



## Who Wants to Be a Poodle, I Don't

*Lauren Child*

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## **Who Wants to Be a Poodle, I Don't** Lauren Child

Lauren Child takes the lead with this wry and wooly tale of a pampered poodle who just wants to paddle in puddles like REAL dogs do.

Trixie Twinkle Toes lives in the lap of luxury, with every creature comfort a manicured paw away. Adored by the glamorous Mademoiselle Brulee, the little poodle has a maid to plump her pillows and a cook to prepare her nibbles. But Trixie isn't happy. She doesn't like the puffing and poofing and preening. She doesn't like being dressed in little pink ponchos. She wants to be dazzlingly dangerous and daring. She wants to step in puddles! With a witty text that scampers across the pages and hilarious mixed-media illustrations, Lauren Child offers a one-of-a-kind treat sure to entice both spirited little readers and deeply devoted dog-lovers alike."

## **Who Wants to Be a Poodle, I Don't Details**

Date : Published September 22nd 2009 by Candlewick Press

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Author : Lauren Child

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## **From Reader Review Who Wants to Be a Poodle, I Don't for online ebook**

### **Josie Panidou says**

I didn't like this book. I think Lauren Child has run out of ideas and has gone for style over substance with this one. The story lacks depth and I found it quite a chore to read, in all honesty.

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### **Monica Edinger says**

I'm the owner of a little black poodle so put that breed and Lauren Child together for me and I'm gone! So I admit here at the outset that I'm totally not a reliable reviewer for this particular book. Cute story of a poodle who doesn't want to be so dainty, frou-frou, but wants to get out into the puddles\* and just be like other dogs. There are some very charming images (say the one of the poodle at the groomer reading a magazine) in Child's usual style.

\* I just have to say that unlike the poodle of this book --- who has a very long name I'm not putting in here -- - mine doesn't care for puddles, thank goodness! However, she does love to play in the park with tons of other dogs.

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### **nicole says**

As I have said many times before, Lauren Child is pretty much the best. She is my illustration super-hero. The pictures are fun and crafty and the typography is even better. The way she shapes and swivels the text around the page here is better than in any of her previous books. You actually feel the movement she's describing. It's fantastic. I thought the text would've really benefitted had it not blended with the images so much though. At the beginning of the book particularly, the text and background colors were too similar. I like the unconventional nature of it, but I thought it still should've popped more, for practical purposes.

And then there's the story itself. How many times have I already read this story? This EXACT story? The dog that's made to be too pretty and proper but really just wants to jump in puddles and bark 'til its jaws stop working? Or the dog that WANTS to be prissy, but then FALLS into a puddle and realizes the error of their ways? How many times? Too many? Yeah. This is that again. Done a bit better, but it's not enough of a departure to be truly worthwhile. Fortunately, everything else about Child's storytelling is uniquely her own and very much worth looking at.

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### **Brandi Goeth says**

Who Wants to Be a Poodle I Don't by Lauren Child is about a dog who is tired of being treated in a posh life. Trixie Twinkle Toes is the poodle's name, and she wants to change her image. She doesn't know how to express this to her owner, so she acts out. She starts howling, and swinging on chandeliers, so her owner

calls her vet. The vet assures her nothing is wrong. She continues to worry, and brings Trixie to get pampered, where Trixie sees a ad that says she can change her life. When she leaves from getting pampered, her owner doesn't put on all the posh things she usually does. Trixie finally steps in a puddle, and saves a drowning dog! She now lives a happy dangerous life.

I thought the book was a bit boring. It was hard language for younger kids. The font and movement made it harder too enjoy. I think the illustration was great!

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### **Stefanie Kellum says**

The spunky poodle is super cute, and the illustrations are adorable, but the twisty words on almost every page made me dizzy while reading this.

