



Crankee Doodle

Tom Angleberger , Cece Bell (Illustrator)

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“Yankee Doodle went to town / a-riding on a pony / stuck a feather in his hat / and called it macaroni.” Many know the song “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” but few understand it. This unapologetically silly picture book reveals that the legendary ride to town (and the whole macaroni thing) was all suggested by Mr. Doodle’s overeager pony. This just makes Mr. Doodle cranky: “I do not want macaroni. I do not want a feather. I do not want any other clothing, any other pasta, or any other parts of a bird. I do not want anything that they have in town!” A historical note ends this colorful, comical take on a nonsensical old song.

Crankee Doodle Details

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From Reader Review Crankee Doodle for online ebook

Storywraps says

First off, let me confess, I loved this book a lot. I looked at the cover, giggled, and loved it. I read through the book, laughed and double loved it. I then closed the cover and said, "I don't want to review this book and put it on my blog." Why in the world would you do that you may ask if you loved it so much? I did not want to review it because the book evoked in me a "two year" mentality that did not want to share, a mentality that said this is too good and I want this book all for myself....it is mine, don't look and certainly don't read it. After I came to my adult and responsible senses (Sigh!) I got on the computer and ladies and gentlemen here is the review of "Crankee Doodle", a book I know you will love too.

The book is a quirky twist on the old beloved song that most people learned as a kid, Yankee Doodle. The original lyrics are:

Yankee Doodle went to town,
Riding on a pony,
stuck a feather in his hat
and called it macaroni....

What the heck does that mean? Sounds like he had had quite a night on the town....

First of all let me address the "pony." His character is by far my favourite and quite a hoot. His expressive face and sublime buck teeth makes him very endearing to me. He so badly wants to go to town, shop and spend quality time with his friend but his Yankee colonial counterpart will have none of it. The poor pathetic pony hints, suggests then blatantly asks his friend to come along. The pony tries to inspire him to buy a feather for his hat, give his hat a name, and as a final plea even offers to give him a ride there. Nothing moves this stubborn, complaining guy. He won't budge.

Now let's look at the Yankee the Cranky guy. Well the definition of cranky is irritable, annoyed, testy and yes, Mr. Yankee is by definition, cranky. He has a rebuttal for every suggestion and proves to be a negative nelly indeed. The line is crossed when the little pony offers that ride and Mr. Crankee pants quips back, "No way! You smell terrible! Using horse talk...that was the last straw! I do not want to spoil the ending so you need to get a copy and find out how the book ends. The book is clever, witty and the valuable lesson you can take away is that cranky people.... well....suck! But do not despair because redemption is possible.

The illustrations are brilliant, vibrant color pallet used to perfection, and the characters enhanced by the expressive faces and body language. The pictures and text are a perfect marriage.

Can you tell I like the book? The pony still cracks me up every time I do a re-read. I want a pony just like that and I will go shopping and romping with him. The release of this book is June 4th so be sure to pre-order today and be sure to share this info with your friends. Yea for Crankee Doodle!!!!!!

Aaron Wyckoff says

I am a fan of Angleberger's Origami Yoda series and I was excited when I saw this book. Then I read it. Then I read it again, just in case I was being too hasty. I really wish I could have liked this book better, but it did not work at all for me.

The illustrations are simple line drawings combined with intense colors. While this is not bad by itself, particularly if you are sharing the book with a very young child, I found them too simple. There just was not enough going on. I could see everything there was to see on a particular page in two seconds. When you combine that with large chunks of text, it becomes very easy for children to lose interest in the page long before you finish reading it.

While the text has a deliberate negativity to it (he is cranky, after all), I felt it was too negative. I had no reason at all to like the main character. I did not really like the pony, either. While children may not pick up on it, I saw the pony as manipulative and self-serving. The pony was not really trying to find something interesting for Doodle to do, it was trying to get him to take it into town for its own purposes.

I can see some children really enjoying the story, but I was unimpressed and would not consider using it in a classroom.

Abigail says

Author Tom Angleberger and illustrator Cece Bell offer a revisionist take on the classic song *Yankee Doodle* in this humorous picture-book, as Mr. Doodle argues with his pony about whether to ride into town, whether to go shopping, and whether to buy a feather for his hat, and call it macaroni. Mr. Doodle, as it transpires, doesn't like macaroni, much preferring lasagna...

Although I can appreciate the humor in Crankee Doodle - I have seen it performed during story-time, with two readers taking the parts of Mr. Doodle and his pony, and the effect on the young audience is always one of immediate hilarity - I find that reading it to oneself is quite a different experience to hearing it read aloud by others. Without the performative element the humor here falls a bit flat for me, and the gouache artwork, although colorful, doesn't quite compensate. Humor is, of course, inherently personal and subjective, so responses will vary, but this is one I recommend chiefly as a read-aloud, if the storyteller is particularly good at over-the-top performance.

Sam says

Silly Crankee Doodle with a sassy Horse tell a fun story with some actual facts. A total winner for me and great fun to read.

Debbie says

History lesson disguised as an extremely funny picture book. As in most great literature the horse is the smart one.

Marly Natherson says

This is a quirky little book. I can imagine my kids enjoying the "crankee" mood. This would be a great text for studying mood or dialogue and for working on reading with expression.

Marci says

Definitely more of boy humor....but definitely a winner....

Heather says

A literally laugh-out-loud-funny picture book that is not only a must-read but a must-read-aloud.

