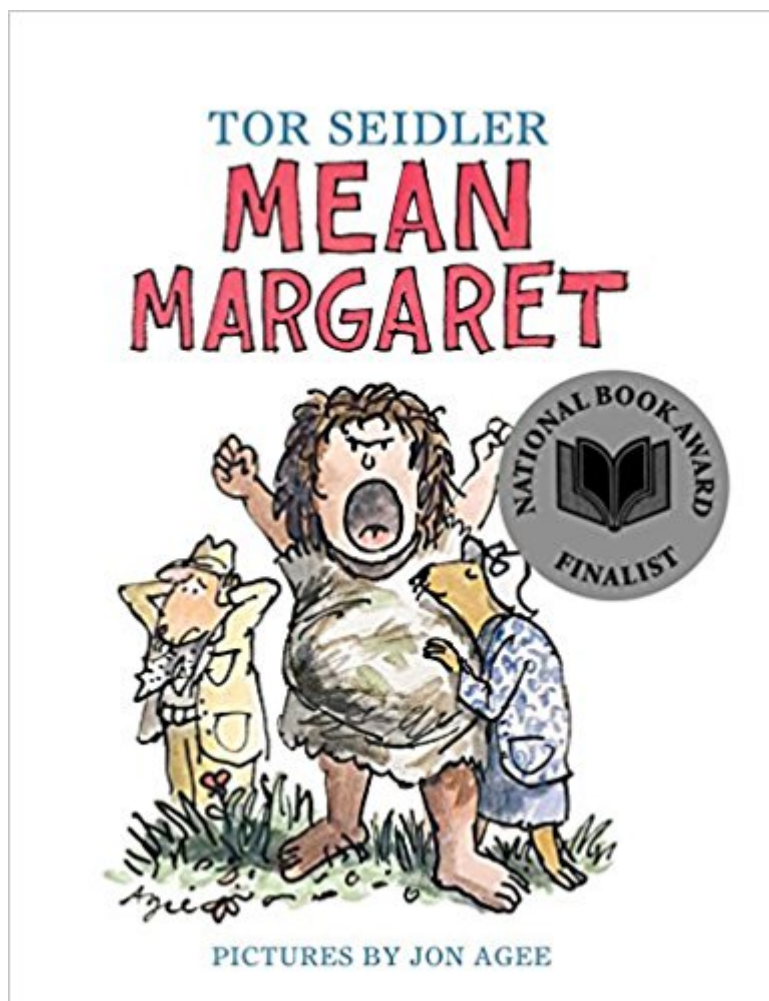


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# Mean Margaret



## Synopsis

Unconditional kindness is the key in this National Book Award Finalist from the author of *The Wainscott Weasel* about nontraditional families, adoption, love, and a little peace and quiet. Margaret is a mean, cranky human toddler from a family of nine. She is such a pain that her beleaguered parents chuck her out, and she's on her own, grouching and grumping until two caring woodchucks, Phoebe and Fred, take Margaret in as their own. But despite their love, Margaret continues to wreak havoc with her loud, destructive ways, ruining the burrow and shrieking nonstop. Soon the woodchucks are as beleaguered as Margaret's human parents were, but because love is more powerful than temper tantrums, they are determined to make it work. So they enlist a little unconventional help, and with the guidance of a snake, bats, and a skunk, their feral little human just might realize there's more to life than being mean.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0780 (What's this?)

Paperback: 176 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #325,855 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #80 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Stepfamilies #135 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Adoption #330 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Mammals

Age Range: 7 - 12 years

Grade Level: 2 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 3-6. A wildly funny story of a newly wed woodchuck couple who find a willful, wailing human toddler and take her into their home and into their hearts. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

A fastidious woodchuck discovers parenthood to be worse than his wildest imaginings in this benign, if sardonic, animal tale from Seidler (The Wainscott Weasel, 1993, etc.). When Sally Hubble, a poster child for the ``terrible twos," is left in a ditch by three of her older siblings, the maternal instincts of Phoebe--the new wife of a woodchuck named Fred--are aroused despite the difference in species; soon the child, dubbed Margaret after Phoebe's mother, is ensconced in the once-spotless burrow, pulling apart glowworm lamps, smashing heirloom furniture, and greedily consuming all the honey, berries, and goat's milk the harried woodchucks can gather. Margaret grows at a great rate, and soon the family finds itself sharing a nearby cave with a squirrel, a skunk, two bats, and a snake, plus Phoebe's coquettish sister Babette and her three offspring. When at last Margaret makes the mistake of stomping on the skunk's tail, her reeking flight into the forest reunites her with her natural parents. Fred, whose relief at her flight is not entirely unmixed, realizes that his attitudes toward parenting have undergone a profound change when Phoebe shortly thereafter gives birth to little Patience. Chubby and disheveled, Margaret towers over her exhausted, dapper minions in Agee's numerous thick-lined, simply drawn cartoons. Advanced readers may perceive an edge beneath the drollery, but it's all in good fun. (Fiction. 9-11) -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

If you haven't read this book yet, no matter your age, you should. It's hilarious!