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### **Amanda says**

I am currently the nanny to a 3 year old girl who loves books almost as much as I do. I also have a niece who will soon be 4, who is also quite a bookworm. I love both of these girlies, because while they still find comfort in board books and simple rhymes, they both enjoy learning new words (the bigger the better) and listening to "big kid" books that contain many pages (paper, not cardboard)and have lots of words on each page. All three of us are big fans of Lauren Child, creator of Charlie and Lola, two of the sweetest siblings ever. The Charlie and Lola stories, both the books and DVD's, are a huge hit with many people I know. Lauren Child has such a gift of teaching life lessons gently and with great respect for little ones. She has a great sense of humor, and the illustrations in all her books are so colorful and unique. I have praised every book of hers I've come across, and I am now in love with this book as well. Who Wants to Be a Poodle I Don't is hilarious. It is full of funny names, plenty of big words, and the frustrations that I'm sure every kid feels. It is very aggravating to feel strongly about something, and not have the ability or the means to express yourself. That is what Trixie Twinkle Toes, the poodle in the story, is facing. Trixie doesn't want to be a poodle-- at least not the way her owner thinks a poodle should be. She wants to bark and howl and jump in puddles, not be groomed and pampered and put in pink ponchos. When I was reading it, I kept thinking of small children dressed up for church or whatever, being told "Don't touch that!" and "Stand still" when all they want to do is play. This book is a great way for adults to remember to chill out and just have fun...and a reminder to let kids be who they are.

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### **Lynley says**

If you run your finger over the dog's body on the cover you'll find it's printed in some kind of textured paste. There is also a diamante used for the dog's collar, but make no mistake -- this isn't a crappy mass-market story made with no love under the assumption that girls have been conditioned to read anything pink and sparkly.[/caption]

This is a picturebook written and illustrated by British kid-lit master, **Lauren Child** of Charlie and Lola fame.

The story might be used in the older classroom or with a child reader to discuss sound devices and

alliteration, for starters.

In particular, *Who Wants To Be A Poodle I Don't* is a wonderful example of the leitmotif, in which sound devices are used to tell us more about a character.

This story -- like many picture books -- is a wonderful example of how character names can say a lot in fiction. Why is Mademoiselle Verity Brulée named as such? In the Anglo world, what connotations are associated with the French? Since crème brûlée is a kind of sweet dessert, what might we surmise about this character?

Crème brûlée...is a dessert consisting of a rich custard base topped with a contrasting layer of hard caramel.

-- Wikipedia

Perhaps Verity has both soft and hard edges to her personality. Perhaps the contrast of textures in this particular dish is symbolic of how two characters living together as one family can have such different temperaments that they are like chalk and cheese. However, it is precisely the contrast in textures of the crème brûlée that make it work so well as a dessert. If only Trixie and Verity can learn to live with each other they'll make a great team.

Ideology

Dogs should be left to be dogs, not treated as toys to be groomed and molly-coddled.

Since, in children's stories, animals are stand-ins for children, the ideology is therefore also that children should be allowed to be children, free to run around parks and get themselves dirty.

### **Notes On The Illustration**

This book is illustrated in a similar style to the Charlie and Lola series, though Charlie and Lola books make quite heavy use of collage, in which photographs appear to have been cut out and stuck on. This book retains the feel of collage but doesn't employ that exact technique. Instead, I'm reminded more of the Japanese kimono, with its distinctive admixture of highly detailed patterns. I'm sure this is intended, since Verity is seen at one point wearing a kimono inspired dressing gown. (I believe they're just called 'kimonos' in the West.)

The setting might be in Paris or in England or America -- the era feels a bit 1920s, but we do see a retro style TV, which places it more squarely in the 1950s -- before the Aristocracy had died, in any case.

The scribbly/collage illustration style of Lauren Child, in which the rules of perspective are thrown out the window, lends a childlike, playful feel to everything she writes, and encourages us to poke fun at the characters and to look for humour which we may have to dig just a little deeper for. These characters are 'off-kilter' and 'quirky', like the illustration itself. The childlike nature of the story is evident even in the punctuation (or lack thereof) on the cover: The title is a run on sentence and Lauren Child does not capitalise her name on book covers.

