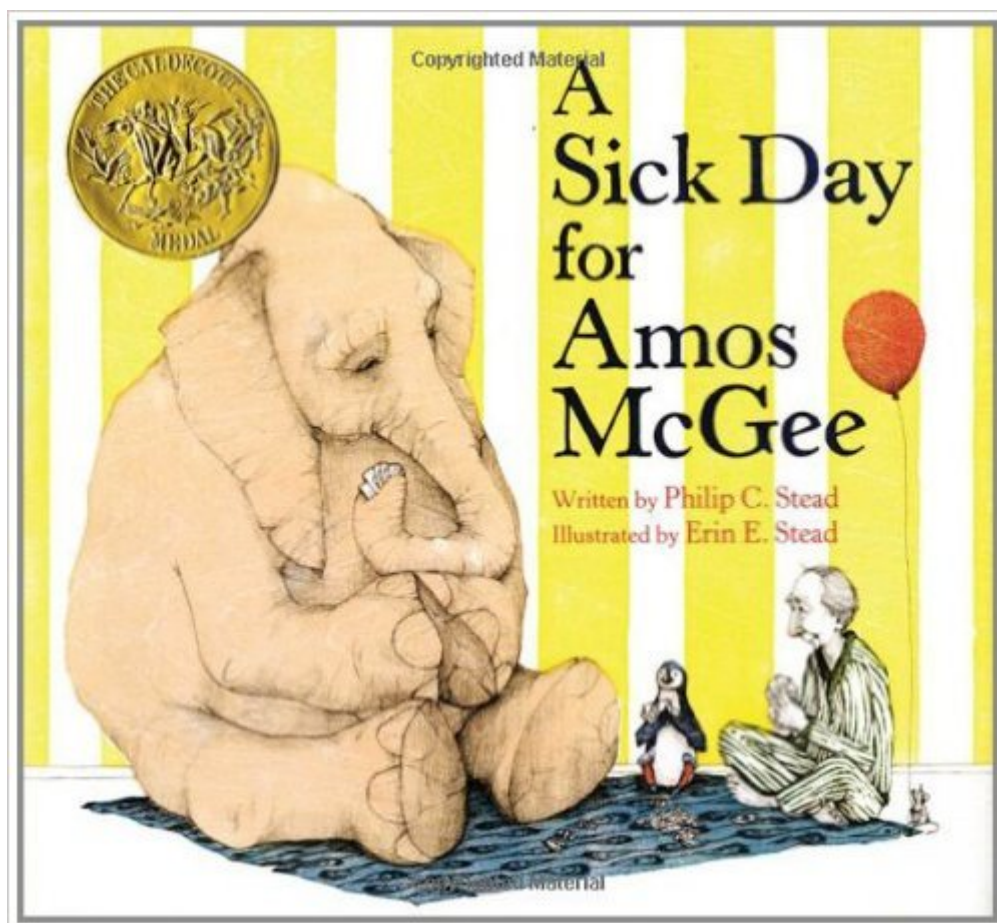


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# A Sick Day For Amos McGee



## Synopsis

The Best Sick Day Ever and the animals in the zoo feature in this striking picture book debut. Friends come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. In Amos McGee's case, all sorts of species, too! Every day he spends a little bit of time with each of his friends at the zoo, running races with the tortoise, keeping the shy penguin company, and even reading bedtime stories to the owl. But when Amos is too sick to make it to the zoo, his animal friends decide it's time they returned the favor.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 760L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Roaring Brook Press; 1st printing edition (May 25, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1596434023

ISBN-13: 978-1596434028

Product Dimensions: 9.6 x 0.4 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (231 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,426 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > Children's Books >

Animals > Zoos #10 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult

Discussions > Illness #10 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Health >

