



Leo: A Ghost Story

Mac Barnett , Christian Robinson (Illustrations)

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You would like being friends with Leo. He likes to draw, he makes delicious snacks, and most people can't even see him. Because Leo is also a ghost. When a new family moves into his home and Leo's efforts to welcome them are misunderstood, Leo decides it is time to leave and see the world. That is how he meets Jane, a kid with a tremendous imagination and an open position for a worthy knight. That is how Leo and Jane become friends. And that is when their adventures begin. This charming tale of friendship—from two of the best young minds in picture books: the author of the Caldecott Honor–winning *Extra Yarn* and the illustrator of the Bologna Ragazzi Award–winning *Josephine*—is destined to become a modern classic that will delight readers for years to come.

Leo: A Ghost Story Details

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Author : Mac Barnett , Christian Robinson (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Leo: A Ghost Story for online ebook

M. Lauritano says

Coming from two of my favorites in the picture book world I had HIGH expectations for this one. Unfortunately, Mac Barnett, genius that he is, let me down. Christian Robinson can do no wrong as far as I'm concerned, but I do prefer his less monochromatic work. The illustrations are fresh, evocative, and cute as usual.

The story, though. Hm. It has some pacing and/or focus issues for me. The narrative feels front heavy. If the ultimate focus is the friendship between Leo and Jane and how their life situations fit together, she deserved more pagetime. Of course I appreciate the appearing act orchestrated in the first two spreads, but part of me questions that usage of space for a narrative that ultimately is about two characters. The same sentiments go for the funny family interaction and exorcism scenes. I might have just begun the book with Leo, wandering and lost; unseen. Those pictures were too good to lose. I also wondered if the thwarted robbery could have been more drawn out and suspenseful, but it was managed well enough. The final resolution though, definitely feels too quick to me. Maybe it's just my taste, but I think this would have worked better as an early reader. Break all the funny or sad incidents into their own brief chapters, keep the language simple. There's certainly something original in a tale of a ghost mistaken for an imaginary friend.

The tone of the story almost feels as if it is being told by a precocious child. A majority probably think that means it's great writing for a picture book, but I'm not convinced. Picture books should not have to feel like they are the creations of, or in the spirit of children. Some bookmakers have achieved that goal well with depth and humor, but Leo: A Ghost Story doesn't make the cut. Everyone else seems to like this book though, so I sincerely hope Barnett and Robinson work together again and try to top this effort.

Julie says

Oh WOW I love this book. Like many of my favorite modern picture books, it has a timeless quality that would make it at home with classic Tomi Ungerer and Russell Hoban, but which also has feet firmly planted in 2015. A terrific story about friendship, identity, and what life (or, I suppose afterlife) is all about. And no surprise: Christian Robinson's illustrations are phenomenal. Highly, highly recommended.

Benji Martin says

Originally posted at The Tales of an Elementary Librarian.
<https://byhopewesteer.wordpress.com/2...>

Last year, after our yearly author visit, I was driving through downtown Montgomery to have dinner with my wife (in the passenger seat) and Mac Barnett (in the back seat). At some point, my wife made a comment about the quality of my driving, and the danger that I was putting our guest in. Morbidly amused, but also genuinely curious, I turned to Mac and asked, "If we did all die in a fiery crash tonight, how many books do you have finished that would still be published posthumously?" He laughed and started counting on his fingers. After a moment, he said, "Seven. I have seven books that would be published." I was amazed by

this. Most authors I know are working on their next book, in hopes that it will be sold by their agent. A few have two or three sold ahead of time, but haven't written them yet, and even less have two or three finished waiting for publication, but SEVEN?! That says a lot about Mac, about how much creative juice he has stored up in that brain, and how tirelessly he works to churn these books out. And let me tell you a secret, THEY'RE ALL GOOD! It's a little bit ridiculous how much talent can be stored in one person.

Anyways, Leo: A Ghost Story, along with The Skunk, was one those seven books. It's about Leo, a ghost who has lived by himself in an empty house for a long time. One day, a new family moves in, but they can't see Leo, and he freaks them out a little bit. The family hires a psychic, a clergyman and a scientist to get rid of Leo, but he knows that he isn't welcome, and leaves on his own, searching for a home and more importantly, for a friend.

Mac immediately establishes a connection with the reader by breaking the fourth wall and allowing them to see Leo with the first page turn when not many others in the story can see him. It makes Leo seem real and present. Christian Robinson's illustrations are simple and fun, melancholy at times, and joyful at others. They work perfectly with the text. My favorite illustration is from the part of the story when Leo has just found his first real friend.

In the end, I think it's a great story. It may not be an instant classic like Extra yarn, and it may not be a profound puzzler like Sam and Dave Dig a Hole and The Skunk, but it is a heart-warming story about friendship, imagination and finding a place to call home. I love it, and think most kids will too.

I've seen other reviewers recommending the book for ages 4-6, but I think kids much older than that will love it. I'll be reading it to everyone, all the way up to my fifth graders. So I guess, I think it's good for ages 4-10.