The text in this book requires advanced decoding skills, which is an interesting development in picturebooks since 'type text to path' became so easy in Photoshop. Illustrators and book designers can now design pages with any sort of shape to their words. In this book we have the text fully integrated with the pictures, and the reader is challenged at times to find the book text among the intratext, to slide down the page then defy the rules of reading and read up the page and even to read in circles. Coupled with the advanced language in this book, I'd say it's a picture book designed to be read to children by an experienced older reader (rather than as an independent scaffolded exercise).

### **Plot Structure**

Who is the main character in this story -- Verity Brulée or her miniature poodle Trixie Twinkle Toes Trot-a-lot Delight? The answer to that question is always: Which character changes the most? In which case, the dog and the woman are one and the same character. Trixie Twinkle Toes is a canine manifestation of the part of Verity who feels the social pressure to be 'perfect': ladylike and manicured and everything 'just so'.

### **WEAKNESS/NEED**

Verity Brulée is inflexible and has perfectionist tendencies, preferencing image over practicality. Her dog Twinkle Toes is a dog, and therefore needs to do doglike things in order to be happy. These two characters are trapped together in the same place, which is a requirement for any kind of significant narrative conflict.

Trixie Twinkle Toes does not like her name or any of the rituals that go with being an upper-class dog.

### **DESIRE**

Verity wants to own a dog who is pretty and well-behaved while looking rich and well-groomed. She wants to perfume, powder and pom-pom her poodle and dress her in pink ribbons. She wants to keep her little dog happy and healthy -- constantly wrapping Trixie up at the first sign of a cold -- but she misunderstands her pet due to communication difficulties. (The dog can't speak English.)

Trixie wants to step in puddles. She wants a different name. She wants to be brave and adventurous. She wants to *do* something rather than *seem* something.

Trixie's dissatisfaction comes to a head at the point in the story which switches from 'iterative' to 'singular'. The first part of the book is about how things always are, and describes how they (often) go to the park and how Verity (often) dresses Trixie up. Now:

One night Trixie Twinkle Toes was lying in her room listening to the real dogs howling at the moon.

This is the event that instigates Trixie's self-revelation: "I hate being a poooooooodle".

### **OPPONENT**

Verity and Trixie are each others' opponents, symbolising the internal conflict between being free and being self-restrained. So when Trixie complains that she hates being a poodle, Verity completely misunderstands why she is crying and takes her to the vet, where very cleverly, the vet finds nothing but a sore throat. This is masterful because the young reader is left to fill in a gap: That Trixie's sore throat is due not to having a cold but to howling.

This story is a good example of a pair of fictional opponents who have each other's best interests in mind but end up standing in each other's way due to communication difficulties, separate agendas and poor empathy. We often see this dynamic in husband/wife stories, or between parent and child in young adult fiction. Opponents are often members of one's own family.

## PLAN

At the dog salon Trixie sees a before and after picture of a scruffy to well-groomed dog and realises that it can work both ways. Her plan is to become a scruffy dog. She plans to (and does) catch some fleas after chasing a cat and chew Mr Chomley's newspaper.

Verity foils this plan to become scruffy by telephoning her pet psychic. When the psychic sees nothing in Verity's cup but 'two lonely tea leaves' this provides for obvious and humorous symbolism, showing the young reader that although Verity and Trixie live together, they are each lonely.

## BATTLE

The battle between Verity and Trixie is a constant swing between Trixie getting herself messed up and Verity putting it 'right' with visits to the pet salon and extra grooming sessions and eventually a pooch psychologist. This part of the battle conforms to the law of threes in storytelling:

The poodle parlour  
The psychic  
The pooch psychiatrist

Notice, too, all of that wonderful alliteration with the plosive 'p' -- basically a 'b' sound which is bursting to escape. (Psychiatrist is technically a sibilant, but we'll go with what's on the page.)

