

Mr. George Baker (Reading Rainbow Books)

By Amy Hest



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George Baker and Harry don't seem the likeliest of friends. Yet, sitting side by side on George's porch, waiting for the school bus to come, the two have plenty in common, this hundred-year-old musician with the crookedy fingers going tappidy on his knees and the young schoolboy whose shoelaces always need tying. They're both learning to read, which is hard — but what's easy is the warm friendship they share. In an inspired pairing, a best-selling author and illustrator pay tribute to the power of language and intergenerational bonds.



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Mr. George Baker (Reading Rainbow Books) By Amy Hest Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Hest (the Baby Duck books) and Muth (*Stone Soup*) eloquently capture a friendship between two neighbors in the span of a morning wait for the school bus. First grader Harry and Mr. George Baker ("He's a *hundred* years old, no kidding," the boy claims), an African-American jazz drummer ("some people say he's famous"), share a special bond revealed through Harry's descriptive, first-person observations. "I really like his sweater,/ all hangy with three buttons./ It's chilly in the morning, and/ we both hug our knees./ And wait. We wait, watching/ leaves blow off trees." His youthful, sometimes lyrical narrative offers a peek into their understated relationship. "See his pants, all baggy, baggy, baggy?/ .../ There's candy in those pockets./ .../ George pops one in his mouth and I do too." But the biggest connection the two share is that they're both learning to read. Muth's soft watercolors maintain visual interest with varied perspectives of the same porch scene. In one, the pair sits similarly posed, arms crossed over knees, while another spread allows readers to peer out from the recesses of the porch, over their shoulders and identical book bags. With George's "crookedy fingers, going *tappidy* on his knees," Muth fluidly unveils a montage from a bygone era; a close-up of the man's large, dark hands fades downward into a nostalgic jazz club scene. When the bus finally arrives, both friends board, hand in hand. An upbeat, hopeful tale that speaks compellingly to intergenerational friendship. Ages 5-8.

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From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 3–One-hundred-year-old George has decided to learn to read, so he waits for the school bus every morning along with his young neighbor, Harry. He studies with a group of grown-ups, while Harry does the same with his classmates down the hall. George is a musician, "a drummer man, and some people say he's famous." But to Harry, he is just a friend who shares the struggle of tackling a new skill. Harry narrates the story in short articulate sentences that present an uncomplicated picture of two unlikely friends. Watercolor illustrations depict the African-American man and the Caucasian boy and their warm relationship. The soft tones reflect the pensive feeling, but also capture the playfulness of George's rhythmic drumming as he practices reading. Interesting perspectives allow readers to see the characters from different angles—from the bottom of the porch steps looking up as they smile together, or from behind, showing matching postures and book bags. The spreads are beautifully composed—leaves swirl delicately from one side to the other, George and his wife do a graceful dance across the pages—all subtly pulling the eye from left to right. This book works well as a read-alone or a read-aloud and makes a good companion to Patricia Polacco's *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Philomel, 1998).—*Carolyn Janssen, Children's Learning Center of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, OH*

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From Booklist

PreS-Gr. 1. In spare, affectionate language, young Harry describes how he waits for the school bus each morning with his elderly, African American neighbor, George ("he's a *hundred* years old, no kidding"). When the bus arrives, they both get on because George is learning how to read in a class for adults. There's more situation than story here, but Hest tones down what could have been a message-driven piece with quiet, lyrical words that keep the emphasis on George and Harry's companionship and give a sense of George's character that goes beyond his illiteracy. George is a former jazz drummer, according to Harry's fond descriptions, which are written from a child's worshipful viewpoint and beautifully illustrated in subtle watercolors. Hest's understated, unhurried poetry echoes the syncopated rhythms of music to describe the fear and thrill of learning to read, and like Mem Fox's *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* (1985), her book

is a simple, sweet, moving portrait of a natural friendship between seniors and children. *Gillian Engberg Copyright* © *American Library Association*. *All rights reserved*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ruth Powers:

The book Mr. George Baker (Reading Rainbow Books) make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting anxiety or having big problem with your subject. If you can make reading through a book Mr. George Baker (Reading Rainbow Books) for being your habit, you can get far more advantages, like add your personal capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. You may know everything if you like available and read a publication Mr. George Baker (Reading Rainbow Books). Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or other people. So, how do you think about this guide?

Rebecca Shadwick:

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Heidi Fritz:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try point that really opposite from that. I activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of information. Even you love Mr. George Baker (Reading Rainbow Books), it is possible to enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh seriously its mind hangout guys. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

Ricky Dotson:

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