



Could Be Worse!

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"Unexcitable Gramps surprises everyone with a whopping tale of derring-do that proves there's life in the old boy yet. Stevenson's watercolors couldn't be better."--School Library Journal.

Could Be Worse! Details

Date : Published May 21st 1987 by Greenwillow Books (first published April 26th 1979)

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Author : James Stevenson

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From Reader Review Could Be Worse! for online ebook

Georgia Ball says

People who have seen hard times are tough to impress. In "Could Be Worse!" by James Stevenson, two kids can't seem to get their grandfather to offer them any sympathy. No trying, troublesome, gut-wrenching day can get any comment out of him other than, "Could be worse."

Nothing upsets Grandpa's apple cart, not even when the dog makes a mess on a rug so 1970s, it's practically dog camouflage. Stevenson was a prolific children's book author and New Yorker cartoonist, and his illustrations anticipate the trend in modern books of using panels to convey multiple events on the same page. His approach draws from comics to show cause and effect, changes in expression, and sound effects. New Yorker cartoonists love being compared to comic book artists, so I recommend doing this often.

My daughter was resistant to pulling this book on the shelf, possibly because of the sketchy drawings, elderly featured character and muted color palette, but she changed her mind. She laughed harder and louder as the grandfather's adventures grew progressively more outlandish. I loved seeing her giggle.

"Could Be Worse!" has the highest number of reviews on GoodReads I've seen for one of my childhood books, and that's a testament to its timeless humor. I recommend joining the many other readers who mentioned ordering a copy as an adult; you might be surprised at your child's joyful reaction.

Natalie Pietro says

"Could be Worse!" is a great book for any child growing up. I really liked the message and how fun this book is. The pictures are amazing and the comic book style of this book. Every child should read this book at least once.

Shanna Gonzalez says

Nothing new ever happens at Grandfather's house, and his favorite response to everything is "Could be worse!" One day he overhears his grandchildren wondering if anything interesting ever happens to him, and the next morning he greets them with a tremendously tall tale involving a kidnapping by a large bird, an encounter with an abominable snowman, a journey to the bottom of the sea, and a ride on a paper airplane. It becomes evident at the end of his story that his is gently pulling the children's legs, and they respond with appropriate teasing: "Could be worse!"

The story is well paced, nicely crafted and easy to read, but what really makes it fun is Stevenson's whimsical, funny artwork. The gentle relationship between Grandfather and his grandchildren is positive and warm, and children will enjoy this flight of fancy, grounded in the context of a secure relationship. It's not a classic, but certainly worth reading a few times.

Orlando JBF says

I will admit, this was my ABSOLUTE FAVORITE book when I was little :-)

Andy2302 says

This came in a box of city library discards I picked up for the Little Free Libraries in town. The title & cover art made me start reading. The illustrations have a simple beauty. The prose is captivating. I loved it. A septuagenarians 2¢.

Roslyn says

Simple and entertaining.

Kate says

A grumpy old grandpa with stories about how much worse he had it when he was a kid--the "I had to walk five miles in the snow, uphill both ways" story taken to new heights.

Annemarie Metcalf says

I love the attitude in this book, and the extreme extent that the grandfather goes in trying to throw something different into his routine life, while still using the same everyday items he's used to! Hey, no matter how boring or exciting things seem to be, they "Could Be Worse!"

The Brothers says

A short, but humorous story about some kids whose grandfather's catch phrase is, "Could be worse!" They determine this is because he's boring and nothing interesting ever happens to him. But one morning over breakfast he tells them quite the adventuresome tall tale... You can guess their response.

Illustrations a sloppy-creative fun.

Mariah says

One of my all time favorite books from childhood.

Lili Rucker says

Its great

Arminzerella says

Grandpa always says the same thing, “could be worse,” whenever his grandkids tell him something. They assume that it’s because he leads a very uninteresting life. To spice things up, he tells them a story of his previous evening – when he was abducted from his bed, horrible things happen to him, and he finally returns shaken, but alive. Their response? I bet you can guess...

Funny, but completely unrealistic. Grandpa needs to work on his tall tales, but as a first attempt at leading an interesting life – not bad.

Crissy says

Cute.

Marianna Randazzo says

This marvelous story was a favorite among my children and students. It introduced the mantra "could be worse," into the children's vocabulary. It is imaginative and funny. Children enjoy Grandpa's top witted comparisons of their problems to what could always be!

Teacher and author of
Given Away, A Sicilian Upbringing

Emily Arrant says

Summary: This book is about a grandpa and a grandson. The grandson says that everything was always the same at his grandpa’s house. The grandpa always had the same breakfast, read the same paper, and he would always say the same thing (“could be worse”). However one day his grandpa said something different, he said “Guess what?” He then proceeded to tell his grandkids a dream that he had when he went to bed. After the dream he asked them what they thought of the dream, they replied, “could be worse!”

Evaluation: I thought this was a really cute book. This book gave a lesson how things could always be worse. I think the book would also be a good sequencing book when he is telling about his dream.

Teaching Idea: I would read this book to the students. Then at their desk they would have pictures of each event that had happen in the grandpas dream. They would then have to put the dream in sequential order.
