



# Chicken Feathers

*Joy Cowley , David Elliot (Illustrations)*

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**Chicken Feathers** Joy Cowley , David Elliot (Illustrations)

Feather-flapping fun by one of the best-loved storytellers of our time.

A talking chicken! Josh knows it sounds ridiculous, but that's just what Semolina is. And she's not just a talking chicken . . . she's a spirited, sarcastic, sassytalking chicken. And with Josh's mom in the hospital about to give birth to his sister, Josh needs Semolina more than ever, even if she will only talk in front of him. But when Semolina tells him that a fox is sneaking into the hen house at night, can Josh get his dad to believe in Semolina before it's too late?

*Chicken Feathers* introduces one of children's literature's most original, endearing new characters to peck her way onto the page. In the tradition of *Charlotte's Web*, here is a book full of tender moments, sparkling humor, and classic black-and-white illustrations.

## Chicken Feathers Details

Date : Published May 29th 2008 by Philomel Books

ISBN : 9780399247910

Author : Joy Cowley , David Elliot (Illustrations)

Format : Hardcover 160 pages

Genre : Fiction, Fantasy, Childrens, Animals, Juvenile, Middle Grade

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# From Reader Review Chicken Feathers for online ebook

## Marla says

Maine Student Book Award 2009-2010

I thought this book had a cute premise, but it had some inappropriate references for grades 3-5.

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## Erin says

This little novel is about a boy named Josh and his talking pet chicken Semolina. Semolina does not simply make ordinary chicken sounds, but she speaks English, and she is very confident with her sass talking when it comes to being alone with Josh. No matter how hard he tries Josh cannot get her to talk to anyone but him. Throughout the story Josh's family deals with a difficult pregnancy that keeps his mother in the hospital for three months, and they have an issue with missing eggs. Everyday there are at least three to four dozen eggs missing, and Semolina claims that a fox is causing the problem. Semolina also has an issue with drinking Josh's grandmother's "brew." This book has a few references that I would not immediately advise for young readers, but there are very relevant topics present that many children may be able to relate to. As we look at Josh's developing crush on Annalee, we see many aspects of young children. There are so many themes going on in this novel that I would expect third through fifth graders to interpret and apply to their own lives. I recommend this book to many young readers that enjoy a good laugh from a talking chicken.

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## Isaac McNickle says

I decided to read this book because I needed to read a book in the category of New Zealand author and I thought of Joy Cowley.

This obviously fills the New Zealand author category. I enjoy this category as it just shows what talent a small country can produce. It just builds up the confidence of other NZ authors that they can make it in the big time.

My favorite quote from the book is "'I told you for the umpteenth time, I ain't never wasting my words on biggies(adults)" Semolina snapped'

Something new I learned from this book is if you believe you can achieve.

Semolina(the hen) interests me in the book because she acts just like a human while still keeping her hen features obvious.

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## Shelleyburns says

International Book. Themes - family, pets, friends. This is a very funny story about a boy named Josh who has a pet chicken named Semolina. Semolina is a very sassy chicken and can talk, but only to Josh. Something is happening to the eggs in one of the chicken houses and Semolina knows what it is. She tells

Josh it is a fox, but nobody believes Josh. This book is appropriate for ages 3 - 5. I would use this book to reinforce comprehension skills, build vocabulary, or for a writing assignment to create a short story about an animal that could talk.

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### **Becky says**

Cowley, Joy. 2008. Chicken Feathers. Illustrations by David Elliot.

Chicken Feathers by Joy Cowley is enjoyable enough for what it is: a mostly charming story about a boy who loves his pet chicken, Semolina. Josh is the only one in his family that knows (and believes) that Semolina is more than just a chicken. She's an extraordinary chicken: a chicken that can talk. Not just squawk. But talk. Actually talk in human words. Every one else....well...let's just say that they don't trust Josh that much. Semolina has her vices, however, and one of them is her addiction to "brown water" or brew.

There are a few story elements going on in this one: Josh's first semi-semi-crush on the girl next door; the family dealing with a difficult pregnancy. (Josh's mom is hospitalized at six months.) The grandmother (mother-in-law) coming to take care of the family while the mom's in the hospital. And the chickens. There is a fox on the loose in the neighborhood. And Semolina's warnings are going unheeded--at least in the very beginning--so there is danger on that front.

I liked this one. It was unique enough. Not many books about talking chickens having special relationships with their owners that I can recollect. But as nice as it was, amusing as it was in places, I didn't quite love it. But I liked it.

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### **Gillian Torckler says**

We're on page 45 of 141 of Chicken feathers: my son (9) and i have been reading this together and he has decided its not worth carrying on. I will, because i am slightly intrigued to see if it gets any better, because at the moment I agree with him....page 53 and it has been cast aside. I really don't know why this doesn't work for us. It may be the way it is told, it might be the american setting not feeling real, but mostly i think it because nothing has happened.

OK, I persisted to the end and there was a cute, and satisfying ending, but overall this book still hasn't turned my dials. And I doubt it would be enough to keep many kids turning the pages.

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### **Lesia says**

I read this to my 7 and 10 yr old daughters. I needed a short book while waiting for a library hold. This one was perfect. It was a very cute story and we all enjoyed it.

