for the road ahead.

Jayna says

Ages 2 and up

A cupcake is excited to a part of such a colorful and fun cupcake family, but finds himself sad at the end of the day when he is last cupcake left. Cupcake believes that no one picked him because he is a plain vanilla cupcake and tells Candle all about it. Candle decides that cupcake needs a fancy topping and tries several different ones, but finally cupcake decides the best topping is Candle.

This was a cute little book and would be fun for a story time about baking. When Candle is trying weird toppings like pickles and spaghetti you could talk about why those are such silly topping and what would be more good and bad toppings.

Laura says

It never fails. Every time I read this book aloud to my toddler, I develop this killer craving for a vanilla cupcake! Aside from that, as other reviewers have noted, the unexpected ending really makes the story. Let's give kudos to the entire second half of the book, where the character of Candle tries out different toppers on Cupcake to try to make him feel "special." Pickles or smelly cheese, anyone? The book ends without a clear resolution, but when you're laughing, it doesn't seem to matter so much.

Betsy says

You play dirty pool, Charise Mericle Harper. It isn't enough that you've a brand new and very sparkly picture book out. Oh no. You had to go and write one about a cupcake. Cupcakes! The world's most perfect, most delicious food. How is any gatekeeper of children's literature (teachers, parents, librarians, booksellers, etc.) going to resist a book that stars the world's ultimate tasty treat? Unfair, say I. Then I remember that there's nothing stopping the other authors out there from writing their own cupcake-based books. Ms. Harper just happened to be the one to realize the potential. The result is a book that is smart, funny, and as simple as the vanilla cupcake on its cover. In a word: sweet.

When Cupcake was baked everything was awesome. He introduced himself to all his siblings (Rainbow-Sprinkles Cupcake, Chocolatey Chocolate Cupcake, Stripy Cupcake, etc.) and was perfectly happy with his lot. That is, until the end of the day when all the other cupcakes got picked and Cupcake was left sitting by himself. Joined by an equally plain candle the two decide that what Cupcake needs is a special topping. Pickles don't seem to work. Spaghetti? Not so much. And don't even talk about the incident with the squirrel. However, when Candle sees a nut left on the top of Cupcake he goes up there to take it off . . . then realizes something. The final shot is of the candle yelling with triumph, "Tomorrow let's try a potato!"

I first fell for the seemingly simple style of Ms. Harper when she wrote the *Fashion Kitty* graphic novels. Those were books that I was fairly certain I would hate right off the bat. Fashion meets comics meets kitties. How on earth could that be good Doggone it if the woman doesn't know how to write a funny story though. I still quote the line "I love you but I'd really like to eat you" out of context all the time earning me many a pitying stare from the passersby. Her *Just Grace* books are another great example. Seemingly simple on the outside. Surprisingly witty and vivacious on the inside. *Cupcake* is definitely of the same ilk.

Ms. Harper's artistic style reminds me of nothing so much as a variation on that of fellow author/illustrator Meghan McCarthy. Of course, while Ms. McCarthy does mostly non-fiction picture books, Harper sits squarely in the realm of the fictional. At first this book looks pretty straightforward too. Hand drawn art

(colored in by PhotoShop). That sort of thing. But there's also a bit of mixed media here as well. The tablecloth where much of the action takes place looks like a real tablecloth. It's probably also PhotoShopped, but who cares? This is a book where the art serves to show off the personality of the characters. And if there's one thing Ms. Harper excels at, it's personality.

I'll level with you here. As I flipped through the book on an initial pass I was pretty sure that I knew what the ending would be. That's right. I was basically reading the book like a five-year-old. "Surely the ending will be that the candle realizes that it's the perfect topping for the cupcake," I thought smugly. In fact (and this kind of kills me) I did the worst possible thing a librarian can do when reading a picture book. I got to the penultimate page and then . . . and then . . . I PUT IT DOWN. That's right! I didn't even get to the ending. I just put it down and walked away. It wasn't until later that a small pocket of my brain thought, "Wait a minute. This is Charise Mericle Harper we're dealing with. What are the chances that she didn't end the book with the expected coup d'état? So I raced back, checked, and sure as shooting it was a surprise ending. D'oh! Fooled like a little kid! Let's hope that your preschoolers have a bit more picture book savvy than I did when they read this book.

There are plenty of books out there where the main characters don't want to get eaten. My thinking is that in this story Vanilla Cupcake really hasn't thought through all the potential ramifications of being a fancy dessert. Really, the book that this reminded me of the most was Arnie the Doughnut. Cupcake is clearly a distant relative of Arnie, though Arnie is far more aware of his potential fate than this book's tasty treat. Whatever the case, I kind of love the lack of a moral in this story. It easily could have swerved in the direction of the old lesson, "Just because you're plain looking you can still have a great personality" (most books tiptoe around these exact words, but that tends to be the general gist). This book shows someone who is outwardly plain at the start and remains outwardly plain at the end with a fellow plain friend. Moral schmoral. This is just fun storytelling. It gets to fool the reader and make the child who picks up this book feel smarter than a cupcake. What's better than that?

