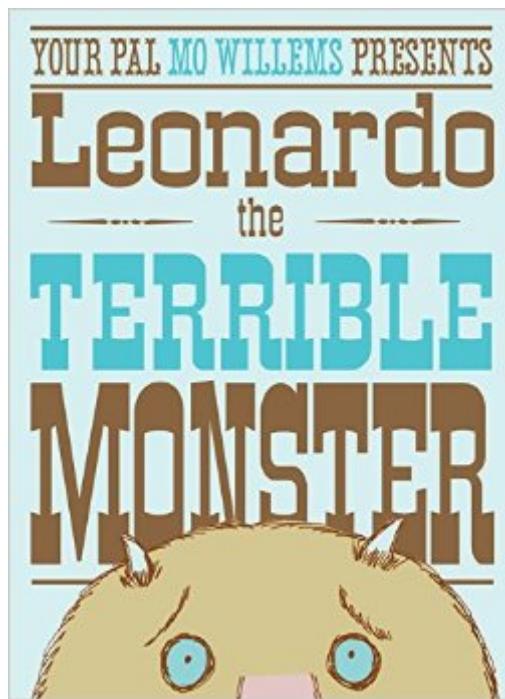


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# Leonardo, The Terrible Monster



## **Synopsis**

Leonardo is truly a terrible monster-terrible at being a monster that is. No matter how hard he tries, he can't seem to frighten anyone. Determined to succeed, Leonardo sets himself to training and research. Finally, he finds a nervous little boy, and scares the tuna salad out of him! But scaring people isn't quite as satisfying as he thought it would be. Leonardo realizes that he might be a terrible, awful monster-but he could be a really good friend.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: AD670L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

Publisher: Hyperion Books for Children; 1st edition (August 23, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0786852941

ISBN-13: 978-0786852949

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 0.2 x 13 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (142 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #9,070 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values #87 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Early Learning > Beginner Readers #161 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Emotions & Feelings

Age Range: 3 - 6 years

Grade Level: Preschool - Kindergarten

## **Customer Reviews**

I'm a big, big fan of Mo Willems' last book, "Knuffle Bunny," and was equally delighted by this new picture book about a little monster named Leonardo who wants to be scary, but only seems cute. Leonardo decides to pick on Sam, a boy he determines is the most scaredy-cat kid in all the world, but after he succeeds in making Sam cry, Leonardo realizes he may have actually hurt the boy's feelings, and tries to make amends. A gentle parable about playground cruelty, this is also a beautifully laid-out book, with a bold, expansive use of empty space and clear, easily understood imagery. The serious emotional message is underplayed in favor of a playful tone, and will delight small children... You'll have a lot of fun trading "BOOS" with your kid after each reading. I enjoyed this one a lot, and it's frequently requested at storytime.

Pick up a hardcover copy of "Leonardo the Terrible Monster" and take a gander at the bookflap. Scan your eyes downwards and take special note of the suggested reading level. This, I must say, is a bit of calculated picture book brilliance. It reads, "For audiences as young as 3 and as old as 36". Now I once experienced the supreme pleasure of sitting amongst several hundred librarians and teachers in the New York City Arts and Humanities Library to see Mr. Mo Willems speak. My friends, you have not lived until you see a hundred or so middle-aged female librarians swooning over Mr. Willems' dapper good looks, his off-the-cuff remarks, and his instant rapport with any crowd. He is also, as far as I can determine, probably 36 and herein lies the beauty of the little note on the bookflap. Any yahoo could write that awful and almost obligatory statement that proclaims, "For kids between 3 and 103!!!", with a sickeningly saccharine smile. This book, on the other hand, makes the cut-off 36 and from there on in "Leonardo" proves to be a consistently surprising and sublime little tale. Meet Leonardo. Leonardo has a problem. As any child familiar with the concept of monsters knows (or who has seen "Monsters, Inc", anyway) the job of that particular creature is to be scary. In this respect, Leonardo fails miserably. He just ain't a fright. When he attempts to do so he earns patronizing looks of the awww-isn't-the-little-fella-cute variety. Other monsters either look or act in a disturbing manner. Not our Leo. Fully aware that he needs a plan of some sort, Leonardo decides to locate, "the most scaredy-cat kid in the whole world" and frighten the bejeezus out of 'em. Sam is that kid. When Leonardo attempts to scare Sam it seems at first as if it has worked. Sam is, after all, in tears. The kid, however, claims that Leonardo's sorry excuse for a scare was not the source of his tears and then proceeds to outline exactly how horrible a day he's had and why he's been on the brink of tears ever since. Leonardo is moved by the little boy's story and resolves there and then to become Sam's friend. For a moment it looks as if the two little guys walking off holding hands will be the last picture in the book, but this is a Willems title after all. Though they're definitely buds now, the book admits, "that didn't mean that he [Leonardo] couldn't try to scare his friend every now and then". The real ending of the book? Sam joyfully running after Leonardo after the monster really has scared him a little. Happy ending for all. So let's take a look at this book. Prior to "Leonardo", Willems was a fan of the square and the long horizontal shaped picture books. There are lots of theories out there that talk about how the shape of a children's title determines the kind of story it is. By and large, books (like "Leonardo") that are long and vertical tend to be far more interesting artistically than their square or horizontal brothers. Certainly this is Willems' most beautiful book to date. The cover looks like an old-timey wanted poster, or perhaps playbill for some penny-dreadful theatrical production. Inside, Mr. Willems make great use of space. The font is

