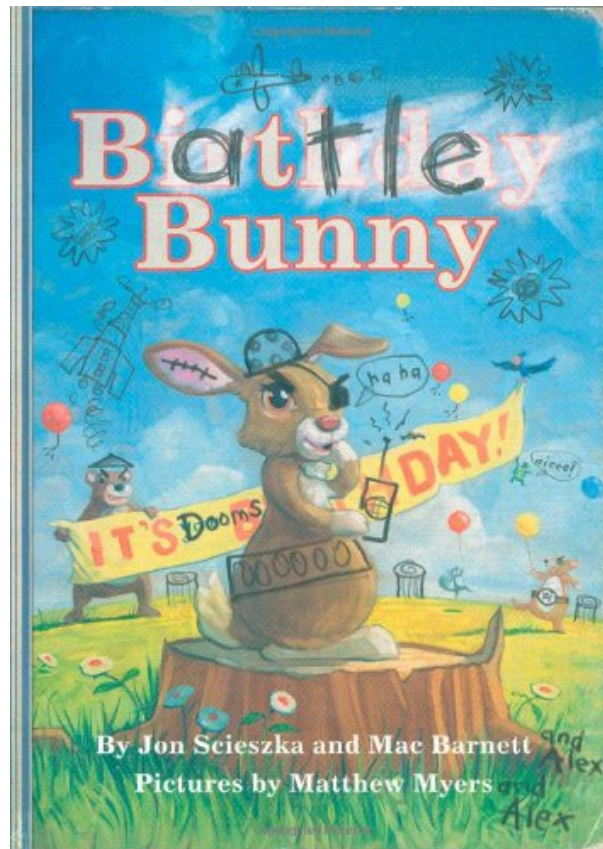
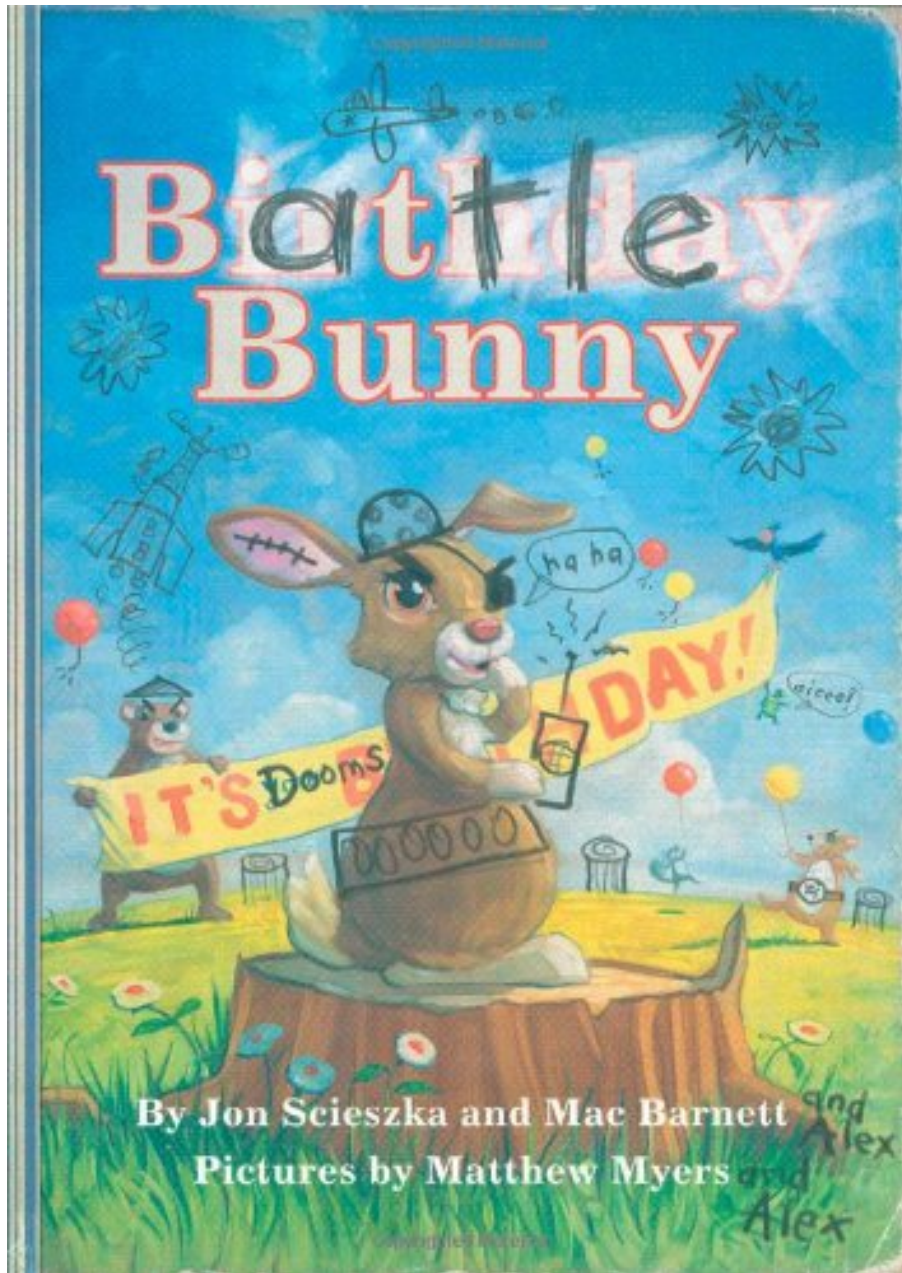


