



Sammy the Seal

Syd Hoff

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Sammy, the adventurous seal, leaves the zoo for the day and ventures into the big, busy city. Along the way he finds a school full of kids and new things to do—and he even learns to read!

"So funny and so original that it promises to be one of the most successful books in this best-selling series."
(*Publishers Weekly*)

Sammy the Seal is another hilarious, original story by Syd Hoff, the celebrated author of *Danny and the Dinosaur*. This Level One I Can Read is perfect for shared reading with a child.

Sammy the Seal Details

Date : Published January 5th 2000 by HarperCollins (first published 1959)

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Author : Syd Hoff

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Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Animals, Fiction

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From Reader Review Sammy the Seal for online ebook

Luann says

Maybe I would have loved this if I'd read it first when I was little. Reading it as an adult, it just seemed silly - and not in a good way. Why would the zookeeper let Sammy leave the zoo and go exploring around town? Why would the teacher let Sammy stay in school? How can Sammy learn to read and write in the space of two sentences? ("Sammy learns to read. Sammy learns to write.") I usually don't mind some silliness and a bit of fantasy in stories, but this one wasn't a favorite. I did enjoy Syd Hoff's illustrations, which brought back nice memories of Danny and the Dinosaur.

Julia says

A childrens' favorite that is sure to delight and stick with children for much years to come. The simple formatting of the writing is the doorway to beginning readers as they follow Sammy who isn't a seal but an actual sea lion.

The concept is cute and sweetly when you think the fact that a zookeeper would just allow one of his charges out to see the world to fit him. Then again looking at the confining spaces of this particular zoo it does make sense.

The pictures follow along sweet and simple while helping to get the story across to readers even as he makes his way home.

Dolly says

This is a fun story - it's designed for beginning readers and has a simple narrative, but it is a bit long. Young readers might need to read it in parts. The idea of a seal going to school and playing sports is funny and quite fantastic. We enjoyed listening to this book narrated on audio CD by Charles Mintz while we followed along with the story.

Sarah says

I just can't get past the fact that there's a SEA LION pictured throughout the book.

Gail Barge says

This book is a classic that I used to read with my Mother when I was a little girl. This book emphasizes the importance of learning about new places and meeting people who are different, all while upholding the importance of the love of home. Students could use this book to learn about different types of homes (single

parent, divorced, different houses, different towns, etc.). Young students will enjoy the likable title character and his zoo friends.

Patricia says

A sweet story about Sammy, a seal, who is allowed to venture out of the zoo to see what the world is like, because he is very well behaved. I remember reading this book as a small child countless times and really enjoying both the story and the pictures. As an adult, I still find this book to be adorable and enjoyable. The illustrations are very crisp and clean and look like something a very talented child artist would create. *SAMMY THE SEAL* is a wonderful little book.

For those familiar with the Accelerated Reading Program, this is a 2.0 level book.

Brian Gramman says

Sammy the Seal is the dystopian novel that *1984* was meant to be. What is Big Brother if not a semiaquatic anglophone determined to force himself into the lives of unsuspecting humans? Orwell envisioned a world where you were always being watched, whether you liked it or not. This, of course, pales in comparison to Syd Hoff's nightmarish conception of a totalitarian regime that grants a seal the right to take a bath IN YOUR TUB whenever it pleases, whether you like it or not.

Sammy is a despot who just happens to spend time in a zoo. He's clearly the Kim Jong-Un of the place. All the other animals are forced to pretend that they're happy for him, smiling toothy, herbivorous smiles as Sammy flops out the door and leaves them all in their cages. Sammy allows the zookeeper to keep up appearances as an authority figure despite his obvious lack of authority. This morphs a man who used to stand for something into a spineless, groveling sycophant that exists only to enable Sammy's innermost fantasies, the most terrifying of which is attending school.

Sammy begins his time in the classroom as an anonymous observer, hoping to catch the teacher in the midst of a lesson that she'd live to regret. Having failed to discern anything other than party rhetoric in her teaching, Sammy makes his presence known to her via an off-key rendition of the song that all the students are forced to sing (there's no better tool for molding young minds than a song). As the lesson continues, Sammy starts playing with blocks adorned with the letters of the alphabet, and his illiteracy becomes apparent to the reader. What happens next is hard to understand the first time through. At first, when Sammy provides clear evidence that he can't read, nothing is done to rectify this obvious academic concern. Then, just a few pages later, Hoff writes, "He learned how to read. He learned how to write." And then this happens:

Do you see that handwriting? It's immaculate! We've got to get this guy on illuminated manuscripts immediately!

So what's going on here? Why did Sammy stink at making words with the blocks only to turn into Máel Muire mac Céilechair in record time? Looking back, it quickly becomes apparent that Sammy could always

read. He was able to independently reach a school that he was visiting for the first time, making it very likely he made use of maps and street signs. Sammy's inability to spell anything with the blocks is nothing more than a test. But a test of what? There are two possible explanations, both of them deeply disturbing.

The first is a cynical test of loyalty. Sammy feigns illiteracy to see if the teacher or any of her students would bring up such an embarrassing attribute, which would be to no one's detriment but their own. Imagine the potential consequences of acknowledging any trait of Sammy's that contradicts the social policy of apotheosis. If you say Sammy can't read, doesn't that imply that you think he *should* learn how to read, meaning that his failure to do so to this point is, in your opinion, *an error in judgment?* Blasphemy gets you nowhere, and it gets you there in a hurry.

