

Gender issues



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Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day Judith Viorst

General Storyline: Alexander gets out of bed and from that very moment everything seems to go bad for him. First, he goes to bed the night before forgetting to throw away his gum. He wakes up with gum in his hair. From that point on, he has many things that happen to him all day that prove to him that he is having a terrible day. Finally, he goes to bed, gets his pillow taken away from him (though his brother gave it to him), his light burns out, he bites his tongue and his cat sleeps with his brother instead of him. But, alas, his mom tells him that "some days are just like that." (last page, there are no page numbers in the book).

Gender Issues: Basically the story is about a little boy who is depicted as a "typical" little boy. Of course this is a stereotype, because his room is messy, his hair is tussled and many of his toys are on the floor. On the second page, there are three boys sitting at the table and they receive boy toys (a Corvette Sting Ray car kit and a Junior Undercover Agent code ring) in their cereal boxes. In the next pages a mother is driving the kids to school and there is only one girl seen in the entire book. There is a female teacher, and in Alexander's classroom, there are only two girls; there is one girl of color and all the rest of the children are Caucasian. On the next two pages, there are four girls and three boys; there is one boy of color. The next two pages have a girl and three boys, one of the boys is a boy of color. In the dentist's office, the dentist is male, and it is the mother who brings the kids to the dentist.

On the next two pages, there are only boys. The boys get into a small fight and it is mother who breaks them up. The next two pages show three male children. Towards the end of the book, we finally see a father. It is very

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apparent that the father is the "bread winner" and the mother is the homemaker. This is shown because dad is in a suit and tie and working in an office. The kids mess up his office and his reaction is "please don't pick him up anymore". This shows that the father does not take equal care of the boys.

It is obvious on the next page that mom has cooked the dinner and dad has finally arrived home. The following four pages are all of the boys and although mom is quoted, she is not present on the page.

There is no real moral to the story, but Alexander likes Australia as a possible place to move to because of the challenges that he is having there.

The story portrays a traditional family with mom taking care of the kids and the home. The father is at work in an office so he is the one who makes money for the family. The written depictions are about Alexander and his day so Alexander is spotlighted.

Personal view: Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day is a hilarious book. There is charm and wit in it. I particularly liked that Alexander was always wanting to move to Australia. The book is illustrated in pencil which adds to the dramatic presentation. The reader can relate to Alexander because they have all had a bad day. I think it is a funny book and that children would love it without thinking about gender.

To rewrite the book, I would like to see more children within it that are of all different colors. I would have liked to see some of the book showing at least one other family that showed non-traditional roles, even if it expanded the number of pages. Overall, this is a delightful book that would be fun to share with children.