Mary Birky Collier says

EVALUATION: "Crankee Doodle" seems to have a fun but simple plot--a soldier's talking horse tries to help him out of his boredom through a variety of suggestions, including going to town, going shopping, buying a feather for his hat and calling it macaroni, and more, all of which are allusions to the "Yankee Doodle" song. The story is told through simple, but artistic illustrations, in one - two panel pages. Several pages have just illustrations and now words, but a couple pages are almost entirely filled with words--when Crankee Doodle has long "diatribes" refuting Pony's suggestions for his boredom. Overall, this book seems best suited to upper-primary since some vocabulary (macaroni, pasta, exhausted, etc.) is a little more difficult. But the plot is very basic with fun humor.

POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS: Again, this graphic novel seems geared toward upper-primary readers (second - third grade). Since this book is based on the song "Yankee Doodle", readers of this book would definitely benefit with knowledge, review, and explanation of this song. One nice feature is that at the back of the book, Tom Angleberger provides not only the words to the song but also some basic explanation of America and the Revolutionary War, as well as explanations of words like "Yankee". This book would be a great addition to any basic American history teaching that may happen in the primary grades, as well as any possible units looking at books based on music, songs, etc.

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES/CONCERNS: One concern is that a student randomly choosing this book without a sense of the "Yankee Doodle" song or reading the explanation at the back of the book may have difficulty understanding the references to "macaroni" used in this way, how Crankee Doodle is dressed (as a Yankee soldier), etc. However, I think most students would understand the graphic novel on a basic level of a talking pony and his friend. The illustrations are very "accessible" and humorous. It would probably be a great book to read with an adult (teacher, parent, etc.) who has knowledge of the song, etc., who can check for understanding, answer questions, etc.

marmix says

Ouch! A. is harsh. I thought this was pretty cute, but my 8-year old says - nope; just not that good.

Kristy Isla says

A funny take on the Yankee Doodle song and very funny as you think it is set in the past but come to find out it is not. I love the lasagna hat. Older kids that know the song will find this funny, younger kids may not understand it.

Emily Batdorf says

Another Teacher's Choice book, but I'm not sure why.

I would not use it in the classroom because I cannot picture the right audience for it. This book doesn't really stand alone, but I would assume is meant to go along with a study on the American revolution, which students learn about in 5th grade. Since it presents a very low intellectual challenge and few real facts to enrich a curriculum, I would not find it beneficial for 5th graders, who should be practicing higher thinking, such as defending arguments about which side, Patriots or Loyalists, they would take.

Now, this book could be a kindergarten-1st grade reading level regarding vocabulary and simple storyline. However, their social studies curriculum involves the more concrete aspects of society, such as who the librarian is. Thus, this book would not mean much to them.

All in all, if you want a book where the antagonist tries persuading the protagonist to do something he does not want to do, just stick with Green Eggs and Ham.

Chris says

Crackin' Up Over "Crankee Doodle"

Mark your calendars for the June 4th release of a picture book that's as funny as any I've ever read. I gave my husband a dramatic reading of "Crankee Doodle," last evening during the news, and we were both guffawing. Who says picture books are just for kids?

Author Tom Angleberger, of "Origami Yoda" book fame, had a revolutionary idea, turning the song "Yankee Doodle" into a crazy tale. Cartoon illustrations by his wife, Cece Bell, add to the hilarity as Crankee argues with his pony about the necessity of going to town, buying a hat, a feather, and other such nonsense. The action begins with inaction on the first spread with Crankee, in full revolutionary gear, sprawled out in a meadow underneath a tree. "I'm bored," he says, a statement his codependent pony immediately picks up on. Poor four-legged ventures onto thin ice when he suggests a trip to town, his long face all grins, expectation and teeth.

"Town? No way. I hate going to town," says Crankee—so begin pages of back and forth conversation

bubbles between the characters. The pony suggests this, then that, but Crankee nixes every notion the palomino proposes. Tried and true, the placid pony doesn't throw in the towel; he plods on with ideas, while Crankee goes from testy to irate, finally pushing his trusty comrade too far.

When the pony says he'd please like to go to town, and he can give his master a ride, Crankee quips, "No way! You smell terrible." That is the straw that breaks the pony's back. Crankee heads do not prevail. The buddies strike a compromise that puts the pony in the driver's seat for a change.

Scroll past "The End," and you'll see an afterword by the smart little steed. He offers his two cents about the original song "Yankee Doodle," and includes the words as well, while Crankee stands off to the side, exasperated, his fingers in his ears.

A five-musket salute to "Crankee Doodle," a book sure to provide belly laughs for readers of all ages.

Barbara says

Most of us probably remember singing the song "Yankee Doodle" and wondering what exactly its lyrics meant when we were young. This hilarious story tells the story--or one possibility--behind the song. As a pony tries to persuade his lethargic and reluctant owner to head into town, the cranky man lists all the reasons they shouldn't go. He hates shopping and rejects every suggestion the pony offers for going to town. After hurting his pony's feelings, his grouchy owner must apologize, and the last gouache illustration shows the two of them, loaded down with their purchase, having a blast. The very last page provides a historical note on the lyrics. Readers will hoot as they read this book, guaranteeing a surge in popularity for the song. Hilarious from beginning to end, this book is a perfect choice for the upcoming Fourth of July.

Barb Simpson says

Hilarious read aloud, my boys laughed & laughed!