Diseases

Age Range: 2 - 6 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 1

## Customer Reviews

Sometimes children's book reviewers bandy about the term "classic" like it was a verbal shuttlecock. There's nothing that raises the savvy readers' eyebrows faster than to see some wordsmith drooling profusely over "a new classic" or a book merely "destined to become a classic". Even worse is when they start calling a book "old-fashioned". Nine times out of ten what they're talking about is the fact that the book parrots some picture book title of the past. That's the crazy thing about A Sick Day for Amos McGee. It doesn't parrot anyone, and when you read it you feel like you've known the book your whole life. Could have been written last year, ten years ago, or fifty. Doesn't matter because the word "timeless" may as well be stamped all over each and every doggone page. If you want to

give a child a book that will remain with them always (and lead to decades of folks growing up and desperately trying to relocate it with the children's librarians of the future) this is the one that you want. Marvelous. Each morning it's the same. Amos McGee gets out of bed, puts on his uniform, and goes to his job as zookeeper in the City Zoo. Amos takes his job very seriously. He always makes sure to play chess with the elephant, run races with the tortoise, sit quietly with the penguin, blow the rhino's runny nose, and tell stories to the owl at dusk. Then one day Amos wakes up sick and has to stay in bed. The animals, bereft of his presence, decide something must be done. So they pick themselves up and take the bus to Amos's house to keep him company for a change. And after everyone helps him out, Amos reads them all a story and each one of them tucks in for the night. It's strange to think that author Philip Stead wrote both this and last year's *Creamed Tuna Fish and Peas on Toast*. Not that the latter was a bad book or anything, mind you, but that was a case where the protagonist had to be a perpetual crankypants. The character of Amos simply couldn't be more different. He's like a cross between your favorite grandpa and Mr. Rogers. I read through this book several times to get down the cadence of Mr. Stead's wordplay too. He's prone to terms like "amble". He parallels Amos's activities in the first half with similar activities with the animals are taking care of him in the second. He knows when to leave sections wordless. And at the end, the "goodnight" section sort of makes this an ideal bedtime book for small fry. Practically invokes *Goodnight Moon* it does. There's definitely a Sebastian Meschenmoser quality to this book (a statement that is going to be understood by approximately three people out there). Meschenmoser is a German illustrator who has written titles like *Learning to Fly* and *Waiting for Winter*. Erin Stead's style is similar partly because there is a common humanity to every animal she draws. It's not just the anthropomorphic details, like a penguin in socks (an animal Meschenmoser shares an affection for). It's deeper than that. Look at this cover and then stare deep into that elephant's eyes. There are layers to that elephant. That elephant has seen things in its day and has come out the wiser for it. It could tell you stories that would curl your hair or make you laugh till it hurt. That's what I see when I look at a Stead animal. I see a creature that has had a rich full life, and all because of how she has chosen to put pencil/woodblock to paper. Amos McGee himself could not be any better. You love him from the moment he stretches in his pajamas. Everyone here, from the owl to the tortoise is someone you believe in. Add onto all that the little tiny details as well. How Amos and the penguin sit and stand together, ankles turned inward. The fate of the penguin's red balloon. Where Mr. McGee's teddy bear is at any given time. The portrait of the penguin in the home. The rabbit reading a newspaper on the bus. And then there's the penultimate spread where the animals gather around Amos as he gets ready to go to bed. His left foot rest gently against the

rhino's nose, his left hand on the elephant's trunk. Very simple, natural, affectionate touches. You notice them, but you don't. That's the charm. So there's the content. Now look at the actual art and design. According to the bookflap, Erin creates her illustrations by hand using woodblock printing techniques and pencil." That's impressive in and of itself, but I think the use of color is fascinating. Ms. Stead is sparing. On the one hand, you're never able to identify the book's exact year. On the other, you know in the back of your brain that if the publisher wanted to use all the colors of the rainbow, they could. You could also read the book several times before you noticed the elaborate flower design that ties the horizon in place behind the runny nosed rhino. Little touches, but necessary. Husband and wife author/illustrator teams emerge once in a while, but they don't always have the golden touch. That the Steads not only have it but are also willing to use it as a force for good instead of evil is gratifying. It's also gratifying to think that maybe we'll see them do more books in the future. I'd like that. I'd like that very much, and I'm wagering that a whole generation of children reading and loving this book are going to like it as well. Here, I'll make it simple for you: Need to buy a picture book for a kid between the ages of four and eight? Buy this one. There you go. Problem solved. For ages 4-8.

