

Spider's New Friend

Dirdura Wynn

Sheila Wynn, Illustrator

XlibrisUS (Sep 21, 2021)

Softcover \$14.99 (38pp)

978-1-5434-9815-8

The familiar picture book Spider's New Friend imparts lessons about kindness and personal dedication.

Dirdura Wynn's picture book *Spider's New Friend* delivers timeless lessons about persisting—and about choosing kindness over cruelty.

Drawing on a time-worn tale, this easygoing picture book follows Spider, who wants to visit the market at the top of the water spout. There, he hopes to buy some yummy bugs to feed his family. But the weather has other plans.

As Spider climbs the water spout, the rain begins to fall, causing him to slip and land on the grassy ground. While his friends come to see if he is okay, Spider is jeered at by Big Grouchy Bug for falling. Ignoring the hurtful words of Big Grouchy Bug, Spider resumes his climb. Once the rain stops, he finally makes it to the market.

Later, the story deviates from its nursery rhyme inspiration: Spider finds out that Big Grouchy Bug is sick and has to quarantine. Instead of gloating, he goes shopping for Big Grouchy Bug, reasoning that there is no one else to help. Big Grouchy Bug is grateful for Spider's kindness, and he apologizes for his mean behavior.

Working toward lessons on forgiveness and friendship, the book's overarching messages are always at its fore. This is a story about the importance of persisting toward one's goals—and about choosing to be kind. Spider is a steadfast example throughout: he is upbeat despite the challenges he faces. And even the book's antagonist, Big Grouchy Bug, proves capable of a transformation: shown kindness, he realizes that his own behavior is wrong, and he changes accordingly.

The prose is direct, plain, and straightforward—most focused on making sure that the book's message is accessible, and that the story delivers clear understandings of good versus bad behavior. Still, there are spelling and punctuation inconsistencies within it, impeding its successes. And while the illustrations, which focus on insects and other features from nature, are colorful, elements of their images repeat without distinction.

Set among in a bug community, the familiar picture book *Spider's New Friend* imparts lessons about kindness and personal dedication.

ALEX DAILEY (April 12, 2022)

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