

Sleighting Christmas Stereotypes: Dear Santa Book Review

Dear Santa compiles five stories that are told through poetic letter writing between Santa and various characters that took the time to initiate a written correspondence with him. All of the characters have different reasons for writing to him, all based around what he can't/should/shouldn't do for them leading up to and including Christmas Eve. Santa takes the time to respond to everyone, most of the time offering up quips of advice to help them be better versions of themselves.

Santa confers with five different characters in these letter writing campaigns. While three (the Kid, the Candyman and Dewey Jackson) talk with Santa about what they specifically would or would not like, the elves and mall Santas have a representative lobbying for help on the group's behalf. Santa tries to see the best in everyone, but his patience quickly runs thin, leading him to go as far as threatening some of those who wrote to him. Most of the people writing are motivated by greed, which leads St. Nick to try and negotiate with them while hoping they see the errors in their thinking.

In the first story a demanding kid attempts to bully Santa into delivering every present on their list. The second story is about Santa reaching out to his elves about working conditions, which turns into a correspondence with a "narc" elf. In the third story a child writes about their dream of selling candy at baseball games. Santa suggests bringing a potato gun and using it to shoot candy to willing participants. The fourth story is about a mall Santa trying to advocate for better conditions for all of the other mall Santas. The final story pits Santa in a battle against Dewey Jackson, an entitled cat.

The book is at its best when highlighting the flaws that people have, including Santa. In a season where everyone is supposed to be thinking about others and presenting their best selves, every character has a sense of selfishness to them. No one is willing to see the other's side, an awkward but authentic look into some real world personalities. *Dear Santa* shows that everyone, at times, lets their emotions get the best of them, which leads to questionable decisions. There's not a clear resolution to any of the stories, as they end with Santa letting them know the plan on Christmas Day (for better or worse). It's up to the reader to creatively determine how successful these plans turned out to be. This adds an element of fun to the book.

Author **Jeff Zurovski** presents 50 easy-to-read poems that tell these five stories. Although clearly a book that is meant to be read during the Christmas season, *Dear Santa* offers more than just an easy read to put you in the holiday spirit. It shows the imperfections of human (this includes elves, cats and whatever Santa considers himself) behavior. This book has a dual purpose: Read for enjoyment, followed by reading it with a child to discuss what each character might have done differently.

Dear Santa Santa vs. The Kid (and other problems) can be purchased here:

<https://www.lulu.com/en/us/shop/jeff-zurovski/dear-santa-santa-vs-the-kid/paperback/product-1y5ygvkz.html?page=1&pageSize=4>.