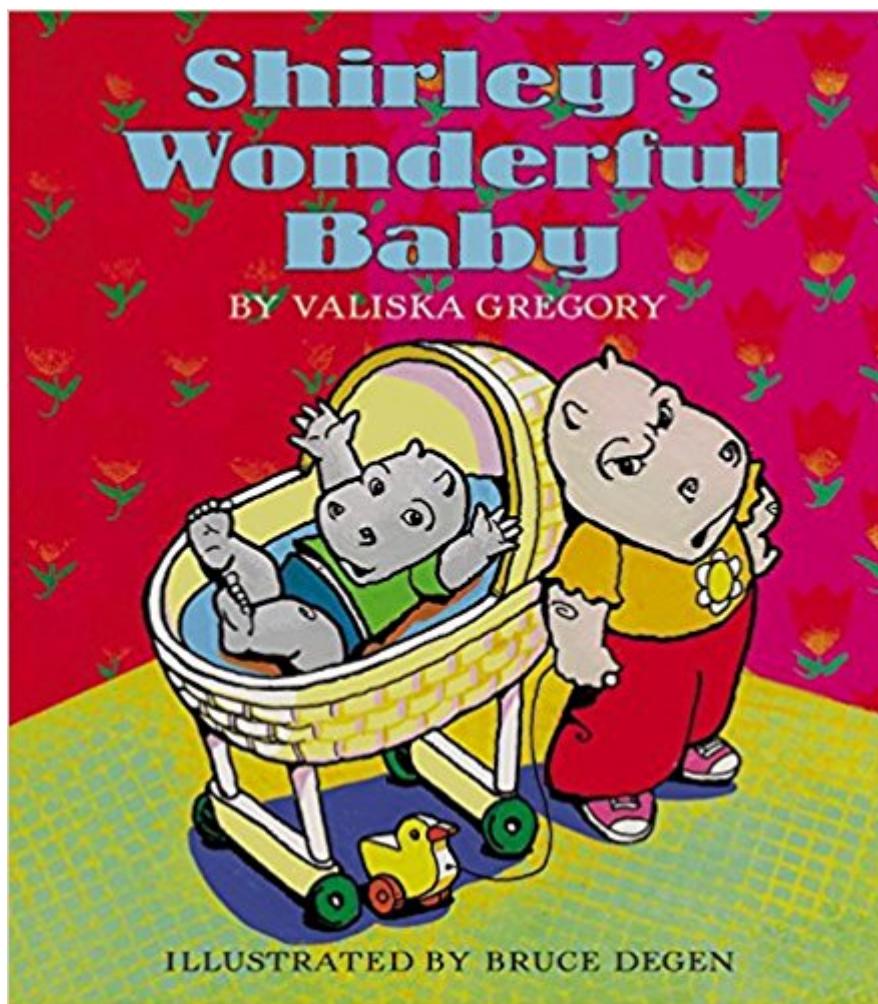


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# Shirley's Wonderful Baby



## **Synopsis**

Everything Shirley's new baby brother, Stanley, does is wonderful. Wonderful, that is, to everyone except for Shirley. What's so special about a baby that looks like a prune, has legs like a turkey, and drools? Only Ms. Mump, the baby-sitter, agrees that babies aren't that interesting, especially with their wet diapers, burping, and constant need for attention. But then Ms. Mump and Shirley discover that being Stanley's big sister is what's most wonderful of all.

## **Book Information**

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Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 2

## **Customer Reviews**

Shirley the hippo thinks it's about time to send her new brother, Stanley, back where he came from ("The trouble with Shirley's new baby brother was that everything Stanley did was wonderful"). She's had enough of his attention-grabbing spitting, drooling, babbling and smelly diapers. But gradually Shirley undergoes a change of heart, thanks to a clever new babysitter, Ms. Mump. Announcing, to Shirley's delight, that "I like my tea with two lumps of sugar and no babies," Ms. Mump mirrors Shirley's resentment by disparaging babies in general ("Babies are notorious for getting into trouble"), while at the same time maneuvering Shirley into defending her brother. The resourceful woman also nurtures Shirley's sense of competency and importance by asking her to take over such chores as feeding, burping and diapering her infant sibling. Gregory (A Valentine for Norman Noggs) gets the arch tone just right, and it grows warmer as Shirley's affection deepens.

