



***Mr. Watson's Chickens* by Jarrett Dapier, illustrated by Andrea Tsurumi**

Chronicle Books, 2021

ISBN: 9781452177144 (Picture Book)

*Age Range: 3-5 (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: Gr 1-3 (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

***Interrupting Chicken* meets *Click, Clack, Moo* in this zany classic-in-the-making!**

With rollicking rhythms, nonsensical refrains, and too many chickens to count, this modern classic will inspire unstoppable giggles and endless rereads. Bawka-bawka!

Mr. Watson has 456 chickens in the sink, on the bed, in the bread box. When his partner, Mr. Nelson, threatens to leave, Mr. Watson takes his chickens to town to sell only for them to escape! Young readers will follow Mr. Watson all around town as he gathers up his chickens. But, when they're all rounded up, does he have the heart to sell them? Does a different fate await these chickens?

This quirky, irresistible book is full of read-aloud fun with its onomatopoeia, rollicking rhythm, and familiar refrains and ends with a touch of sweetness. It has all the makings of a classic, with a farm theme, hilarious refrains, and a familiar narrative structure that unfolds in threes. Librarians, teachers, and parents looking for a new book that feels traditional will love sharing this book with children.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ “Animals creating mayhem deliver rousing readalouds, and Dapier (*Jazz for Lunch!*) and Tsurumi (*I'm on It!*) here drive this story element to its riotous extreme. . . . Tsurumi[’s] meticulous draftsmanship makes the wonderfully frenetic activity both clear and absorbing. . . . Subtle background portraits of Tove Jansson as well as Frog and Toad gently hint at the history of queer creators in children’s literature, while the carousing chickens draw most of the attention—and all of the laughs.” —[Publishers Weekly](#), **starred review**

★ “As author Jarrett Dapier’s perfectly paced storyline and illustrator Andrea Tsurumi’s colorful, clean-lined artwork show, Mr. Watson’s Chickens take over the house, and the snowball effect of nearly 500 chickens in one small abode is very funny. [...] Dapier’s prose is full of tenderness and spunk. When Mr. Nelson tells Mr. Watson he might leave, Dapier writes that Mr. Watson knows “his heart would be a broken egg” without Mr. Nelson. Depictions of gay couples are still uncommon in children’s literature, particularly in picture books, so the depiction of Mr. Watson and Mr. Nelson’s lovingly quirky and (mostly) harmonious relationship is commendable.” —[BookPage](#), **starred review**

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“Animal lovers and empty nesters will appreciate the delightful antics within this story. Short, accessible text makes this book enjoyable for young readers, especially as a lap read. Comical illustrations, including cross-sections to show the chaos inside the home, depict the many hundreds of chickens playing instruments and causing all manner of ruckus. . . . Readers who are patient enough to examine the illustrations carefully will be rewarded with surprising and humorous moments outside the primary narrative.” —[School Library Journal](#)

“[S]illy [and] fun with nice moments of repetitive and interactive text, but by far the best part about [Mr. Watson’s Chickens] is the omnipresence of thoughtful and intentional diverse representation. Mr. Nelson and Mr. Watson are a biracial gay couple with a loving and supportive partnership, and there is a broadly multiethnic supporting cast; but if you squint even further, there is additional detailed layering of diversity in body type, age, mobility, and gender throughout the book, serving as a subtle but constant stream of acceptance and representation.” —[Booklist Reviews](#)

“[A] great read-aloud, but it may be best shared one-on-one given Tsurumi’s highly detailed digital art. The seek-and-find nature encourages readers to pore over each humorous illustration, spotting chickens playing musical instruments, roasting s’mores, and using aerial silks—all on the same page. . . . The subtle references in the art to well-known gay children’s book creators (Arnold Lobel, James Marshall) reinforce the book’s casual embrace of a same-sex couple—who hopefully won’t end up with quite so many chickens next time.” —[The Horn Book Magazine](#)

“[Mr. Watson’s Chickens] is amusing . . . Frequent repeated phrases will assist skilled storytellers in performing the tale effectively . . . Chicken-loving lapsitters will find much to look at.” —[Kirkus Reviews](#)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- 2021 BookPage Best Books of the Year
- 2023 ALA Rainbow Booklist Picture Book
- 2021 NPR Best Books of the Year

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

[Storytime Solidarity: Interview with Jarrett Dapier](#)

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

[Stop Book Banning: A Special Episode of Fated Mates](#)

[Blue Island Public Library: Freedom to Read Storytime](#)

[Publisher's Weekly: Confronting Cultural Illiteracy: LGBTQ Books 2022](#)

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

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