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From Booklist

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When Alex gets a silly, sappy picture book called Birthday Bunny, he picks up a pencil and turns it into something he'd like to read: Battle Bunny. An adorable rabbit's journey through the forest becomes a secret mission to unleash an evil plan--a plan that only Alex can stop. Featuring layered, original artwork, this dynamic picture book celebrates kids as storytellers.

- Sales Rank: #122191 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Simon n Schuster Books for Young Readers
- Published on: 2013-10-22
- Released on: 2013-10-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x .30" w x 6.75" l, .59 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 32 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Most helpful customer reviews

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Wickedly funny!

By Peggy Tibbetts

At first glance it appears as though some mischievous child has scribbled all over this book. Upon closer inspection the extraordinary plot unfolds. From the inscription we learn that GranGran, apparently thinking Alex is still a toddler, has presented her "little birthday bunny" with this sappy picture book, "Birthday Bunny" on his "special day." In response Alex, who is clearly not a toddler and maybe needs to lay off the video games, has taken a No. 2 pencil in hand and transformed the whiny little bunny into a ferocious farting rabbit with super powers. In Alex's re-write it takes an army of bomb-throwing forest zombies, two presidents, and the real birthday boy to stop this psycho bunny from carrying out his Evil Plan, which involves a rocket.

Scieszka's and Barnett's writing and Myer's illustrations magically combine to create a rare comedic masterpiece that works on so many levels it's impossible to describe them all. You must read it for yourself and savor the nuggets of nuance. "Battle Bunny" is wickedly funny.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

I solemnly swear that I am up to no good

By E. R. Bird

Remember *Duck Amuck*? I am referring of course to that old Looney Tunes short where Daffy Duck came to the realization that his fourth wall is a bit . . . faulty. Watching that short, as Daffy is being rubbed out of existence by an eraser I like to think about those kids seeing the short for the first time. Maybe amongst them there are some kids who feel this is a keen bit of transgression. Maybe some are shocked by the fact that unspoken rules are being broken left and right. Or (more likely) maybe they all just go with it. Kids get over shocks to their systems amazingly fast. But even the most jaded amongst them will have to pause for half a second as they take in the brand new picture book *Battle Bunny* by Jon Scieszka, Mac Barnett, and Matthew Myers. Talk about forbidden territory! Here we have a book that espouses the freedom to create over the old

established (and, quite frankly, achingly poorly written) order. Parents and children have fought the disparate concepts of creativity vs. law & order since the first toddler took a crayon in a chubby little hand and created a masterpiece on the dining room walls. *Battle Bunny* just cranks that fight up to eleven.

Open this book and you'll see the following inscription written in a flowery hand. "Happy Birthday, Alexander! To my little birthday bunny on his special day. Love, Gran Gran." It quickly becomes apparent that Gran Gran's present to Alex, a poor man's Little Golden Book-esque bit of schlock called *Birthday Bunny* was evidently not doing it for her beloved grandson. The entire book looks as though it has been scribbled with a thick black pencil. These aren't random scribbles though. Oh me, oh my, no. Alex has vastly improved what once was a limp tale about a bunny that thinks everyone has forgotten his very special day. Under Alex's hand sentences are reworded, illustrations are updated, and the new plot concerns a bunny supervillain bent on world destruction. The only one who can stop him? A boy conveniently named Alex who is the only one with sufficient chops to take the bunny down.

Barnett has always tended to follow in the footsteps of his mentor, Mr. Scieszka, which is to be expected. He burst onto the scene a couple years ago with picture books that worked to upset the standard expectations. *Guess Again* mocks the guessing game picture book, *Count the Monkeys* does the same with counting books, and *Chloe and the Lion* makes fun author/illustrator collaborations. Scieszka himself is the merry jester of the form, taking picture subversion to a whole other level with books like *The Stinky Cheese Man* and *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Put the two together and where does that get you? Well apparently what happens is that the two get bored with the whole fourth wall idea. Apparently it's not GOOD enough for them anymore! They want to go bigger and bolder. They want to incorporate 21st century mash-up culture with this new generation of visual learners so as to make a book that becomes interactive in whole new ways. End result: *Battle Bunny*.