Sara says

A ghost gets mistaken as an imaginary friend. This is so cute!

Stephane Savoy says

Wish I could get Leo to come and visit me... lovely tale of a friendly ghost

Jessica says

Charming and very different. The style and pictures are very unique, and the story went with them perfectly. I would not at all be surprised to see this win a Caldecott.

Tara says

Mac is on point as usual. Read aloud to me by a friend's son made me appreciate it more than if I had read it

alone.

RLL22017 Flora Zayas says

[knights at the round table, slay a dragon, and have a "glorious feast." When Jane is called away for dinner, Leo finds out that she thinks he is imaginary. He becomes so worried

Edie says

What a great combination of text and illustration. Leo is a loveable ghost who just needs to meet the right friend and he does, after being a roaming ghost for a while, in a dreary city with no warmth or place for mint tea. When he discovers Jane he finds a soul mate who has a great imagination and an open mind. And he goes from imaginary to real (of sorts). There is a warmth to this book that is hard to describe, but you get the sense of happiness as Leo stays up late (and in another room so he doesn't wake Jane up with his rustling) to make a coat of arms since they are playing knights and queens (with imaginary crowns). And what a great mom to just announce that Jane has to tell her imaginary friends good-bye....lovely through and through, every child would like a Jane and a Leo in his/her life.

Colleen McDonough says

Leo, a house ghost, tries to befriend a new family that moves in his home but ends up scaring them since they cannot see him. Leo decides to become a roaming ghost and looks for a new friend. However, no one can see Leo so he becomes lonely. Finally Leo comes across Jane, a little girl with a big imagination who sees Leo and treats him like her other imaginary friends.

Although the tone of the book is light and tells a story of friendship, the illustrations have a bit of a spooky feel to them being all black, blue, and white.

I really liked the character of Jane, a girl who is truly herself and accepting of others. She proclaims herself the king in their game of Knights of the Round Table. When Leo finally admits to Jane that he is a ghost and not an imaginary friend, she responds "Well that's even better".

Young children will really enjoy this twist on a ghost story and tale of friendship.

I found this book from the Ted Talk we watched for class by the author, Mac Barnett.

Marie Soleil says

Ce n'est pas parce qu'on n'existe plus vraiment, qu'on ne peut rêver d'un peu de compagnie! C'est ce que Léo le fantôme se dit quand il part à la découverte de ce monde qu'il a connu jadis. Heureusement, la joyeuse Jane lui ouvrira grandes les portes de son ébouriffant petit monde!

D'une plume tout en fine sensibilité, Mac Barnett sait tricoter une adorable vérité entre les oeillères du réel. Une irrésistible ode à cet imaginaire qui fait de l'enfance la plus luxuriante des aventures.

Erica says

Leo, the ghost whom most people can't see, leaves his home when the new inhabitants make him feel unwanted.

Wandering the city, he finds a friend, one who thinks he's imaginary. He can't tell her he's really a ghost or else he'll scare his first friend in years (decades? CENTURIES?) away.

Much like Mog the Forgetful Cat, Leo saves the day and earns respect.

There are so many subtle, positive messages in this story, creeping into the brain through the eyes.

Leo's new friend, Jane, is a black girl who has a **huge** imagination (and also wears the ponytail balls in her hair and I wanted those sooo badly when I was little but my mom couldn't make them work so I was just envious of all the girls who could wear them, a memory which surfaced when I saw Jane, but in a lovingly sentimental way, no spite at all). Leo was a white kid when he was alive and he admits that the city has changed a lot but he's not hesitant to talk to this girl who can see him, this girl who plays games in her room or in the yard instead of hanging out with technology. She'd prefer dragons and knights of the Round Table! Oh, my heart! I love this child so much!

Leo is worried he will lose his friend if she finds out his truth. Jane's a much better friend than that, though. There are police women, non-methy white burglars thieving a black household, and despite the monochromatic illustrations having a decidedly '50's feel, some women wear pants! And Jane wears full-body pajamas, not a cutesy little nightdress!

None of those things are central to the story but they're there, quietly informing young minds about the world and I thought that was pretty cool.

Lizzie says

This book feels instantly classic: the retro illustrations paired with a timeless tale of finding friends who really see you. Leo's loyalty and gentle soul are so lovable. Mint tea and honey toast for the masses!

Sandy says

The illustrations in this children's book help support the fantastic story that flows throughout its pages about a ghost named Leo. Leo has always lived alone but when a family moves into his house, Leo decides he must move out and he finds himself alone in the city. Not everyone can see Leo, as ghosts can only be seen by few individuals and the city becomes overwhelming for such a small ghost. Leo happens upon Jane playing on the sidewalk and she immediately strikes up a conversation. She is quite the girl with her wit and charm. Leo seems lost for words because Jane has so many but there is something happening between the two of them almost immediately. As I finish out the book, I am laughing and smiling at the duo as they seem to be made for each other. I really enjoyed the illustrations in this novel. The white, black and different hues of blue played well together. It cast a subtle yet unique presence on the pages as the use of their tints brought distinct characteristics to each page and the characters throughout the story.

