



The Taking Tree: A Selfish Parody

Shrill Travesty , Lucy Ruth Cummins (Illustrator)

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We all know the story of the "selfless" tree that gave all she had just to make sure a young boy was "happy."

Snore. This is a different tree. This is a different boy. This is a very different book.

The Taking Tree is not so happy when the boy takes her twigs to pick on his sister, or takes her apples to sell for college (she's an oak tree for goodness sake), or when he cuts off her branches to build a house that he burns for insurance money. And the boy is not sorry at all. Ever. In fact, he's kind of a jerk. And the boy asks for more, and more, and more until the oak tree is so fed up she just can't take it any longer. While another story might end sweetly with an old man sitting on a stump. This one does not.

The Taking Tree: A Selfish Parody Details

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From Reader Review The Taking Tree: A Selfish Parody for online ebook

Emily says

"He told the tree, 'I want to go away to college, but I have no money to pay for it. Will you give me your apples?'

The tree said, 'I'm an oak tree. I can't grow apples. When have you ever seen me grow apples?' ... 'Is there even a college that takes apples as tuition?' asked the tree."

Nick says

While I am not a huge fan of The Giving Tree, and thought that it was one of Silverstein's lesser books in many ways, I cannot in good conscience support such a primitive and mean-spirited parody as this. The final straw was the "author notes" parodying Silverstein's life and career. Shel Silverstein was a very creative man in a variety of fields. The person who wrote this parody isn't, based on the results here.

There are adults and children who will find this book to be funny, mostly those who have either not read The Giving Tree or those who read it and disliked its somewhat sappy sentimentalism. The thing is, being sentimental doesn't hurt anyone, and this book just isn't very funny, as parodies go. The story, being a slavish rebuttal to Silverstein's original, attempts to make fun of the original tree's selflessness and generosity, by having it be a passive victim instead. [Except when it has unexplained magical powers.] Why would that be funny? The child, instead of being worthy of the tree's sacrifice, is instead a selfish twit with no redeeming qualities. Okay, so that's sometimes funny on TV sitcoms, but in this case, it just doesn't work very well.

The Taking Tree seemed like really bad fan fiction, rather than the work of a professional.

The artwork is okay, and could have merited a second star, had it been associated with a better book.

Melody says

Really, really funny. Especially if you, like me, hate The Giving Tree with all your heart.

It's a one-trick-pony, this book, and it only exists to mock Uncle Shelby. The end is brilliant. The illustrations are adequate but not stellar.

Worth reading if you're a cranky old curmudgeon.

Abigail says

Once upon a time there was a little jerk of a kid who spent his days underneath an oak tree. After one too many bad deeds - throwing acorns at old people, setting fires with the tree's leaves - the kid is carted off (to juvie, one assumes), and the tree is happy. Good things never last, however, and soon the kid is back, now wanting to go to college (which seems questionable, but let's not quibble). Demanding some apples, the kid is met with incredulous denial: *"I'm an oak tree. I can't grow apples. When have you ever seen me grow*

apples...Is there even a college that takes apples as tuition?" And so it goes, as the boy continues to exploit the tree, at every stage of his life (when not in prison). In a final insult, the kid (now an old man) takes a chain-saw to his arboreal "friend," but it isn't the tree alone that faces the consequence...

From start to finish, from front-jacket-blurb to back, I found The Taking Tree: A Selfish Parody hilarious. Taking Shel Silverstein's The Giving Tree as a starting point, 'Shrill Travesty' creates a marvelously satirical tale that pokes fun at just about everything in that classic but much-debated original book. Every aspect of the story is up for grabs, as the general premise (tree gives everything to boy) and specific incidents (the coming and going of the boy over the years) are ruthlessly and effectively parodied. Even the handling of the author photo itself (which has been withheld here by popular request, because apparently it "has terrified more children than the bogeyman") manages to strike a hilarious note. Who hasn't had a discussion of Shel Silverstein's photo, which I have seen described as 'Satanic?' Absolutely hilarious! Recommended to anyone who hates The Giving Tree, or who loves it but has a sense of humor about it.

karen says

so i was waiting until the gods of media mail delivered david's (yes, belated) birthday copy of this book to him before i wrote my own review. i know my reviews are a secret joy to him, and i didn't want his view of the book to be tainted by my keen critical eye. i also figured it was his duty to review it first.

you see, david's review of *the giving tree* is quite legendary, don't you know? like, golden age legendary. much like the aurora borealis, it can only be seen on certain nights, when the moon is full and the wolves are snug in their dens, and then - in a twinkling - it is gone again, but all who have been fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of it are never the same afterward. "did you see that?" they ask each other, never sure if it was imagined.... in some cultures, reading david's review of *the giving tree* is a rite of passage, when little boys become men. but those little boys are shit out of luck, because right now, that review is in the wane of its cycle.

and now - irony of all ironies - david's review of *this* book has also gone into hibernation. david kowalski, you are running the very real risk of becoming entirely apocryphal.

and if i may be one-more-time-name-dropping before we get to the actual review, may i just take this moment to say that ariel is not a mermaid but an angel sent here from heaven to give me books, even when i don't come right out and beg for them. she is a delight.