All this to-ing and fro-ing aside, in a memorable story we need some sort of climactic battle. In a novel we might get a lot of time spent on the psychological turmoil of the main character and not need a set piece, but picturebooks are more like films in this regard. The set piece (big budget scene arranged to maximum effect) in this story is the part where Trixie gets the chance to save another little dog by diving into a puddle. Again with the 'p' (puddle).

## SELF-REVELATION

Even more masterfully, the alliteration during the puddle scene changes to 'd': 'dazzling', 'daring' and 'dangerous'. The careful reader will notice (or at least sense) that Trixie is less 'poodle', more 'd' for 'dog'! The transformation in the puddle has happened. In case we missed the way the alliteration is related to the story we have it reinforced on the following spread:

Verity Brulée looked at Trixie Twinkle Toes and saw not a little pompommed toy poodle but instead a DAZZLINGLY DANGEROUS DARING dog.

## NEW EQUILIBRIUM

The thing about picturebooks is that they don't take themselves too seriously, and authors are free to signpost their plot points with phrases such as 'From that day on...' which is where we find the bit with the mandatory new equilibrium. (All stories require a new-equilibrium -- it's just usually more subtle in stories for adults.)

From that day on, Mademoiselle Verity Brulée and Trixie Twinkle Toes eagerly read the weather pages -- and if it was raining ... they went out ... with all the other dogs.

In an earlier age, children's stories were often tied up a bit too nicely, resulting in a twee conclusion. Modern readers have less tolerance for this, perhaps because we can no longer buy anyone's version of a 'perfect world', so we are told on the final page that Twinkle Toes and Verity are still not fully eye-to-eye -- after all, Verity still calls Trixie's very embarrassing full name at the public park.

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### **Anna says**

Why is there no place to rate things ten stars? Love. this. book. so. much. The loopy script, the nonconformist poodle protagonist, the adherence to Trixie's essential doggyness (okay, so she can read) while endowing her with a complete internal life, the themes about accepting one's true self and living up to one's potential in spite of the expectations endowed upon one based on one's external appearance. This is a phenomenal book about finding one's identity, without ever, ever hitting the reader over the head with it. Poodle Trixie tries out different potential identities, and rejects them based on how well they suit her, ultimately winding up with a mix that is hers alone. She forces Verity, her owner, to accept this identity by proving that it makes her happy, which is basically what Verity wanted all along. In the end, both have to compromise to an extent, which is just how life goes, really. It's subtle, but that's what makes it so ingenious. Can't wait to read this aloud.

postscript:

All right, now that I have read the book aloud, yikes this is hard to read. No good at all for the kids. I think a one-on-one read with a slightly older kid (7-8) would be great, though.

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### **Cheryl says**

Sometimes a dog just wants to be a dog. And poodles were apparently bred for puddles, so, yeah, Verity Brulee needs to get a clue about her small companion.

The only flaw is that Trixie is a miniature poodle, and I think kids would be thrilled to learn how big standard poodles are... but the distinction is not made here.

Love the back cover.

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### **Jennifer says**

Lauren Child is a genius children's book author and illustrator. That is truly a rare gift in the saturated literary



world, and a boon to those of us who love well-written stories our children can enjoy.

Known for her Clarice Bean and Charlie and Lola titles, Child ventured into another genre of storytelling with a stand-alone book about a poodle who hated being a dog that's lavished upon. She hated the expensive dog food, puppy salon treatments, doggy manicures and the like. All she wanted to do was jump in puddles, get dirty and chase after newspapers.

*Who Wants to be a Poodle? I Don't* is not only a stellar story with a relevant moral, but the illustrations are wonderfully displayed throughout as well.

My youngest daughter, who is a budding artist herself, was drawn to the embossed cover and the art inside, for the illustrations are not simply your run-of-the-mill variety. Child draws her signature illustrations, but uses fabric to decorate everything from expensive dresses and shoes to posh lampshades and opulent floor-length curtains.

*Who Wants to be a Poodle? I Don't* is a must-buy for Lauren Child fans and for any parent whose child relishes beautiful and unique illustrations in a children's book.

