Helen Lester Book Reviews

Tacky the Penguin  K – 3rd
Tacky the Penguin is a total nonconformist who lives with a group of formal, proper penguins. But it is Tacky who foils the plans of three critters with “get-rich-quick plans” that threaten the penguins’ existence. This is a rollicking tale that clearly shows that there are advantages to being an individual. (School Library Journal)

Three Cheers for Tacky  K – 3rd
Hip, hip hooray! Tacky’s back, along with his proper penguin pals, Goodly, Lovely, Angel, Neatly, and Perfect. They are in school now, and, as usual, Tacky has his own way of doing things. When the friends enter the great Penguin Cheering Contest, the main concern is whether Tacky can get the cheer right. He handles the situation in his own unique style and once again proves that although he’s “an odd bird,” he’s certainly “a nice bird to have around.” (School Library Journal)

Tacky in Trouble  K – 3rd
While he is surfing, Tacky’s brightly flowered shirt catches a gust of wind, and, after many days, he finds himself on a tropical island. There, he encounters a large gray rock that turns out to be an elephant. The elephant mistakes Tacky for a bouquet of blossoms just right for his table. To escape, Tacky must prove that he really is a bird by doing “something penguinish.” (School Library Journal)

Tacky and the Emperor  K – 3rd
Tacky, the delightful penguin who marches (or is it waddles?) to a different drummer is back in another funny and charming tale—this time involving a royal visit from the emperor. Tacky gets the royal treatment after he innocently tries on the emperor penguin’s clothes and the emperor penguin gets a welcome break from pomp and ceremony. (School Library Journal)

Tackylocks and the Three Bears  K – 3rd
Get ready for a return trip to that “nice icy land.” Typically overenthusiastic and clueless, Tacky the penguin draws the lead part in a performance of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” even though he doesn’t quite understand what a “play” is. (School Library Journal)

Tacky and the Winter Games  K – 3rd
Tacky and his fellow penguins on Team Nice Icy Land train hard for the Winter Games but Tacky’s antics make their chances of winning a medal seem slim. When the competition finally arrives, the other animals are worried that he will ruin their chance at a medal. (School Library Journal)

Tacky Goes to Camp  K – 3rd
Tacky is off to Camp Whoopihaha, where he unpacks a collection of ridiculous items, sets up a circus tent, and participates in activities in his usual bumbling fashion. Tacky the penguin and his friends scare each other by telling ghost stories around the campfire, never expecting that one of the frightening stories will come true. (School Library Journal)

Listen Buddy  K – 3rd
Buddy is a rabbit whose father has a big nose (he’s a great sniffer) and whose mother has beautiful teeth (she’s a great chomper). Buddy has beautiful, big lop-ears, but he mishears everything his parents say to him, including their directions for his first long hop solo. (School Library Journal)

Hooway for Wodney Wat  K – 3rd
Poor Rodney Rat can’t pronounce his R’s and the other rodents tease him mercilessly. But when Camilla Capybara joins Rodney’s class and announces that she is bigger, meaner, and smarter than any of the other rodents, everyone is afraid. It seems she really is bigger, meaner, and smarter than all of the rest of them. Until our unwitting hero, Wodney Wat, catches Camilla out in a game of Simon Says. Read along with Wodney as he surprises himself and his classmates by single-handedly saving the whole class from the big bad bully. (from Publisher)

Wodney Wat’s Wobot  K – 3rd
When Wodney must face off against that big bully Camilla Capybara for a second time, a talking robot becomes his secret weapon. The meek wodent . . . er, rodent . . . hero with a speech impediment and a heart of gold is back! So is Camilla Capybara—the BIG bully who makes poor Wodney and his classmates tremble. But this time, Wodney has a secret weapon: a robot that helps him pronounce his r’s and seems to be just the thing to scare Camilla away for good. (from Publisher)
**Batter Up Wombat**

This was a brand-new baseball season, and the Champs were ready to go in their spiffy clean uniforms. Nevermind that the previous year they finished last in the North American Mammal League, this season would be different. But when a Wombat wanders onto the field opening game day, the Champs have no idea just how different the game was about to become. (Publisher)

**Hurry Feelings**

Fragility was a solid piece of work. But despite her sturdy exterior, Fragility was fragile. Anything and everything hurt her feelings. No one could even say she looked nice without evoking images of big, squishy cupcakes-since they are also nice- and causing Fragility’s friends to stop speaking to her for fear of another fit, but Rudy, a very rude bully, has other ideas. In the face of real insults, will Fragility finally learn to take a compliment? (from Publisher)

**It Wasn’t My Fault**

When accidents happen to Murdley Gurdson, they are usually his own fault, but when a bird lays an egg on Murdley’s head one day, he tries hard to find someone else to blame. (Publisher)

**Me First**

Pinkerton is pushy. He is the first one on the bus, the first one in the water, and the first one down the slide. He is leading his Pig Scout troop one day when he hears a voice ask, "Who would care for a sandwich?" Pinkerton then learns that first is not always best, because he must take care of a demanding Sandwich. From the opening description of Pinkerton as "pink, plump, and pushy," to the many labors he must endure, the tale is filled with humor. (School Library Journal)

**Porcupine Named Fluffy**

After a singularly unfluffy porcupine named Fluffy fails to become what his name describes, he meets a fierce rhinoceros who sees the humor in his own name, Hippo. Of course, the two become fast friends and discover the truth in the saying, "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." (School Library Journal)

**Princess Penelope’s Parrot**

An arrogant and greedy princess's chances with a handsome prince are ruined when her parrot repeats to him all the rude comments the princess has made. (Publisher)

**Score One for the Slothes**

Everything is nice and peaceful at Sleepy Valley Sloth School, with the sloths content in their slothfulness, until Sparky arrives. She is, just as her name would indicate, full of energy, and decidedly unslothlike: "Let’s read a story! Hey, we could use a little music!" She soon dubs her classmates "a bunch of bores," as they try to ignore her and continue to nap. When a representative of the S.O.S. (Society for Organizing Sameness) -"a real boar"-arrives to close the school because of its low test scores, it is up to Sparky to save the day. (School Library Journal)

**Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing**

Ewetopia has never been comfortable in her own wool, so when she is invited to a costume party, she thinks she has found the perfect chance to shine, but her costume is a flop, leaving her on the sidelines until a mysterious guest with questionable motives tries to sweep Ewetopia off her feet. (School Library Journal)

**Something Might Happen**

Twitchly Fidget the lemur worries about almost everything until his Aunt Bridget Fidget pays him a visit and shows him another way to live. (Publisher)

**The Wizard, the Fairy and the Magic Chicken**

When three boastful magicians try to outdo one another, they create a problem that can be solved only when they work together. (Publisher)

**Author: A True Story**

By sharing her struggles as a child and later as a successful author, Helen Lester demonstrates that hurdles are part of the process. She even gives writing tips, such as keeping a "fizzle box." Helen Lester uses her unique ability to laugh at her mistakes to create both a guide for young writers and an amusing personal story of the disappointments and triumphs of a writer’s life. (School Library Journal)