The author also understands how a word like "notorious" (used judiciously, several times) can be like a feather tickler to readers' burgeoning vocabulary. Similarly, Degen's (Jamberry) artwork subtly follows the heroine's transformation: his thick black line allows for understated facial expressions as well as dramatic body language. The mixture of patterns and textures draws in readers, while the saturated colors provide the immediacy and punch of the unfolding changes in Shirley. Ages 3-7. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

PreSchool-Grade 2-Everything about Shirley's infant brother is wonderful. As her father changes Stanley's diapers, he comments that the baby is wonderful. Her mother thinks his tiny nose is wonderful. Even her neighbor thinks Stanley is wonderful and tickles him under his chin. Shirley is the only person who does not think Stanley is wonderful. After all, he can't walk or talk, and he drools most of the time. Fed up, she finally asks her parents, "Don't you think it's about time to take this baby back?" Shirley's mother just replies that Stanley is wonderful. Then one day, a baby-sitter who pretends not to like babies plays with Shirley and shows her how to change Stanley's diaper, feed him, and burp him. By the time her parents return, the child thinks her brother is wonderful. Beautifully illustrated in primary colors, the pictures of this hippopotamus family will delight readers. The unique textures were created by applying gouache over hand-cut stencils, plastic and wire meshes, masking tape, and punched-out patterns. Children with siblings will relate to this young hippo, whose expressions are priceless. Kristin de Lacoste, South Regional Public Library, Pembroke Pines, FL Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Little hippo Shirley gets exactly what any child having difficulty adjusting to the arrival of a new sibling needs when Ms. Mump the babysitter arrives. Everyone thinks Shirley's baby brother Stanley is simply "wonderful." Shirley doesn't understand as she questions "[w]hat's so wonderful about a baby with legs like a turkey," "who looks like a prune," drools and spits a lot, and can't even talk. She's elated when Ms. Mump arrives declaring she doesn't like babies and spends the entire afternoon playing with Shirley. Ms. Mump doesn't even want to take care of Stanley when he wakes up and needs attention. She just tells Shirley how to do it. Shirley changes his diaper, feeds, comforts, and entertains him. In the process, she bonds with him. Ms. Mump's broad smile of satisfaction in the end suggests this was her plan all along - to trick Shirley into falling in love with Stanley. This heartwarming tale is told with charming, cartoonish hippos that dress and act like humans in settings that are an interesting mix of gouache over collage and finished with pen and ink.

Recommended for all children aged 3 to 8 and highly recommended those with younger siblings.

Shirley's new baby brother is indeed wonderful - depending on who is asked. Shirley's internal dialogue contrasts sharply with all the adulation heaped on the baby by the surrounding adults. Her dialogues run heavily to prunes that drool - until a wise baby-sitter arrives. While charmed by Shirley's tap-dancing, she seemingly doesn't find Stanley of much interest. She prefers to settle down with a "thick book" and leaves Stanley's care to his big sister. Older siblings will love this book for accurately depicting newbabies - baby hippos, that is. Parents will love it for its subtle humor. All will find the resolution completely satisfying. This book, with Degen's funny illustrations that both children and adults can peruse with pleasure, is destined to be read to shreds.

The first half of this book is a prolonged, super-negative anti-baby tirade. Sure, we as adults can see the reality behind Shirley's jealous rants, but can most small children, who are theoretically the target audience here? I think this book indulges in dark, negative emotions, and the resolution is dramatically weak, so the message is unlikely to get through to the kids who need it. I would NOT recommend this book as a tool to work through sibling rivalries.

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