Im a Manatee: (Book and CD)

Not blessed with the adorable good looks of a koala, the mythic mystery of a dinosaur, or even the useful familiarity of a dog, the manatee is an infrequent hero in the world of childrens literature. It doesnt help matters that the poor thing has a name thats so difficult to rhyme. But the unnamed hero of John Lithgow and Ard Hoyts Im a Manatee (really, a boy dreaming he is a manatee) sees plenty of upside to the life of the animal thats been indelicately nicknamed the cow of the sea. And when rhymes are unavailable to state his case, he simply makes some up: Encumbered by my lumbering gigan-atee,/ Im thought to be an ocean-going brute!/ The least appealing creature on the planet-ee,/ But to a manatee, Im cute! The words in the book are the same as the lyrics in the song version of Im a Manatee, which is included on an enclosed CD featuring a singing Lithgow as well as in musical notation in the back of the book. The verses sound more natural in their original musical form than they do read aloud in the pages of the book where they can clunk a bit. Still, theres much to like about in this aquatic flight of fancy, including the kind of wordplay moms and dads will enjoy (very few kids books contain the phrase immune from human folly and inanity) and Hoyts illustrations of the title animal, which manages to be simultaneously homely and adorable. (Ages 4 to 8) --John Moe

My Personal Review:
Im a Manatee is another hit from the talented Mr Lithgow, actor-singer-performer. His childrens books are such a joy not just for the little ones that are his target audience but also adults. The writing in Im a Manatee is absolutely hilarious - a potent combination of flawlessly rhyming text, wit and humor. The accompanying CD with Lithgow performing the song that accompanies the text is catchy and will have little ones and adults alike tapping their toes and singing along.

I find Lithgows childrens books to be building blocks for early literacy skills especially with the sing-alongs and read-aloud opportunities in the book and CD combo. I cant recommend them highly enough!

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