As terrifying as that idea may be, don't worry, it might be even worse than that. If the teacher would notice Sammy's illiteracy, she would at the very least react in a way to quickly move past the situation. She would more than likely put the blocks away in an attempt to keep the children from noticing what she just noticed, preventing them from saying something stupid that would result in the public execution of their families. But this doesn't occur. Instead, the teacher lets them continue until recess, at which point a casual game of volleyball starts up. What this means, of course, is that she fails to notice Sammy's illiteracy, proving that she has the exact same problem. That's right. This teacher can't read.

While this might seem like a bad thing, it's music to Sammy's ears. He wants teachers that can't read because illiterate teachers teach illiterate students, and a population that can't read or write is much easier to control. Sammy is playing the long game, and if this classroom is representative of education throughout Sammy's nation, then he's succeeding.

The story ends with Sammy returning to the zoo and declaring, "There's no place like home!" He rejoins his fellow seals and chows down on some fish. This seems uncharacteristic for the seal we know Sammy to be, but there's a reason for this. Rather than end the story of Sammy the Seal, Hoff decided to instead offer the reader a new beginning, a solution to the problems that Sammy creates. Hoff indicates that Sammy is perfectly happy in his zoo enclosure, and only his unnecessary exposure to the outside world turns him into a megalomaniac. If the zookeeper kept Sammy where he was and prevented him from expanding his territory, peace could be possible. In Hoff's mind, if you give the seal some fish and pat him on the head, he probably won't come after you.

Syd Hoff and Neville Chamberlain had (at least) two things in common. They both believed in the power of appeasement, and they were both dead wrong. That doesn't mean there aren't lessons to be taken from the cautionary tale of Sammy the Seal. Make sure your kid's teachers know how to read, and if you ever need a calligrapher, hit up the nearest pinniped.

Emily Togstad says

Emily Togstad

English 12

1/16/15

Sammy The Seal

I read a children's book to Austin's niece Skye. The book was called "Sammy the Seal" written by Syd Hoff. Skye enjoyed the seal. She thought he was really funny. She laughed a lot. I laughed a few times to. The book was really silly. I really liked the book.

The main character was a seal named Sammy. He liked exploring and he really loved eating fish. The zookeeper's name was Mr. Johnson. The zookeeper was really nice. He was Sammy's friend. Sammy also made some friends with children at the local school. None of their names were said.

The book was about a seal named Sammy that wanted to get out of the zoo. He asked the zookeeper to let him get out of the zoo for a while. The zookeeper let him go. All the other zoo animals kept asking the seal where he was going. Sammy left the zoo and walked around town and looked at everything. He went to a school and learned how to read and write. After a long day, Sammy went back home to the zoo and ate some fish.

The book took place in an average town with a lot of friendly people. The town had a very large zoo with many animals. The name of the town was never said, however according to the pictures there were very large buildings. The book was written in 1959. The book probably took place in the 1950's.

I think this book was written to show that there is no place like home. Although the seal really loved exploring new places, he really loved being back home at the zoo. He was very thankful when he got to eat his fish for dinner like usual. While he was away from home, he missed swimming too. He was constantly looking for water when he was in town. The seal loved the little things in life.

I would give this book 4 stars. The book was silly and funny. I would recommend this book to anyone. Even though it's a children's book, I really liked it. I think anyone would really enjoy this book.

Kat says

I actually never read any of Syd Hoff's books until I picked this up at Barnes & Noble to read it to my niece at the store.

Sammy the Seal is a fun book about a seal who lives in a zoo, and he wants to see what's outside the zoo. Mr. Johnson, the zookeeper, lets Sammy the seal out of his cage (what?!?) so he can explore the city. He wanders the streets and observes people, jumps into a man's bathtub, and eventually ends up in an elementary school classroom. Although he enjoys his adventures, he realizes that he likes living in the zoo.

Syd Hoff's art is simply amazing. I love the simplicity of his characters. He's probably one of my favorite children's illustrators, up there with Margaret Bloy Graham and Roy McKie.

Samantha says

I love Sammy! Such a great story...a total classic, must-read for every reader =)

Andrea Cox says

by Andrea Renee Cox

Cute story about a seal exploring the big world. I knocked off a star for the book being unrealistic. However, this book is a good one to open up a discussion about exploring the world verses the comforts of home. It was an enjoyable read. To me, it's a classic children's story that I loved when I was little and still am happy to read now that I'm grown.

I was not compensated for my honest review.

Michael D. says

This is a great read for teaching students science as it pertains to animals, natural habitat, diet, etc. An educator can also use the book to teach a little Geography. Sammy is a wonderful character for teaching students how to find one's place in the world. Also, it is a wonderful read for addressing the school culture and the purpose for attending school.

Luisa Knight says

I love Syd Hoff's illustrations and you can't really go wrong with his stories either. Your beginning reader will enjoy this one, especially if you follow it up with a movie! When I was a kid, my mom happened to find the 1962 Disney "Sammy, the Way-Out Seal" and we watched it often, wishing we could put a seal in our bathtub too.

Reading Level: K - 3rd grades

Sammy Long says

this was one of my most favorite books as a kid. I really enjoy this illustrations the author uses. He is also one of my favorite authors for children's books.

Lisa says

This is probably truly the first favorite book I ever had. I like this book so much that I read it to my daughter's Kindergarten class when I was a Mom Reader...

I remember reading it as a kid and laughing everytime...moral of the story, there's no place like home.

Now I collect Syd Hoff books. Strangely enough, I named my daughter Sydney...not after the author, though :)