It arrived promptly and was just as expected. Thank Youmore is redundant, more is redundant, more is redundant, more.....

I have been a school librarian for over 20 years and would rate this one tops in its appeal as a read-aloud for third graders. I especially appreciated the way it showed how family is created - the gradual movement away from self-centeredness to mutual caring and support. I found it a tender, funny book, and so did the kids.

Reason for Reading: I've read one previous book by this author and since I enjoyed it was looking forward to reading another of his books. I'm not sure "Mean Margaret" is actually the best title for this book as Margaret is not the main character, nor is the story really about her, but she is indeed the antagonist. The book concerns Fred, a woodchuck, and his search for a mate. His eventual marriage to the woodchuck Phoebe brings up the talk of children, which Phoebe loves and Fred

hates, putting her off with lame excuses the next day they find a human child outside their burrow. Sally, renamed Margaret by the woodchucks, is the ninth child of the Hubble's, a fat lazy couple with progressively ruder and wilder children. Toddler Sally takes the cake though and no one but a mother could love her. Sharing room with siblings 6, 7, & 8, they plot to drop her off far away in the woods one night to hopefully never have to contend with her again. Such then, is the story of how Phoebe takes in this mannerliness, self-centred child to look after and care for and love as only a mother can love. Along with Fred and Phoebe are a cast of their animal friends including Skunk, Snake, Squirrel, Mr & Mrs Bat & Phoebe's sister with her own three young children. The story mainly takes place amongst the animals in the forest but does switch to the human Hubble family a few times. This is a lovable, dear comedy where nearly everyone learns a life lesson by the end of the book. Fred and Phoebe are wonderful animal characters and anyone who enjoys this type of animal fantasy will certainly like this book. There are most definitely touches of Roald Dahl in Seidler's humour as his dark humour is laced with a witty meanness that makes this as much a fun read for adults as children. The artwork by Agee is plentiful and reminded me of William Steig in style. A funny story, touching and heartwarming at times, while giggle producing at others. Not exactly a fast-paced story but one to enjoy at its own leisurely pace. This read makes me want to re-read "A Rat's Tale" the only other Seidler book I've read, and go on to reading his other books.

This is a charming story about a nit-picky woodchuck named Fred who has his life turned upside down; first by his marriage to Phoebe, and right on top of that by the appearance of a lost human baby on his doorstep. The baby, who Phoebe names Margaret, is not only your typical demanding toddler, but her family life has resulted in her developing an especially unpleasant personality. Margaret's presence forces Fred to adapt to change and circumstances he once would never have accepted. Her absence likewise inspires her human family to make some changes of their own. Even Margaret herself is changed by the experience. The friendship and generosity of Squirrel, Skunk, and Snake (however unwillingly on Snake's part) was appealing as I had never imagined a friendship between the species, or pictured a snake as a cherished friend.

This book is a great and fantastic comedy book that Tor Seidler wrote about two woodchucks, Fred and Phoebe, who come to find a human child on the entrance to their burrow. They take her in as their own child but life is hard. Finding the foods she likes and not knowing what to do with her screaming and yelling 12:7.(12 hours, 7 days) Margaret, the human child, learns what true love is. Phoebe and Fred offer her the foods and take care of her risking anything. But she runs away after

she gets sprayed by a skunk. Phoebe tries to look all over for her but can't find her. Read this great fantastic book to find out the lovely ending to this fantasy fiction book. by J.Pak

This book fails to deliver on its promise of an outrageously funny book although it has its moments. For one thing, Margaret does not appear until Chapter 9, and the beginning chapters could be condensed into 2 or 3 snappy chapters. Margaret has no redeeming qualities to engage a reader much less an animal family, and the description of her selfish, slovenly habits becomes tedious rather than funny. One wonders why her human family would miss her and, further yet, change for the better as a result of her absence. Although Margaret redeems herself slightly in the next to last chapter, by then it is hard to care. The one totally delightful aspect of this book is the art work of Jon Agee. However, the charming art cannot atone for the disappointment of a book purchased with high hopes as a read-aloud to second and third graders.

A National Book Award finalist, this book is now all too little-known. It's a great story and Jon Agee's illustrations of loving woodchuck newlyweds and loud messy toddler convey humor and tenderness. A winner for kids eight to ten. [carolweston.com](http://carolweston.com)

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