Philip C. Stead's charming story about a zookeeper and his animal companions is matched beautifully with the elegant pencil drawings and woodblock printings by his wife, Erin. E. Stead. From the very start the reader is drawn in by a warm two-page spread that depicts Amos' bedroom. The action that moves the viewer's eye towards the right- Amos stretching as his day begins and his armoire opened invitingly- is complemented by a series of strong vertical lines. There are the wide yellow stripes of the wallpaper and the thin green stripes on his pajamas. The effect is a sense of being enveloped, or better yet, being hugged. It is a feeling appropriate in a story about mutual affection, genuine kindness, and true friendship. Amos McGee is an older gentleman (in the truest sense of the term) who lives in a little house sandwiched between two high-rise apartment buildings (a nod to Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House*, I presume). Each morning after a bit of oatmeal and tea, Amos heads out in a fresh-pressed uniform to begin his workday at the City Zoo. It is clear from the first glimpse that this zoo is atypical: outside the gate, sitting high in a branch of a tree on the sidewalk, sits a monkey as comfortable as can be; inside the gate we can see a giraffe frolicking on the wide lawn. It doesn't appear that these animals reside in the usual enclosures. Indeed, the animals seem to enjoy a life more akin to a fancy retirement community. We discover that Amos spends his days playing chess with the elephant, running races with the tortoise, sitting quietly with the shy penguin, soothing the rhino's runny nose, and reading bedtime tales to the owl. It only

makes sense that when Amos comes down with a bad cold and cannot make it to work, his animal friends hop on the bus and take care of him in the same gentle, loving way. Besides the artfully understated beauty of the story and the characters, *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* stands out from almost all other picture books I've seen this year for the absolute genius in its visual storytelling. Erin E. Stead does not merely illustrate. She breathes life into an already delightful story while adding many more layers of expression. Stead's attention to the smallest details is what allows the reader/viewer to experience this book many times over and still discover surprises each time: from the miniature bus stop for the mouse to the tie-wearing bird; from the sweet absurdity of Amos' bunny slippers to the depiction of a penguin donning floaties. Even Stead's use of woodblock printing to add texture and a bit of color is thoughtful and well-used. It is apparent throughout the work that each pencil line, each color choice, each wrinkle in Amos' face or in the folds of the tortoises' knees, was deliberate and made with a careful eye and a loving hand. Stead has achieved elegance with an organic heart. There is nothing stuffy or too-precise about her lines. Rather, her remarkable drawing skills clearly allow her to bring an incredible warmth and individual personality to each character. The slightly retro feel of Amos' surroundings (his antique stove and pocket watch, the 1950's-esque bus, the lack of any modern technology) combined with the use of white space give the book a pleasant stillness and leisureliness. Some books come into existence and it seems as if they have (or should have) always existed. They possess something timeless and fundamental. Perhaps they float in that creative ether, just waiting for the perfect author and artist to bring them to life. *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* is just such a book.

Our librarian threw this new book in with our requested items because she thought we would enjoy it. Boy, was she right! Sweet, sweet story with unique and fascinating illustrations. I couldn't get enough of the pictures. I've already looked to see if Stead illustrated other books, but....sadly...no. I highly recommend this book for toddlers and preschoolers. LOVE IT!

*A Sick Day for Amos McGee* is a very sweet book about a friendship between a zookeeper named Amos and the animals he cares for. When Amos gets sick, his friends elephant, tortoise, penguin, rhinoceros and owl come to his house to comfort and care for him. Erin McGee's lovely, layered illustrations convincingly depict the friendship between Amos and the zoo animals. I enjoyed reading this book and look forward to sharing it with my children. As a child, I would have loved imagining befriending the animals in this story. As a parent, I hope my children are surrounded by such thoughtful friends.[...]

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