The sole flaw with the book, as I see it, is that after you stare at the cover for a couple minutes you suddenly want nothing more than to get your hands on a delicious vanilla cupcake of your own. Fortunately there's a recipe at the back (complete with a cupcake toting squirrel) for making your own "Deliciously Plain Vanilla Cupcakes" with their own "Deliciously Plain Buttercream Frosting". So you lack for nothing, really. It's a funny story about an unlikely edible hero (my favorite kind of hero) and a problem that kids will be able to solve while the main characters remain ignorant. What's not to love? As per the usual Charise Mericle Harper fare, this is just fun fun fun. Deliciously so.

Ages 4-8.

Malinda says

Cupcake is a creamy and plain vanilla cupcake. He is born into the "world" and is so happy to have such a large funny of other cupcakes. His brothers and sisters are all so colorful and bright. He soon realizes that he is left alone and that no one wants him, because he is just "plain". He becomes sad, until "Candle", who is just a plain green candle talks about how sad he is too, because his brothers and sisters are more fancier than he is.

The book takes off with Candle and Cupcake teaming up to make Cupcake fancier, so people will like him. They play around with a bunch of silly ideas throughout the book.

I love this book. It is a great book for children to see that is okay to be different from others. I think it is a funny and cute read for younger children.

Sarah says

This book was the cutest! The artwork was great, the storyline fun, and the ending subtle. My kids loved choosing which was their favorite cupcake and I love that the author put a cupcake & frosting recipe at the end. Just really super cute.

Ginny says

Love Love LOVE!
I just want to take Vanilla home and eat him aaaaalllll up!

Cassie says

Ahh yes, a book about a cupcake. Can't say that I've ever heard of one before, and that's a good thing. New and different; that's what I like. Sure, *Cupcake* is basically a story teaching the reader that being plain and different is ok, and that has been done before, but never with a Charise Mericle Harper twist. The lesson doesn't hit you in the face. You don't read her books expecting to learn something; you read her books anticipating enjoyment and a funny ending - the learning part is a bonus that may (or may not) dawn on you later.

The other thing I enjoy about Harper's work is that I cannot look at a book and say "ahhh yes, I can tell by the artwork that is a Charise Mericle Harper book". Nope. Her style is varied and there is no way you would confuse Fashion Kitty with Mimi or even Lulu. That may or may not be such a good thing to an artist, but to me, a simple Children's Librarian, I enjoy stories more when the pictures actually match the text and I admire flexibility in people. It shows a willingness to enjoy new things as well as the ability to express oneself in more than one way, not to mention the fact that because of her long list of writing and illustrating credits, she is sure to have a book to suit just about anyone.

Cupcake is a great fit to the 4-8 crowd (share it with a Fancy Nancy fanatic to remind them that plain is ok too!), though I bet the adult sharing the book with a young child will enjoy it just as much. Be warned though: reading the story might make you want to bake cupcakes, but guess what?!? A recipe for that very purpose is included in the back. YUM!

Mandy says

I adore this children's book. I am a huge fan of cupcakes and I love how the author incorporated a plain vanilla cupcake with a bunch of fancy ones. Then candle comes along and is plain as well and he tries to help cupcake find something special to put on top. The illustrations are cute and colorful, my youngest really likes

this book!

Tasha says

Vanilla Cupcake is born after ingredients are mixed together and he is baked in a toasty warm oven. He is decorated with plain vanilla frosting and then meets all of the other cupcakes that have been decorated in a much more fancy way. By the end of the day, he is the only cupcake that remains and hasn't sold. He bursts into tears and a candle nearby hears him crying. Cupcake explains what has happened and the plain green candle understands because he has very fancy siblings of his own. Then Candle has a great idea and hops off to find exactly the right thing to decorate Cupcake. They try all sorts of things from pickles to pancakes and even a squirrel! But nothing is quite right. Just when readers think that Candle and Cupcake will finally figure it all out, there is a delicious twist that will have everyone laughing out loud.

This book is a hoot! I had worried with its sparkly cover and sweet subject that it might get a bit too syrupy, but just when you think that might happen the humor kicks in and takes the book in a different direction. Harper's writing is simple, adding to the humor by its straight-forward tone. Her art is also simple and graphically strong with its black outlines and pastel colors.

A book that captures the cupcake craze with a sweet tone and plenty of giggles, share this one at any sweet storytime you may be planning. Appropriate for ages 3-5.

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

When you're just a 'plain' cupcake it is hard to stand out...but if you look to your friends for help you may find a solution.

Nashiea Edmiston says

A beautifully designed book about a little vanilla cupcake who thinks he is very plain compared to his fancy brothers and sisters. When vanilla cupcake is not chosen by the end of the day, he is feeling pretty crummy about his plainness...until his friend candle comes along. The pair share similar experiences and decide to come up with a plan to make vanilla cupcake less plain and in the process, completely miss what is obvious to us all! Children will love the ending. Ideal read aloud for preschool or early elementary.