so, *the giving tree*. i gave that book 5 stars not because i think it is an awesome story, but because it is so spectacularly manipulative and it teaches little kids how to be sociopaths, but masks it underneath some scratchy drawings, and that it has been in print as long as it has without people being up in arms about this leaves me awestruck and twitterpated. i don't care how you are reading it (popular interpretations are a mother's selfless love for her child - giving up all she is made of for him to succeed, or as a spiritual parable about the turn-the-other-cheek philosophy that gives and gives despite being taken advantage of, or as a terrifying tale of inequality and battered woman/tree syndrome in an emotionally unequal relationship), it is a shitty, shitty situation for the tree. come on, tree - haven't you been following my reviews??

this is like a bizarro shel silverstein book, where the tree has a backbone, and even though that stupid kid manages to get a lot of shit over on the tree, at the end, there is comeuppance.

i love a good revenge story.

i love the illustrations, i love the playfulness, i love the little back-cover joke; this book is a real freaking joy to me. this is a perfect gift for anyone who can be amused.

Matthew says

Thank goodness someone finally got around to taking *The Giving Tree* down a peg or two. I can't remember a book that has been so widely loved and so severely misread in the history of literature. Everyone loves the fact that this boy takes and takes and takes some more and the tree so graciously, so lovingly, so unthinkingly just gives every last piece of itself to the boy to give him a little happiness. Who taught the boy the value of respect for others? No one. And yet everyone I ask is just in love with the book. Something's seriously wrong with that. This is kind of taking the book in the exact opposite direction, but it was just so perfect in that regard. With its final action, the tree finally manages to kill the boy back after everything the little monster put the tree through over the course of a lifetime. Wonderful! Way to go tree!

Ladan says

It is indeed so funny and reading it right after "the giving tree" was much more fun.
??? ?? "???? ??????" ?????? ?????? ?? ??? ????? :)))

Yapha says

NOT FOR KIDS! Absolutely hilarious. You need to read it. Especially if you don't like the messages in *The Giving Tree*.

Brixton says

For those who loved *The Giving Tree*, do not fear. As with most parody, this will only be "funny" for a short period of time; there is much in here that, if it isn't already (and I say it is), will become dated very quickly (eg, a reference to the US 2008 election).

It seems to be a trend nowadays to trash Shel Silverstein's classic children's book (hence we just so happen to now have *The Taking Tree*, to squeeze a few bucks out of that, no doubt). I have the impression it's more cool to assume kids are complete suckers who have no capacity for nuanced thinking or complex reading, and that all who are exposed to *The Giving Tree* will grow up to be doormats at best, battered spouses at worst. Come on. Just because they're small does not mean children cannot recognise selfishness, have conflicted sympathies, or feel empathy. And certainly they can cope with stories that encourage a good, hard philosophical think. I used to feel so sorry for the tree I cried. I did not grow up to let people push me around, but I do feel strongly that nurturing kindness, loyalty to friends, and selflessness is good, but that one should be careful to retain limits and maintain balance. Letting another take advantage to your own detriment is pitiful. Or how about this: even when you think you have nothing, with a little creative thinking, you can

always come up with what you need. Oh yeah, I'm also an environmentalist. It's probably safe to blame Shel for all such of my horrible qualities.

Another trend nowadays is to claim to be *victimised* by everything, as if American children are such *delicate little snowflakes* that their fragile minds can be wrecked far into adulthood by a single storybook. Again, come on. Take some responsibility here, if *The Giving Tree* was able to so threaten your ability to retain personal integrity, maybe you were just a dumb kid?

As I read through some reviews of *The Taking Tree*, I guess I am most saddened that Silverstein's book about kindness, loyalty and giving arouses so much passionate negativity, words like "hate", "loathe" and "despise". Maybe Shel just gave too many people too much credit. Maybe American kids are just hopeless and mean.

All that said, *The Taking Tree* was to me still kinda funny. I think it's an incredibly bad move on Simon & Schuster's part, however, to market this to young readers. The drawings have only limited appeal, and neither they nor the text lend well to repeat exposure. A young reader would have to have formed a sophisticated critique of *The Giving Tree* in order to appreciate a parody of it, and frankly, I just don't think the humour is for kids at all. I am very definitely not saying at all that they are going to run out and burn their school down just because they saw it in this book (remember, I'm not the one who thinks kids are dumb little puppets), I just don't think they're going to get jokes about things like business corruption and insurance fraud.

Amara Tanith says

Let me start with an anecdote.

When I was a junior in high school, I took a Creative Writing class with a friend of mine. Toward the end of the year, the ~~duehebag~~ teacher assigned us a project; we were each to choose a favorite author and one of his or her books to do a short presentation on. (What that has to do with Creative Writing, I don't know. It seems like our time would have been better suited to, you know, writing.) A sophomore acquaintance in the class chose to do her presentation on *The Giving Tree*, and as part of her presentation, she was going to show an animated adaptation of *The Giving Tree* that she'd found on YouTube.