Erin says

I wouldn't read this to just every child: there's a spooky element here that might raise questions. But the story of loneliness and finding friendship is delightful, and reminds me a lot of *The Adventures of Beekle*. Visually, the story couldn't be more different, though. *Leo* features much darker colors and a flat (literally two-dimensional, not boring), more childlike feel to the style, whereas *Beekle* is crisper and rounder and brighter.

Update: We checked this out a second time, and I read it to the kiddos. The three-year-old shares the ghost's name, so I was a little apprehensive about his reaction. But pretty early on in the story, he loudly declared that he himself was NOT a ghost. And other than that, they loved the story and have asked for it a few times. Especially as we start up a new school year, *Leo the ghost* is a great example of finding friends, both real and imaginary. And I enjoyed the illustrations even more the second time through. While spooky, they still evoke a rather cheery atmosphere.

KC says

An interesting tale of *Leo*, who happens to be a ghost and his antics.

Rosemary Sullivan says

"*Leo: A Ghost Story*," by Mac Barnett, with pictures by Christian Robinson is about a ghost named *Leo* in the form of a little boy, with a friendly nature similar to that of another well-known spirit, *Casper*. We should all be so lucky as to move into a home, where a gracious host makes mint tea and honey toast for company. But such hospitality is lost on the family that moves into the well-meaning ghost's house, where he has resided peacefully for years, "reading books and drawing pictures in the dust." They see a floating tray and not *Leo*, which makes him a threat.

Sensing that he is not wanted, he ventures into the city, whose inhabitants also cannot see him, save for a little girl named *Jane*, who is drawing with sidewalk chalk. She befriends him and together they play games such as *Knights of the Round Table* with imaginary friends, such as *Sir Ruffs*, a loyal dog, clad in armor. Together they go on daring adventures of make-believe, wielding swords and slaying a dragon.

But there is a catch. *Jane* thinks *Leo* is imaginary. He is hesitant to tell her that he's a ghost, for fear it will scare her away and their good times together will come to an end. But in an act of bravery, the true nature of *Leo's* existence is revealed, as are *Jane's* feelings about their friendship.

This sweet ghost story is illustrated by Mr. Robinson in shades of blue using acrylic paint and cutout construction paper. It feels like a creative art project and the story meanders freely from the tale of a haunted house, to a story about imaginary friends and finally a crime caper, among other genres. It has the same liberated nature as a child making up a story, which makes it perfect for its young audience.

Also perfect for this crowd is good-hearted *Leo*, with his small, see-through frame, bow tie, and bangs. He is

a curious child whose interests are reflected in a boyhood room that is both contemporary and of another time. It is filled with timeless treasures such as books, a rocking horse, train set and model sailboat, but also a candelabra instead of a lamp. I was sad that he had to leave such a charming refuge behind, but I understood that he needed to be "a roaming ghost," for a while because in the words of J.R.R Tolkien, "Not all those who wander are lost."

You have to find your place in the world and people who accept you for who you truly are. (That sense of connection is not dependent on the color or transparency of one's skin either, as Jane has deeper blue skin and braids, seeming to reflect an African American identity). No one likes to feel invisible. That is the journey of everyone who is "real."

Laura says

I'm kicking off my Halloween fun today! Let the haunting begin with...

A new Mac Barnett book! :)

Leo is a ghost. Not everyone can see ghosts. Not everyone can see Leo. But Leo was lonely and needed a friend. So he floats off roaming the city in search of a new home and friend.

People walk on by or through him without looking or noticing though. Can Leo find that someone special? Someone that sees him? Sees him for who he really is.

Shades of blue, black, and white bring Leo's tale to light on the page. Blue pages from beginning to end create almost an aged look to the pages at times and a glow on others. Leo's big eyes, bow, and little smile GLOWED! I adored his smiling face and gentle soul.

Leo will teach readers of all ages the power and joy of friendship. Remind us all to cherish the friends that love and see us for who we are in this world.

Go share this story with a friend along with a cup of mint tea and a plate of cookies.

Miriam says

This is a great story about friendship, imagination, honesty, and acceptance.

Although there is a ghost it is not scary at all, unless you have already made your tiny tot terrified of the mere word, in which case you are shit parent.

The illustrations are not in a style that is usually a favorite for me, but I found these charming.

I totally want to play Knights of the Round Table and have tea parties with these awesome kids.

Amy says

Illustrated in shades of blue and starring a sweet faced boy ghost, Leo is left wandering the streets after the new owners of his home make it clear he is not wanted. Thank goodness for Jane, who dubs him her best imaginary friend. After catching a thief in her house, Leo reveals he is actually a ghost. Jane's reply? "Well that's even better." 4.5 stars
