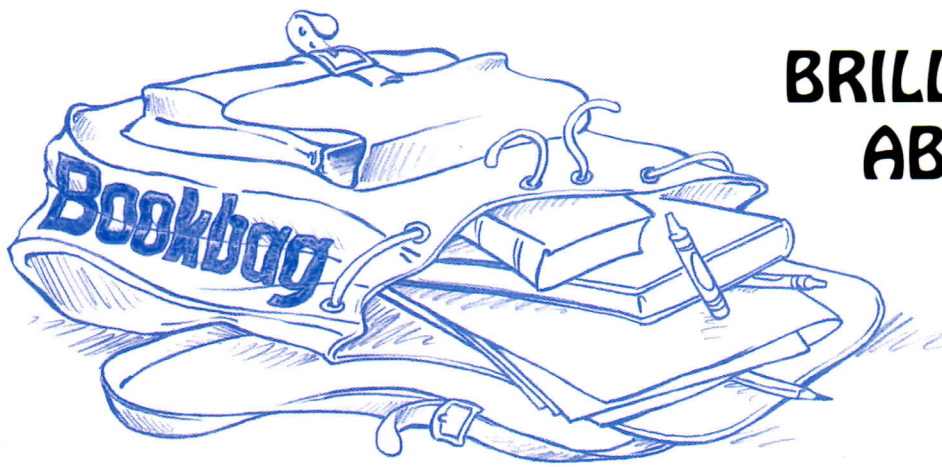


BRILLIANT BOOKS ABOUT DADS

By Mary Anne Duggan



I was 10 when I experienced a turning point with my dad. He was driving a station wagon full of Girls Scouts home from camp when my mild-mannered, hard-working, only-speak-when-absolutely-necessary father broke his silence to say, "You know about that place over there?" As he pointed to a nearby cemetery, we just shook our heads, stunned by his sudden verbosity. "I hear people are just *dying* to get in there," he quipped, as the car filled with howls from the girls in green.

"My dad is cool," I remember thinking, which is not how I would usually have described him.

My husband has the "coolness factor" in my kids' eyes. But he did have a reputation to live down. When Taylor was 2, she concluded that her dad couldn't read because he didn't partake in our nightly story time. This wake-up call drew my husband into reading with our daughter.

Dads can be strong role models when it comes to reading and literacy. In celebration of this month of the father, here are some books that put dad on center stage.

For enlightened dads who do the nightly reading thing, *Guess How Much I Love You*

by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram (ages 4 to 8) is a bedtime story sure to please both father and child. Filled with simile and exaggeration, a father bunny and his child have a contest of words over who loves whom the most. Jeram's gentle pictures coupled with McBratney's rhythmic words make it a perfect nighttime tale.

I Remember Papa by Helen Ketteman (ages 4 to 8) goes back in time to tell the story of a boy, his father, their life on the farm and the boy's quest for a baseball glove. Children can relate to wanting something badly and adults can read between the lines for a peek into this father-son relationship. The painted illustrations of Greg Shed will mesmerize everyone.

I think my son, Seanie, looks like me. But my husband is convinced he has been cloned. When Seanie and his dad sit side-

by-side facing away, even I have to admit their ears and the backs of their heads are identical! In *Big Bushy Mustache* by Gary Soto (ages 4 to 8), a young boy named Ricky is dismayed that people say he looks just like his mother. (Illustrator Joe Cepeda does a good job of proving this to the reader.) Ricky's luck turns when he is given a mustache to wear in a class play. He wears it proudly until he loses his *bigote* (Spanish for mustache) on the way home from school. The next day, his mother presents him with another mustache, which turns out to have come from his father's face that morning. Without a mustache his father looks just like Ricky (and they both look a little like Desi Arnaz).

Cynthia's mother, Inky, marries Harry, a balding shoe salesman who loves to dance "cheeky-cheeky" in *Getting Used to Harry* by Cari Best (ages 4 to 8). Illustrator Diane Palmisciano artfully shows this family of three in their first days together. Cynthia expresses the feelings of many step-children: "Sometimes I wished Harry would go home. Then I realized he *was* home." Cynthia begins to accept Harry when she realizes he has to get used to her, too. And Harry gives Cynthia the ultimate compliment by spending time with her.

Always My Dad by Sharon Dennis Wyeth (ages 4 to 8) tells of a long distance father-daughter relationship. Too often, children living away from their fathers feel guilty and alone. This book shows how one girl deals with that distance. Raul Colon's

illustrations, made from a combination of watercolor, charcoal, colored pencils and lithograph pencils and etched with a variety of tools, are almost suitable for framing.

Coyotes, or "chicken-thieving varmints," were responsible for stealing a dad away from his family in *A Dog Called Dad* by Frank B. Edwards, with illustrations by John Bianchi (ages 4 to 8). This witty tale of a father who literally has "gone to the dogs" will keep readers howling. Dad does return several years later but, like the boy raised by wolves, this dad has taken on canine characteristics like sticking his head out the

car window with his tongue wagging in the wind.

My Dad Is

Brilliant by Nick

Butterworth (ages

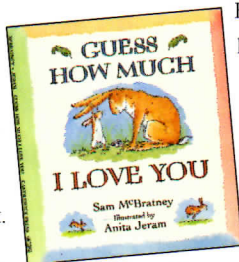
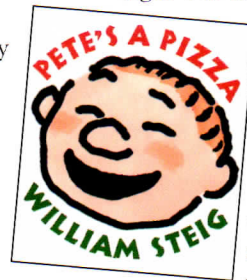
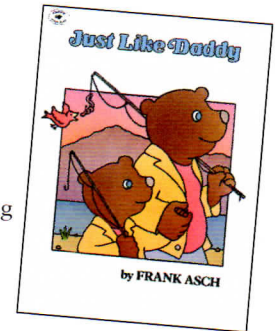
infant to preschool) has become a Father's Day staple. This short read shows a dad doing all the things he does best—cooking, roller skating and singing like a pop star. It is simple but brilliant. Another book for a younger audience is *Just Like Daddy* by Frank Asch (ages infant to preschool). This story about a young bear who is just like his daddy has a funny spin at the end.

So many dads have a corner on the fun market. *Pete's a Pizza* by William Steig

(ages 4 to 8) shows one such dad's

attempt to cheer his son by making him into an imaginary pizza. The father tells the boy that pizzas are not supposed to laugh and the boy replies that pizza makers should not tickle their pizzas.

After writing about moms last month and dads now, I have to end with one of my all-time favorite books about parents, *Weird Parents* by Audrey Wood (ages 4 to 8). I have a 10-year-old who not only thinks I'm uncool, but a little weird at times as well. This is my fate and I'm trying to deal with it. So it was with pleasure that I read this book to her about appreciating our parents' idiosyncrasies. She still thinks I'm weird and her dad is cool but she definitely knows we both can read.



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