Candlewick Press also offers an activity kit for the book with puzzles, games, and drawing exercises.

Ages 4-8

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### **Anais Gilder says**

*Who Wants to Be a Poodle I Don't* is about a dog named Trixie Twinkle Toes. Trixie's owner, Verity Brûlée, spoils her and lives a very spoiled, fancy lifestyle. This is a lifestyle that Trixie does not wish to live. Trixie just wants to be a regular dog and is clearly very sad because of this. Verity is trying to figure out why Trixie is so sad. After watching Trixie step into a puddle, Verity realizes that Trixie does not want to be a dog that is constantly pampered, she just wants to be a normal dog. All of a sudden the dog is no longer pampered. The story ends with Trixie running wild in the park and Verity standing by watching.

I thought that this story was very confusing. The different ways the text was presented gave me a headache. The images did not add much to the text, they were all pieces of the story intertwined.

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### **Sandra Stiles says**

I read this book twice. I loved it. They rhyme and story line were wonderful A story told from he perspective of the poodle. I have always wondered how much dogs liked being pampered. According to Trixie Twinkle Toes Trot-a-Lot Delight, poodles would like to be treated like other dogs. It is okay to be pampered on occasion but not constantly. It is also not appropriate to give them long names. One think that I like even

more than the story were the pictures. It looked as if they used scrapbooking papers and possibly fabric to create the looks. It was bright, cheery and gave the feel of elegance. By this I mean the poodle was pampered and the owner bought expensive items so the choice of backgrounds and papers used gave the impression of elegance. This book will be a gift to one of my young friends, Charlotte. She is 4 years old and loves to read to her mommy (an art teacher at our school) every night. I know the two of them will thoroughly enjoy the book

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### **Amy Forrester says**

This is the story of a poodle with a very unfortunate name: Trixie Twinkle Toes Trot-a-Lot Delight. She lives in the lap of luxury with her owner, Mademoiselle Verity Brulee, who makes sure that Trixie is always a model of poodle perfection. Trixie hates it and she repeatedly tries to get Verity to understand her plight, but instead Verity takes Trixie to vets and doctors. That is until Trixie rescues a dog from drowning in a puddle.

This book is best for a slightly older audience (6+). The story is a little long and the illustrations are complex. If you're reading this book for storytime it's a good idea to memorize most of the text. The words change font and curl all over the pages. The illustrations are also quite busy, with lots of patterned wallpapers, so that can make reading the words a bit difficult especially at an angle or upside down.

Full Review at Picture-Book-a-Day: <http://picturebookaday.blogspot.com/2...>

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### **Lynetta says**

Mademoiselle Verity Brulee is apparently rich and her entertainment is shoe buying. She doesn't like being out in the rain at all. Her dog, Trixie Twinkle Toes Trot-a-Lot Delight, "lived in the lap of luxury with every creature comfort just a manicured paw away. There was a maid to plump her pillow and a cook to prepare her nibbles and a butler to carry her over the puddles." But, wouldn't you know, in the way of stories, Trixie wants to get out in the puddles instead of wearing little pink ponchos. Her behavior merits a visit to the doggie psychiatrist. The fact she can't speak English does not help.

This is a delightful children's/adult book. I identify with Trixie in wanting what is not available. The type is wonderfully spiral or round or on steps with unusual fonts.

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### **Erin Reilly-Sanders says**

I picked this one up because I loved the textures of the illustrations and the sleek chic style with which the protagonist's owner is portrayed. Unfortunately, the storyline sadly disappoints, and contains nothing redeemable. It doesn't even contain a decent moral that is applicable to children and clearly depicted. There are way too many words in this book, many of which are near to impossible to read as they are rotated more than 90 degrees to appear upside down. The text has no flow that gives pleasure when read aloud and the delightful bits such as the dog's silly name are poorly inserted. The subject matter seems dumber than frivolous and was not even entertaining. This seems very much the sort of book that someone who knows nothing about quality picture books would buy for some unfortunate child who would never actually read it.

