



The Butter Battle Book

Dr. Seuss

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Illus. in full color. "Dr. Seuss chronicles the feud between the Yooks and the Zooks from slingshots through sophisticated weaponry, until each side has the capacity to destroy the world. The language amuses, the drawings are zesty and humorous, and the demand for this book will be large."-- "School Library Journal." "Provocative, packs an allegorical punch. The parade of increasingly elaborate (and ridiculous) armaments makes a telling point."-- "Booklist."

The Butter Battle Book Details

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Author : Dr. Seuss

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From Reader Review *The Butter Battle Book* for online ebook

Kirsten Little says

Dr. Seuss has been known to include many different political issues and views in his children's books. I find this extremely interesting and different than many authors. I feel like most children book authors would steer away from politics since many children do not understand the deeper meaning. However, Dr. Seuss used his children books as a platform for different political issues.

Dr. Seuss uses this book as a platform to talk about the Cold War to a younger audience. In the book, there are two individual sides fighting over which way is the "right way" to butter toast. Dr. Seuss was appalled by the Cold War and because of that he wanted to create a fictional war that was bizarre. Both the characters and the events within Seuss' book relate back to the Cold War. We have the two sides fighting each other, one of the main characters is meant to represent Ronald Reagan, and the grandson whose name is not mentioned, but could be called the "little boy" which is the nickname of the Hiroshima bomb. Throughout the book, the two sides compete on who can make the bigger and better weapon until the both have one that could easily destroy either side. As the tension rises within the reader, Seuss leaves the reader with no answer of what happens. He leaves it up to the reader to decide what happens. This gives the reader the opportunity to think and evaluate what they think is right and why. This could spark up controversial conversation within a classroom.

As we can see, this book could definitely cause some controversy within schools. Seuss utilized this book to show his readers that both sides in the Cold War were wrong. In the United States, this book was banned because Americans (capitalists) did not like that Seuss was contradicting perspective. Many places in Canada also followed this move in their own schools. Americans, not the working class, believed that the capitalists were able to decide what values are to be held and what laws are to be formed resulting in controlling society's ideology. This right here is exactly why Capitalist America did not like Seuss' interpretation because they wanted society to be on their side and follow their ideology, so that they could have supporters. I completely understand why this book can be seen as controversial, but I do not think it should be banned from schools. War is something that seems to be reoccurring no matter what. Seems to be out of many people's control. Because this seems to be such a prevalent issue in our society it is important for children to learn about past wars and people's point of view on these wars. I would use this book in a classroom because the war portion of the book is obvious, but Seuss' ideology behind it is not as obvious and not super important to children. I don't think they would even notice that Seuss disliked the war. As I stated earlier, this may strike up controversy in a classroom since the ending is up to the reader, but I think this could also help students. This could help students because they are able to understand others opinions and values, which is something we all need to learn to respect.

Archit Ojha says

Recommended and recited by my wife.

The battle lines are drawn and the fight gets real. There's a think tank working its way furiously to trump the enemy.

Yooks and Zooks and their different styles of applying butter on the bread.

The book inculcates respect and the very essential feeling of tolerance into children.

The unity in diversity.

Lee Thompson says

Me and Rae loved this story. When we hit the end, she wanted to know "What happens?" and it was fun to tell her that it was up to the reader to determine what will happen. Does the Yook drop his bomb and kill himself and the Zook? Or what if the Zook drops his bomb first? Is the first one to drop his bomb surprised to find it is a dud? Will the Zook win, as he has every time before, and history prove that it is always repeating itself? Which way is the right way to butter your bread?

Jason says

A very clever book, really impressed with this one. Shows how to respect somebody if they are different or if they believe in something you don't understand. It then goes on to show if you don't that hatred can turn into a conflict with each side building bigger and bigger weapons, until you end up in a stand-off with a big-boy-boomeroo. Really well done and it leads up to some very interesting discussions with the child you read it too.

Thomas J. Benedict says

I missed Dr. Seuss so I picked up this beauty of a book.

What I never realized as a child was the social statement in this book.

Dr. Seuss uses this story as a reflection of the Cold War, mutually assured destruction, to illustrate how silly conflict can be.

The artwork is abstract and beautiful, as always.

Dr Seuss was a genius.

Ronyell says

6 stars!!!

Being a huge fan of Dr. Seuss' works over the years, I was in that mode where I wanted to read everything that was written by him and I remembered reading "The Butter Battle Book" many years ago when I was little. Well, I stumbled upon "The Butter Battle Book" again when I got older and at first, I was a little hesitant about reading this book again because of its war themes and I usually do not like reading books about wars, but after reading this classic book by Dr. Seuss, I actually found myself really enjoying this book! "The Butter Battle Book" is definitely one of Dr. Seuss' most impactful and darkest stories ever told!

