



There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly

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An old favorite as you've never seen it before! Everyone knows the song about the old lady who swallowed a fly, a spider, a bird, and even worse, but who's ever seen what's going on inside the old lady's stomach? With this inventive die-cut artwork, Simms Taback gives us a rollicking, eye-popping version of the well-loved poem.

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly Details

Date : Published September 1st 1997 by Viking Books for Young Readers (first published 1997)

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Author : Simms Taback

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books

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From Reader Review There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly for online ebook

Angela says

I LOVED this book! Oh my goodness, I was having the time of my life reading this to my son and singing along while he looked at the pictures. And the ending - she swallowed a horse and died. Do you know I'm still laughing at that? It's true, it's soooo true.

Anyway, I think I may have to buy this book for my son....so I can continue to laugh every time I read it.

Laura says

Caldecott Honor 1998:

This American folk poem was first heard in the US sometime during the 1940's. My children enjoyed the bold, whimsical, illustrations because a hole was cut out of each page to reveal the eaten animal in the old ladies belly. It's a goofy, silly book with a great moral: NEVER SWALLOW A HORSE!

Rhayne says

Death is not typically a topic one would consider when picking a book for kids, let alone in a sing-along fashion, but somehow There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly has continued to entertain children since the 1940's. The ballad also continues to inspire illustrators whom continue to create their own colorful and unique renditions. Simms Taback famous artist and illustrator, whom is also known for Josph Had a Little overcoat as well as his Smithsonian calendars, created his own rendition of the song in 1997. Talback's rendition reads like a quirky somewhat loopy collage which adds to the overall strangeness of the poems content.

There was an old who swallowed a fly tells a story of just that, an elderly women whom swallows a fly. She attempts to solve the problem by swallowing a spider to swallow the fly, but is once again left with an animal inside her. The women then continues to swallow different types of animals in attempts to solve her horrendous appetite, until the size of the animals get so ridiculous the women literally dies. Although the woman does die the poem is playful, and with such arrhythmic rhyme scheme one cant help but sing along.

Talback's pictures emphasize the strange, somewhat creepy, totally weird content of the poem enabling a picture book which is not only fun to read but entertaining for readers of all ages. The strain of the weight and her ill health can be registered from Talback's interpretation and by giving the animals overlooking the incident a voice he adds to the whimsicality all picture books should exude. By allowing the pictures to act along as part of the illustration themselves, enabling strangely place notions of reality, expressing voices for once unheard characters and depicting an old women whom is as entertaining and creepy as she is plump, Talback allows the poem to carry on to another generation of readers while still entertaining previous generations.

midnightfaerie says

My children were eating dinner when I read this to them and my 5 yr old was disgusted and my preschoolers were fascinated. The book wasn't quite the old folk song that I remembered and I was a little disappointed. Certain verses were repeated twice and I'm not sure why. I tried to guess at the pictures, wondering if perhaps there was a reason they were repeated due to the imagery in the cut out holes not matching up, so another page had to be added, but it still didn't seem to make sense. Overall, it was okay, but nothing that truly touched me or my children.

Ronyell says

“There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly” is a silly lyrical book rewritten from a 1940s American folk poem by Simms Taback and is a Caldecott Honor Book. This book is about how an old lady manages to swallow every animal that comes in her path for no reason, until she goes a bit too far towards the end. This book is full of silly fun, but smaller children might want to watch out for the disturbing ending.

Simms Taback has done an excellent job at writing this story as it sounds upbeat and is creative, especially when he states about why the old lady swallow one animal after the other. Simms Taback also brings some attitude to the story as he makes it seem like what the old lady is doing is absurd, such as how he stated that it was absurd how the old lady swallowed a bird. Simms Taback also does a superb job at illustrating this book as he makes each character look surreal. The image that stood out the most was the image of the old lady herself as she is the most surrealistic looking character in the entire book. The old lady has bloodshot eyes throughout the book indicating she is crazy and her dress is black and has colorful dots painted all over her dress. I also love the way that Simms Taback made die cuts in this book when she shows the animals that the old lady has swallowed in her belly and the die cut gets larger the larger the animal she swallows gets.

Parents should know that the ending might be too disturbing for smaller children. I will not spoil the ending for you, but it does deal with the subject of death and children might worry about the concept of death. Parents might want to explain to their children about how death is apart of life and be careful into how they are explaining this theme since smaller children might not understand the full concept of death. Also, parents might want to talk to their children about the difference between reality and fantasy, especially since this book was not meant to be taken seriously and the things that the old lady has done does not really happen like that in real life.

There was an Old Lady who swallowed a fly” is certainly one silly book that children will love for many years. I would recommend this book for children ages five and up since the format is simple for children to read, but the ending will definitely disturb smaller children since they do not understand about death in real life.

Mariah says

Love. Doing a lesson on this book tomorrow!

Amber says

If you want a great book to go along with the song, this is the one for it! I have looked at the other version of this book, which is the board book, but it just is not the same! The illustrations in this book were made by using art media and collages on Kraft paper. Also, when it comes to the items that the lady swallowed or has swallowed, they are hidden in the picture on the page before or page after. Which makes it so cool. Then with some of the animals, like the bird, cat, and dog, these pages have the different types or different breeds of the animal. Which makes it awesome for the children who are interested in how many animals there are and how many different types of a certain animal there are.