The selection of Matthew Myers as artist was particularly interesting to me here. He's not a usual suspect when you think about other Scieszka and Barnett collaborations. Normally those guys are far more likely to be paired with a Lane Smith or an Adam Rex or maybe even a David Shannon. But looking at what Myers has done in the past, the choice makes a certain amount of sense. It was Myers who illustrated Erin Cabatingan's two *Musk Ox* books (both titles unafraid to muck with the picture book format right there). Here he creates art that could be best described as Garth Williams meets Dav Pilkey. The meticulous level of detail is honestly insane. Even when you turn the book over and look at the back cover you can see that every single tiny bunny gracing the top of the cover has been gracefully perverted into a killer, a spy, or a fart machine. Even the first shot of the bunny hero of this book, which an initial glance would appear to be free of Alex's shenanigans, hides a couple "improvements" here and there. Let's just say Beatrix Potter would not approve.

It's also hard not to enjoy a book where the creators are having such a bloody good time. What's evident from the cover onward is how much Scieszka & Co. are enjoying their jobs. First there's the question of coming up with a picture book plot worthy of tearing into proverbial shreds. As a children's librarian I can assure you that the old everyone-forgot-my-birthday-oh-wait-no-they-didn't shtick is as old as the hills and twenty times as saccharine. If Scieszka and Barnett are ever inclined to write a sequel to this I suggest they deface a story about a little bunny that wants to dance ballet but all the forest animals tell him he can't. That would be the OTHER overdone picture book plot out there. So you've the subject matter as well as the actual writing and overwriting itself. The book had to be believable and the overlaid text equally so. THEN they had to get an artist on board with this madness. It had to be someone capable of drawing not just a mockery of ootsy-cutesy bunny tales, but also a realistic kid/stick drawing style. Put all those elements together and the end product works. I did find myself wishing I could see the original "*Birthday Bunny*" pages first, but them's the breaks, kid.

All this begs the question: Is this book good in its own right or is this just a case of cleverness for cleverness's sake? Because clever it most certainly is. Not just the concept itself, but the execution. But is it clever with hope that adults will ooh and ahh over the technical aspects of the form, or will kids "get it" too? According to reliable sources, the best way to read this book aloud is to read the "original" cute sections first, then follow it up with a reading of the Battle Bunny parts. That gives a really good sense of what's being done on the page. And maybe I'm wrong about this, but this book has the potential to blow their little minds. At its best the book will do precisely what its critics most fear. It will inspire children to "improve" books, websites, photographs, and other forms of media on their own. Directed in the right way this energy could be immensely creative. After all, how far a step is it from the child who updates preexisting narratives to the child to makes up stories of their own. You heard it here first then: Battle Bunny is fan fiction for the elementary school set. Admittedly one wonders how many kids will repeatedly read Battle Bunny after the first thrill. Still, the violent storyline is enticing in its own way and certainly some readers will pore over the changes, marveling at how sentences and scenes could be changed so dramatically.

Not since *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* has there been a book so prone to accidental weeding in libraries nationwide. *Book Eating Boy* has a bite taken out of the corner of its cover, and we librarians spent half our days rescuing that title from the discard box thanks to our overly enterprising pages. *Battle Bunny* is doomed to suffer this same fate. Just look at it. Tell me that those unfamiliar with its cheeky subtext won't be tossing it in the trash upon spotting it on a shelf. Pity the occasional child who will be interrogated by a clerk about how this book came to be so horribly defaced. Consider too the parents, librarians, teachers, and more who will object to this book on moral grounds. A book that encourages drawing in books? Horrors! Maybe it's crazy that I don't feel the same way. I dunno. Reading through it, the lesson I took away was that insipid picture books that talk down to their audiences deserve what they get. If a book doesn't respect the child reader, kids will know and they'll resent the book for it. Barnett and Scieszka strike that immensely difficult balance between what kids enjoy and what adults enjoy. They respect their readers' intelligence and end up with remarkably interesting books as a result. Whether or not *Battle Bunny* takes off and inspires copycats or disappears without some much as a whisper remains to be seen. At the very least, it's gonna blow a few minds. And that's gotta be worth something right there. A pip.

For ages 4-8.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Battle Bunny is delightful for kids who have graduated from fuzzy animals to superheroes and warriors

By Neurasthenic

Such a funny concept. We have here a vapid but otherwise typical children's story about a bunny who thinks his friends have forgotten his birthday, seemingly marked up by a boy slightly too old for it, to make it more exciting. Thus we have an affectionate satire of typical books for children aged 3-5, and an amusing window into the daydreams of boys (mostly) aged 7-9. The execution of both the underlying text and the subsequent annotations are excellent. Sometimes it's enough to change just a few letters on the page to make it more exciting, but the new narrative deviates more and more from the original book, and by the end, the new text and accompanying illustrations (including doodles of President Obama) dominate the page.

My son who is about to turn 7 finds this book delightful. A tip, for kids his age anyway, after reading enough of the book to make clear the concept, read it through once to get the underlying story, then a second time for the annotations.

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