She didn't download the video, unfortunately, so she had to go searching for it; the first link she clicked turned out to be a different one than she'd picked. Then she thought she'd found it on the second try. She *really* hadn't.

Instead, she'd ended up here. And so our class accidentally blasted "GIVE ME ALL YOUR FUCKING APPLES!" down the hall, given that the speakers were so loud and the door was open.

The whole class, teacher included, laughed hysterically for probably five minutes.

So when I sit down to read a *Giving Tree* parody, that's always on my mind. The parody I'm reading has to compete with the absolute shock and hilarity of that Creative Writing incident.

The Taking Tree didn't have that shock factor, obviously, but it was still amusing. Our premise here is vastly different from *The Giving Tree*; essentially, the two characters' personalities are entirely opposite the originals. The little boy is an antagonist brat, and the tree isn't putting up with his shit.

Me being me, I certainly enjoyed it. I'm not the kind of person who'll ROFL over a book, but *The Taking Tree* gave me a chuckle here and there thanks to its frankness and sheer absurdity.

I'd advise fans of adult-targeted picture books to give this one a try, as well as those who individuals who don't like the original *Giving Tree* (or those who did like, but don't mind someone poking fun at the premise). I would point out, however, that I wouldn't recommend this to parents looking for something to read to their children. Like most parody picture books, it belongs in the humor section--*not* the kidlit section.

Mark says

At present my reading has slowed down ever so slightly as i foolishly began to watch the box set of 'The Wire' and am fast becoming addicted. However i am trying to restrain myself and just watch a couple of episodes at a time. I find I am using the remote a good deal as I pause and rewind to try to fathom what on Gods own earth half of the characters are saying.

If this tree had a role in the series she would, as I note americans like to say, kick ass; whether on the side of the cops or the drug dealers I would not like to say or at least certainly not without a good deal of promised and assured protection. If i was seeking to be literary and pretentious I would say ' This tree probably led the charge on Dunsinane', if I was being me I would say 'This tree really made me laugh and expunged from my mind for a brief moment of joy the horror that is 'The Giving Tree'.

This seems like payback for every ecological disaster, every cloud of Napalm, every man-made desert encroach, each and every act of deforestation....well that might be putting a little too much responsibility upon this jokey spoof but after the gross doormat status of the giving tree where she gave her all, literally, without any thought for herself and the brute that was the boy takes and takes without giving or thankng or acknowledging this is not so much a breath of fresh air but a being forced to stand in a wind tunnel when they turn the generators on full and the little tyke is swept clean off his self centred little feet.

Suffice it to say, even though the Tree stil gets abused and violated by the ever ageing brat, the Tree gets the last word and that word is sort of Timber-ouch-squish.

I loved it. A really funny and clever parody.

PS. I love the note at the end of the book which points out from whence comes the paper on which the book is printed. It reminded me of the cards which spoof the ' This card is made from wood drawn from sustainable forests' where they say ' No tree was destroyed to make this card but two small bushes were brutally beaten to death to make the envelope'

Sari says

The Giving Tree has creeped me out my entire life. I found The Taking Tree at the library while I was

browsing with my four year old and was glad there wasn't anyone else around because I laughed my head off! Not sure it should have been in picture books, but it was a terrific book, I loved it!

Lisa Vegan says

This quirky parody book went from really entertaining for me, a reader who hates The Giving Tree (<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>) with a passion, to okay maybe this is too topical, dark, dumb, black, with perhaps unwarranted or misplaced bias, etc. to the last pages and especially the last page, which was brilliant and to which I say *touché!* *Touché* particularly as regards to me, someone who hates the original book but who has a good 10,000 books in her apartment.

This picture book has a rather narrow audience range: I say it's for adults who feel varying degrees of scorn, hatred, dislike, etc. for the book this book is parodying. It's a picture book, but after I read it I took it off my childrens shelf. Older children and adolescents who've read and reacted with horror or sadness or other negative emotions to the original book might like this too, but it's really a book for adults. It's being marketed as a kids' book though.

Also hilarious are the bios on the back inside cover of the author and the illustrator and the missing author photo that has been withheld by popular request.

The illustrations really worked well. I love the facial expressions on the boy/man and the trees, and all the colorful pictures.

Maybe it is just a gimmick, but oh how I chortled. I got a kick out of this. It's kind of a one (or few) time read though. Unless I'm subjected to *The Giving Tree* and need a fix, this isn't a book I'll read again and again. But, it was sure an appropriate gift and I really enjoyed it. And, just as I finished writing this, I had the urge to read the book again, so maybe I will want to reread this, and I do want to share it with others who feel the way I do about *The Giving Tree*.

The last page got me to up this from 4 or 3 to 5 stars. (I have a warped sense of humor, yes.)

Kathrina says

Oh my god, I love this book. With all due respect, I also love Silverstein, but mostly because he can be so cynical and cantankerous but still appeal to a children's sensibilities. But here we have a cynical take on one of Silverstein's more sentimental works, and I just can't get enough of it. Tree, I feel your pain. Tucker Max fans, get the f*ck out of my bookstore. But buy this first.

Foad says

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