The book starts off with a grandfather character telling his grandson about the great battle between the Zooks (orange uniformed people who ate their bread with the butter side down) and the Yooks (blue uniformed people who ate their breads with the butter side up). The battle between the Zooks and the Yooks started when one of the Zooks shoots off the grandfather's Snick-Berry Switch with a slingshot and the grandfather goes to Chief Yookeroo to get a better weapon that can beat out the weapon of the Zooks. Unfortunately, the Zooks keep on making better weapons than the Yooks, while the Yooks constantly try to build a better weapon to match with the Yooks' weapon, which causes the book to come to a surprising conclusion!

Wow...just wow...

Who would have ever thought that I would ever come across a Dr. Seuss book that discusses about war? Well, I have come across other Dr. Seuss books that have a heavy message ("The Lorax" and "The Sneetches"), but this was what I called one of Dr. Seuss's darkest books since it discusses about a topic that is often serious to many children...WAR. It was also surprising that this book was actually a parody of the Cold War (the war between the United States and the Soviet Union) as both the Zooks and the Yooks tried to best each other with having a better weapon than the other side. Even though I do not usually read books that have war themes because of the whole "only one side can win in this war" mentality that is constantly being shown in these types of books, this was one of the few war books that I had read that actually had a brilliant moral to the story:

WAR IS POINTLESS!

Since the premise of this book is about how both sides do not like each other because they spread their butters a different way on their breads, you might be thinking to yourself about how ridiculous this all is and why both sides could not reach a compromise about spreading their butter on both sides of the breads. But, what I loved about the way that Dr. Seuss wrote this book was that both sides were not portrayed in a positive light since the Zooks seem like bullies and the Yooks are prejudiced towards the Zooks for buttering their breads differently and that might sound a bit odd, but it was appropriate enough to bring the theme of this book home. The reason why I have such a huge dislike for wars is because both sides that participate in the wars can be shown in a negative light if they believe that fighting is the only solution to whatever problem arises instead of sitting down and talking about the problem and coming to a reasonable solution that can benefit both sides. I loved the way that Dr. Seuss made a statement about how ridiculous the war between the Zooks and the Yooks really was because having a war about who has the best weapons seems like a ridiculous reason for countries to fight each other and we can easily see that through the Zooks and Yooks' actions throughout this book. Dr. Seuss' illustrations may look a bit darker than usual, but still has the usual creative flair as the Zooks are always shown in orange jumpsuits while the Yooks are always shown in blue jumpsuits and I also loved the different weapons that each side has, especially the Zooks' weapon that was called the Eight-Nozzled, Elephant-Toted Boom-Blitz which looks like a machine that has eight nozzles and is being carried by two mean looking purple elephants.

Probably one of the most controversial things about this book was the abrupt ending. I will not tell you what happens at the end since I do not want to spoil this book for anyone, but you will be left wondering about what happens next after the events of this book. I will admit that I was actually mad at how the book ended, but then since this book was written during the Cold War, it is understandable about why the book ended the way it did. It makes me wonder about if they ever thought about making a "Butter Battle Book" movie, will the conclusion be changed in the movie and how will they go about it? Also, the theme about the Zooks and the Yooks going at war with each other might be a bit disturbing for younger children, especially if they do not understand about the motives of wars or if they do not like seeing characters fighting each other.

Overall, "The Butter Battle Book" is easily one of the best books about anti-war ever written and anyone who is a fan of Dr. Seuss' works or would love to read about how terrible wars are will definitely not be disappointed in this book! I would recommend this book to children ages six and up since the war themes might upset younger children.

Review is also on: Rabbit Ears Book Blog

Anne says

I think it is one of his best!

sarafem says

Another Seuss work with a social undertone, this one is about prejudice and war. Two groups hate each other for what amounts to a completely ridiculous reason, and each thinks they are better than the other. Through classic indoctrination, their governments feed citizens the ideas that they are different and must hate one another.

A random and rather juvenile act of violence instigates a full-assault war, and it is interesting to watch as the two sides compete to see who can build a better, more destructive weapon.

I think this is a wonderful book to read again and again to children to drive home the message that prejudice and superiority complexes are destructive to ourselves and society. Especially in this time while the US is involved in what I believe is a ridiculous war, I'd like to read this to my kids.