beautiful and ornate up until Sam's two-page explanation about how much his life sucks. At that point it becomes blocky and bold. Figures sometimes fill entire pages and sometimes, as when Leonardo is shocked or miserable, they take up just a tiny bit of room. It's clear that there is a very careful calculation behind each picture that determines where a figure is, how much space he or she takes up, and where the words on that page should go. Though I have great respect for "Knuffle Bunny", love the "Pigeon" and am appreciative of his instructional books like "Time To Pee" and "Time to Say Please", this is Mo's best artistic work to date. The title is just as much about what Willems doesn't illustrate as it is what he does illustrate. It makes for a gorgeous read. Mr. Willems once worked for "Sesame Street", so I found his return to the monsters-are-scary concept especially amusing. He knows his child audience and knows it quite well. In a picture that features a monster that is far scarier than Leonardo, we meet Tony who is said to have 1,642 teeth. A note attached to the bottom of the page, however, reads, "Note: Not all teeth shown". Why put that on the page? Because Mr. Willems knows perfectly well that if you draw a monster and claim that he has 1,642 teeth, your child readers will all count those teeth and cry bloody murder that there are only 148 in the picture. Now I need your help. Remember when I said that I saw Mr. Willems speak in NYC? Well at that time he mentioned his best beloved and universally applauded (not to say Caldecott Honored) book, "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus" and its subsequent spin-offs. In the course of the discussion, Mr. Willems confided that the pigeon now appears in all his books, regardless as to whether or not that book is about him. In "Knuffle Bunny" it appears on someone's shirt. And supposedly it can be located in "Leonardo, the Terrible Monster". Now I have scanned this book from tip to toe. I've inspected each and every page with a fine tooth comb. I've meticulously culled every last stroke of the pen in an effort to find the deceptively simple fowl and I cannot for the life of me locate him anywhere. If you do happen to find the pigeon I want you to write a review of this book on and tell the whole wide world where to find it. Honestly, it's killing me not to know. Otherwise, there is nothing in this book that is objectionable in the least. It's lovely to view, has thick pages that will stand up to a lot of wear and tear, contains a story that is hard to resist, employs a great color scheme and font, and is just an all around joy. A monster must-have.

My name is Monica Iravedra and I am 7 years old. My English teacher read this book to us in class and I thought it was the greatest and funny. My favorite part was when Leonardo made his first friend. I recommend this book for all kids. I also like this book by Mo Willems: Edwina The Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct. I hope you like it too.

I'm visiting my grandchildren, Louis (5) and Katherine (2). I brought Leonardo along as a gift. In the three days since I arrived, we've read it at least 10 times. We love Leonardo, we love Sam, and we love this book!

Mo Willems, Leonardo the Terrible Monster (Hyperion, 2005) I have to admit, I'm a little (but not much) outside the suggested reading range for this book, which according to author Mo Willems is 3 to 36. Alas, I was 37 at the time I read it. I will attempt not to let this affect my judgment in any way. Leonardo is a monster who's incapable of scaring the tuna salad out of anyone. (And if nothing else, the phrase "I'm going to scare the tuna salad out of him!" is worth the price of admission here.) This makes him, of course, a terrible monster. Leonardo hatches a plan: find the scariest kid he can and scare him. He finds a possible target, and... well, that's a spoiler. It's a cute little book, nothing earth-shaking (except for the tuna salad line), but a quick bit of fun to read to the kids. Pull a copy out of your local library before laying out the cash to see how your kids take to it, but I think they'll get a kick out of Leonardo. \*\*\*

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