In the end, we all know what happens with the old lady.

Dolly says

Wonderful illustrations make this book a great story for the kids. The cutouts and busy pages add a lot to this old ditty that has been passed down for generations, something I remember from my own kindergarten days.

We also enjoyed watching the pages animated to the song as sung by Cyndi Lauper on a Scholastic Storybook Treasures DVD. It included seven other sing-along songs with animations of the illustrated books.

This book was selected as one of the books for the February 2017- Caldecott Honors 1998-2002 discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

Jordan says

This children's book is a creative illustrated story about the old lady who swallowed a fly. The storyline of this book is that the old lady ate insects and animals that kept increasing in size. The old, wacky lady was crazy enough to eat a horse. Perhaps she'll die. When you read the story out loud, you find it catchy and start singing along.

The main character in this story is the old lady. The old lady is the one that swallowed the fly, spider, bird, cat, dog, cow, and the horse. She has crooked teeth and small glasses; her eyes are bloodshot and look like marbles.

This book takes place in the old lady's stomach. She eats random animals and insects and all we see is inside her stomach.

The author's message in this story is to have children realize what they are not suppose to eat. Taback makes children's books fun and easy to read.

I recommend this book to children who are learning to read. It's a very catchy book, by that I mean once you read it, you get it stuck in your head. I read this book to Sophie McCoy. Sophie is a first grader at Weyauwega-Fremont Elementary. Her reaction to this book was quite great. She said she loves this book and could read it everyday! She thinks it is funny and awesome. Sophie loves the characters and believes it to be memorable.

Jennifer (JenIsNotaBookSnob) says

This is one of those books that my daughter made me read three times in a row, she just loved it.

The rhyme is slightly different from the one I knew in childhood, but, it's pretty close. I love Taback's illustration style for this book with the cutouts. I'm glad I bought a copy. This is one of those books that you can read really fast if you're trying to be extra silly. We had fun reading it.

Samantha Gacke says

An old lady has swallowed a fly, and continues to swallow more animals, which lead back to trying to catch the fly.

While the text in the book may be difficult to follow, children would really love the pictures! The pictures are all very bright, and they really stick out. Half of the pages have black backgrounds, which helps the reader focus on the pictures. Not only does the illustrator use vibrant colors, but also different patterns and textures to really draw the eyes to what is being told in the pictures. They help tell the story, because as the story progresses, you can see the growth of animals in the old woman's stomach, as well as the total growth of the woman. Overall, the pictures do a great job of accompanying the text.

Jenny says

When my children were little, they loved Taback's books. We read this over and over. The illustrations are amazing and the little asides along with the illustrations bring a lot of humor to the familiar song.

Ashley MacNichol says

My 4 year old son loved this book. We have read it several times before bed. He cracks up at the rhymes. And loves the little illustrations.

Nicole Thompson says

This book is perfect for a young reader, first because it is rhyming. rhyming books are perfect for new readers because it helps them associate letters to certain sounds. The words are very easy, and the story line is light and playful. A child would definitely enjoy this book because it is so silly and "out there." The illustrations go along perfectly because there are silly and kind of just thrown together as well. all of the different bugs and things she swallows are pictured very humorously within the book. I could make a fun activity out of this book in my classroom. the kids can create their own bugs and things that the old lady swallowed... or something of the sort.

Typhani says

Summary: From cover to moral (never swallow a horse), this cleverly illustrated version of an old folk favorite will delight children. Each page is full of details and humorous asides, from the names of different types of birds, to a recipe for spider soup, to the rhyming asides from the spectating animals. As for the old lady, with her toothy grin and round bloodshot eyes, she looks wacky enough to go so far as to swallow a horse. A die-cut hole allows readers to see inside her belly, first the critters already devoured and, with the turn of the page, the new animal that will join the crowd in her ever-expanding stomach. Thanks Amazon!

Audience: Ages 5-9

Genre: Picture Book

Use: Independent reading, shared reading, read aloud

Literary Elements: The pattern of the lady's dress, with its patchwork of bright, torn colored paper pasted on black, is used as the background motif for the words. The text is handwritten on vivid strips of paper that are loosely placed on the patterned page, thus creating a lively interplay between the meaning of the words and their visual power. All in all, this illustrator provides an eye-catching, energy-filled interpretation that could easily become a classic in itself.

Life Lessons: Never swallow more than you can chew!! :)

Recommendations/Awards:

Publisher: Scholastic Inc. (1999)

♥ Christina says

Oh my goodness, This was another one of my favorites as a kid. Its one you can have a lot of fun with that for sure.

Lindsey Bishop says

An all time favorite. I love this book. Teaches kids animals.

Samantha says

Sophie's New favorite!

Calista says

This little story is a folktale from the 40s, didn't know that. I enjoy the art of this book. You get to see the animals inside her stomach. My nephew asked for this book again last night.

Jenna White says

I remember this book from when I was in elementary school. I remember that our librarian would read this to my class for several years in a row and I loved it. I think kids would very much enjoy it because of the rhyming scheme from all the animals. Also, it's very entertaining because they know that a lady could never swallow a cow or a horse or any of those objects in real life. The pictures were fun to look at because of all the bright colors. I think the holes in the pictures are also neat and they add a different kind of element to the story compared to a book with just regular pictures.
