

“Poopy Pants”

By Dave McClain

A book club of the young-at-heart(-and-in-every-other-way) discusses the deeper meaning of one of Dr. Seuss' most popular works.

A group of babies sat in a circle in a corner of the playroom. Mandel, the largest baby in the group, leaned forward and made eye contact with all the other babies.

“I call this post-naptime meeting of the Diapered Darlings Daycare Book Club to odor,” he said.

“To odor? Don’t you mean to order?” asked Susie.

“No, I said it right. Have you smelled yourself lately, Poopy Pants?”

“Oh, ha, ha, ha. Just get on with it!” Susie replied.

“Isn’t your baby sister joining us?” questioned Mandel.

“What, and get out of her bouncy seat? Just look into her eyes. What are they saying to you?”

“She’s looking pretty intense today, but I can’t really pick up what she’s saying.”

“That’s because she has gas, genius. Just get on with it.”

“Okay, okay. Ummm... Rajeev, I believe it’s your turn to bring a book. What do you have for us today?”

Rajeev takes a toy robot from behind his back and sets it on the floor in front of his crossed legs.

“This is my new best friend,” said Rajeev. “My parents gave him to me yesterday for living another year. And THIS was in the box with him!”

Rajeev thrust a small booklet out in front of him for all to see.

“That’s an instruction manual,” sighed Mandel.

Rajeev turned the booklet around and looked at it quizzically. Mandel again addressed the group.

“Does anyone else have a book for us today?”

“I do,” said Shane’ll, as she took something from underneath her arm and held it in front of her.

“One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish?” said Mandel. “Not Dr. Seuss again!”

“Dr. Seuss is a hack.” exclaimed Lily, the petite girl sitting next to Mandel. “I don’t even think he’s a real doctor.”

“Well, it’s either this or an old copy of ‘Goodnight, Moon’ with teeth marks on the pages.

Everyone turned to look at a mousy kid named Marcus who hung his head.

“Sorry,” said Marcus.

The babies turned and looked at Mandel who rolled his eyes and sighed. “All right, Shane’ll. What did you get out of the book?”

“Well,” Shane’ll began, “I think it’s a brilliant treatise on the diversity of 20th century America.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Lilly exclaimed. “There’s no narrative thread. He starts out talking about these fish, then he moves on to some guy who’s too tall for his bed, then a bunch of other stuff. It’s all over the place! You’d have to be an idiot to like this book!”

“You’re such a diaper hole!” shouted Shane’ll.

“Oh, nice language,” replied Lily. “You kiss your mother with that mouth?”

“I don’t have a choice.” answered Shane’ll. “She kisses ME when she tucks me in at night.”

“Ah, diaper fillings.” responded Lily.

“Hey!” Shane’ll shouted. “You can go straight to time-out for all I care!”

“Okay, enough.” interjected Mandel. “Stop acting like babies, for crying out loud.”

An uncomfortable silence descended on the group... until a meek voice arose from beside Mandel.

“Maybe,” Marcus ventured, “the different scenarios represent an invitation to imagination.”

The babies were again briefly silent, but this silence was more contemplative than uncomfortable. Finally, their leader spoke.

“That’s pretty good,” said Mandel.

“Yeah,” offered Susie, “and when we see the character of the Yop hop from finger to finger near the end, we’re clearly witnessing the genesis of the idea for Seuss’ later classic, ‘Hop on Pop’.”

“Great observation, Susie,” Mandel responded. “You’re really smart.”

“Not as smart as I’m gonna be in this many years,” said Susie, fanning out all her fingers and wiggling the toes on one of her feet. “I heard my parents tell my older brother it’s clear that teenagers know EVERYTHING!”

“Well, you’re pretty smart already,” said Mandel.

“Yeah, but for how long?” wondered Lily. “If we don’t get some better books in here, I feel like my brain is just gonna freeze.”

“I know what you mean,” offered Shane’ll. “Every time some adult talks to me in that ridiculous high-pitched voice of theirs, I can feel myself losing I.Q. points.”

A woman wearing a beige smock was walking past the book club, when she stopped in her tracks, wrinkled her nose and looked down at the babies.

“Wooh!” the woman exclaimed. “Some baby needs a change!”

She bent down, sniffed, grabbed Susie under her arms and picked her up. The woman started talking to the baby, her voice now two octaves higher than it was a moment earlier.

“Does my widdle pwincess need a changey-wangey? I think she does! I think she does!”

“Another one bites the dust,” said Shane’ll, as she closed her book with a thump.