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## **West Region, says**

Chicken Feathers, by Joy Cowley

Josh has wanted a pet, but a pet chicken was not what he had in mind. Especially the ornery and cantankerous chicken, Semolina. But Semolina soon becomes Josh's very best friend and she has a very special talent. Semolina can speak, and not just chicken squawks, but human talk. But Semolina is also stubborn and she will only talk to Josh.

This is okay with Josh, until the eggs start disappearing from the nests in their chicken farm. Only Semolina knows where the eggs have gone. The chicken tells the boy, but will anyone believe him in time?

Perfect to read aloud with your family or to your students, enjoy this story about a boy and his spunky chicken that has a lot of attitude.

Grades 3-5

Humorous Fiction

Submitted by Jocelyn Mullen, 1/27/09

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## **Marcia says**

A wonderful, well written, heart-warming story. I was fearing the "chicken that talks" but it fit, and provides a neat perspective. Josh's parents have struggled to have a second child, and now mom is in the hospital on bed rest. Semolina is the chicken that talks to only Josh, and is a funny, wise- cracker with a taste for Grandma's home brew. neat characters, a bit of drama, and lots of chickens, this book felt old-timey but still relevant.

It would make a great read aloud for grades 1-3, or a nice independent choice for older readers.

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## **Monica Hocking says**

It was a good read. Showed great example of bonding between a child and his pet. And lessons of life decisions and how all that can make you stronger.

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## **Eva Mitnick says**

We had a hen named Samantha who used to come sit in my lap and whose fondness for standing under the sprinklers was her eventual downfall (hens and water do not mix well; she caught a fatal cold). There was Henrietta, a plucky red hen with lethal-looking spurs and a bossy personality. Kaya and Griffin used to try to roost on my shoulders when they were gawky tweens. There have been plenty of other hens, all rather sweet and dim-witted – as chicks they pecked at their own toes, mistaking them for worms, and many of them don't have the sense to get out of the rain. Granted, it doesn't rain much here, but still.

Not one hen has ever spoken to me, and so I can only assume that not one had the brains, wit, and sheer

chutzpah of Semolina, the aged and crotchety heroine of *Chicken Feathers* by Joy Cowley (Philomel, 2008). She only talks to Josh, her adopted chick of a human boy, and it's a good thing she does, because he needs a confidante – his mom is in the hospital due to a risky pregnancy, his cranky, hen-scorning grandma has moved in to cook and clean, and his old friend and new crush Annalee has acquired a figure and a boyfriend.

No one believes that Semolina actually talks to Josh, which makes for a lonely and confusing summer. But Josh and Semolina manage to save the inhabitants of coop #3 from a fox – who is then hell-bent on revenge.

This is a weirdly realistic novel; in fact, I hesitate to call it a fantasy, despite the talking chicken. It's clear to me that she does talk, because there is no ambiguity about the things she tells him and because at the very end she talks to everyone, even the "biggies." Now, we never do learn their reaction to this talking hen, so maybe she didn't really talk – but I refuse to buy that. She's a talking hen, darn it, and that's all there is to it. And she is stubborn, cantankerous, and a worrywart with a passion for home-brew (just like Josh's grandma, he realizes at one point). The language is simple, with just a bit of down-home folksiness. The characters are drawn with a spare but affectionate brush, which matches their own uncomplicated natures.

This is a charmer of a story, with humorous drawings to go with it (Semolina is one bedraggled but dignified hen). Recommended for everyone – a great read-aloud for ages 4 and up, and for readers grades 2 – 4.

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### **Marina says**

Cute story. The chicken talks but only "her boy" knows so it causes problems when trying to solve why the eggs go missing. And, she likes the hard stuff. It started out a bit rough when somewhere the fact-checker/editor went awry and allowed the black and white dairy cows on the neighboring farm to be called Herefords (which are actually reddish-brown and white beef cattle) instead of Holsteins but I pushed passed and finished. It makes me glad my chickens can't talk (or won't talk) to me. I'd probably get fed up with all their squawking and carrying-on.

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### **Elissa Schaeffer says**

Several stories surrounding Josh come together during one summer. First there's his pet chicken, Semolina, who talks only to him and insists she knows what's happening to the eggs in house 3. Then there's his crush on the neighbor, who is a little older than Josh and starting to change in ways Josh doesn't understand. His grandmother has come to stay with them and he's never quite seen eye-to-eye with her. All this surrounding the fact that his mother is in the hospital for most of her last trimester to ensure the safety of her pregnancy and delivery of Josh's new baby sister.

Josh was likeable enough and seemed older than his age in some ways and younger in others. Semolina was quite the character and fun to read...but that's coming from a grown-up. I'm not sure how those in grades 3-5 would feel about an alcoholic chicken, or about the changes Josh has noticed in his neighbor.

All in all, I found this to be just merely okay. I'm doubtful if I'd recommend this to any of my library patrons. Grades 3-5 but with forewarning of content.

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### **Qt says**

What a sweet story of a boy and his talking pet hen! It sounds like the author really knows chickens, and the illustrations are very cute. I also loved all the summery details, and Josh's friends and family are well-drawn. For me, though, Semolina the chicken was my favorite part :-)

It was so nice to read about a boy and his pet hen, and I loved that the chicken details were so accurate.

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### **Jodi says**

2.5 stars. It was funny, it was poignant, it was strange. There were several awkward anatomical references that I felt were inappropriate, and a comment about how God is in all the animals and some other weird stuff. The naughty, rude talking chicken had me laughing, but she was a rather inappropriate character with a gluttonous appetite for "Grandma's brew."

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