Lily says

I love activist Seuss books. This book is good, but makes me a little perturbed. I want to laugh at the stupidity of it all, but it's not funny. In other Seuss books, like the Lorax, there's more of a child-like tone to the story. My kids felt the tension in this book and the oldest one even shouted, "Can they stop being weird and just hug. They need to stop fighting and get along." There you have it. Like many world problems, there is no resolve in this story. It left my kids a little irritated. They may be too young for this one. Seuss was one of a kind and I'm happy he found a way to express his views in his books. Knowing history and then reading about it in a Seuss book, just makes it all look asinine.

Lynne Marshall says

A perfect story for our world today.

Julianna says

Reviewed for THC Reviews

The Butter Battle Book is another of Dr. Seuss's titles which reflect his activist side. Through satirical humor, he explores the ridiculousness and futility of war. The Yooks and the Zooks have an age-old disagreement over which way to eat their bread, butter side up or down, and as a result, they eventually start a war over it. They begin with sentries guarding the wall separating their borders which of course, could be taken as a metaphor for anything that separates us from our fellow man. One side fires upon the other with a slingshot and from there, the conflict continues to escalate with each side coming up with increasingly preposterous weapons until both possess a small bomb which could blow the other side to smithereens and in essence wipe out the world.

It's doubtful that younger children will understand the deeper meaning behind the story, but they're sure to be delighted with the classic Seuss rhyming text and whimsical illustrations of Seuss-ified characters and their silly machines. With parental or educator guidance older children can glean an important message about getting along with others who have different views in order to prevent conflict from happening and not feeling like you have to one up each other until you either reach an impossible situation or the worst occurs. I think this simple lesson could be applied to our daily lives, as well as the world at large for preventing warfare. Overall, *The Butter Battle Book* was another fabulous Dr. Seuss story that has earned a spot on my keeper shelf.

Hirdesh says

Lovely one

"In every Zook house and in every Zook town
every Zook eats his bread
with the butter side down!"

"The Boys in my Back Room invented
this rig
called the Eight?Nozzled, Elephant?
Toted Boom?Blitz"

Sandra Stiles says

Okay you are probably wondering why I am talking about this book. In my Language Arts class my students had to read "The Sneetches" by Dr. Seuss. Today I read "The Butter Battle Book" also by Dr. Seuss. The idea is they are to compare and contrast the two books. Needless to say my very knowledgeable sixth graders proceeded to tell me how the Butter Battle Book is actually a political story about the Cold War. I almost dropped my teeth. Why? A few years ago when I did a lesson on the Berlin Wall my 8th grade students had no idea what the Cold War was. These sixth graders not only knew about it they knew which President played a vital role. One of my students is doing their History Fair project on The Cold War and one of them is doing their project on the Berlin Wall. To say I was surprised is an understatement. We will have to do our

compare/contrast tomorrow because today was all about life under socialism and communism. I am so glad that I have taught History in the past because to tie it in with the books we are reading and watching my students make the connections is absolutely wonderful. However if you don't know what the book is about I will say no more and recommend you go to your library and check out a copy of Dr Seuss's "Butter Battle Book".

Davelowusa says

A response to Cold War nuclear proliferation and mutually assured destruction as told through buttered toast.

Samantha says

One of the most profound and powerful of Dr. Seuss's books. I would recommend it to politicians and men and women of the armed forces everywhere. Or even just those who like to quarrel and tend to let things get out of hand over heated emotion. *Sigh* I know war and fighting and a system of defense is important towards a countries "safety" and preservation or what not but by now after paying attention to history and war and all the blood that has been shed can we find a better way to solve our problems already? I think I am probably one of few who view it the way I do as an unnecessary means to fulfill ones insecurities. But we are moving forward in our thinking in that we are becoming more aware of our actions and perhaps better ways in which to fulfill them. This is all rather choppy in thought I know but for me it is difficult to relate this intense dislike and embarrassment of anger, fighting, hostility, and violence. It is obviously a touchy even perhaps controversial subject because even the darker side of humanity has it's place in the world. I would be quite a hypocrite if my stance was to "fight" fighting for that simply perpetuates the cycle. My stance is to achieve a better way. Only I know this is a goodreads blog and much might not come from it but I'll put it out there anyway and it is not intended to be taken as harsh but simply firm as a statement-

We can find a better way at dealing with our problems than blowing each other up. It is time we wake up globally and take responsibility for our actions and gain control over those archaic instincts to kill and shoot and murder. I'm not even going to say that war is wrong and peace is right. They both serve to balance the state of the world and both have their place. Even the killing has served to even out our massive population over time but nature will manage that without our help. I simply feel and know that we don't need to fuel the fire of fighting and unnecessary murder any longer. It's done, we learned let's move on. Let us discuss things like the celestial intelligent beings we supposedly are. We can drop the childish charade of getting each other where it hurts and put our vulnerabilities out there for all to see, take the upper hand and allow war to maybe become a thing of profit and entertainment if we can't let it go completely as Richard Bach portrays in his "One" but stop the killing. That's all, enough is enough. And thank you Dr. Seuss for so brilliantly portraying how childish it is in the Butter Battle Book!

Sandra Baši? says

Not bad, but illustrations are great as always!

Courtne says

We all are intimately familiar with the glorious rhyming and the honest joy of reading a Dr. Seuss book aloud. Considering some of the check-outs that my kindergartner has brought home this year - the kind I begrudgingly cracked open and read each night with the sort of over-taxed smile and forced lilt necessary to make it through the more inane children's books - seeing a Dr. Seuss was a great relief. One that I've never read or heard of to boot!

Unfortunately, the nightly recite until turn-in-time for this library book has probably already been nixed.

"That was boring."

Sigh. Even though I poured every ounce of theatre into that first reading, I have to admit that I tend to agree. Not only that, but I had to do some quick thinking about how to talk about the book with my kiddo... in a surprising turn for a Dr. Seuss book, I wish I would have known the subject matter before diving in.

This book, published in 1984, is anti-war cautionary tale. It probably has good intentions. There's no denying that it could be said to be relevant to today.

Ahem

As told by a Zook grandfather to his dear grandson, the Yooks butter their bread on the wrong side, which cannot be tolerated - so a wall had to be built, patrolled and armed. But with each Zook arm, came a better, more spectacular Yook arm - to the Zook *Tough-Tufted Prickly Snick-Berry Switch*, a Yook VanItch Sling shot to smash it smithereens. And so it goes...until they both come up with the "Big-Boy Boomeroo" which will destroy both Zook and Yook land with loads of toxic blue goo (or something very close to that).

Zooks and Yooks march underground. The last page, a cliffhanger, a face off between the two sides ready to drop the annihilating boomeroo. The question hangs, "will they or won't they?".

The problem I faced with this possibly timely and important subject matter is that it's more relevant to adults than it is to my child. We're not born with war, we teach it. It was boring because for my kid the conflict was *worse* than stupid, **it wasn't even something he could comprehend**. Why would two people be so angry over which side the bread is buttered on? Beyond the fact that I had trouble with the story that equates some real moral issues with something as simple as a matter of opinion - I was faced with a slightly deeper dilemma - do I explain to him that this type of supreme idiocy exists in the world? Surely he'll find that out for himself soon enough?

Because it was bedtime I decided to put off that revelation for another day and preserve whatever quiet innocence I could for just a little longer. I'm sure many people would disagree with me there, but I think a parent should follow their own compass.

"It was boring. Last book for the night, should we let the Pigeon drive the bus, again?"

Hannah says

Yes I'm counting this as part of my reading challenge ?? I need to build my book count lool. I had to read this for this volunteering program I do and this book is part of the curriculum to teach kids about conflicts and stuff. And I think this is one great book to show conflict in a way that's humorous and in a way that can show kids how conflicts can arise and become unnecessary. but personally I think you should have your butter on the top not the bottom so I can see how the Yooks would hate the Zooks. I'm personally offended by the Zooks' choices (KIDDING!)

NaTaya Hastings says

Wow. Just wow. In all of my thirty one years, I have never actually read the Butter Battle Book. It must be one of the only Dr. Seuss books I've never read. I had no idea how dark and gritty it was going to be.

Keep in mind, it IS just a children's book, so it isn't like there is blood and guts and brains spilling out of cracked skulls or anything, but still... This book, short and silly though it may be, takes a hard, honest look at war and how out of control and dangerous it can become.

It was actually an incredibly good read.

Update: Read this again today in honor of Seuss's birthday. It is even more relevant in today's political climate than it was when I first read it last year.

Skylar Burris says

This is clearly a parable for nuclear proliferation, and no doubt Seuss condemns it. However, there is no clear moral drawn in this story, and the events are left unresolved. What will happen? "We will see..." Therefore, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions. As a parent, you can "read" this any way you like with your child: the liberal can focus on the frivolity of war and the dangers of mutually assured destruction; the conservative can, in contrast, argue that peace will ensue between Zooks and Yooks because of the mutual deterrence achieved by the creation of these weapons. So, you can, to some extent, take from it what you will, and it is written in a wonderfully rhythmic and alliterative manner.
