



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 5.0 out of 5 stars

### Jake, Dad and the Worm

I have just spent the most delightful time reading my copy of *Jake, Dad and the Worm*. As the Editor for a School Nursing journal, *School Nurse News*, I am always looking for books that children, teens and families can use to illustrate important life lessons. *Jake, Dad and the Worm* is just such a book. My copy of this story will be raffled off to a deserving school nurse who might choose to keep it in her office, put it into the school library or lend it out to families. Reading together continues to connect us in such a personal way. This story demonstrates how each of us fits into the big picture of the universe in small and significant ways we can be proud of. The illustrations alone are meaningful, but coupled with the text, they make the experience one you won't want to miss. — By Deborah K. Ilardi RN, *School Nurse News*

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### A DELIGHT

We received this as a gift and we LOVE it! It is a delight to read--fun rhymes and playful use of language. The illustrations are AMAZING. The page with the worm in the superhero cape never fails to produce a hearty belly laugh from our 5 year old. And yes, a beautiful message too. — By LD, Amazon.com



## Book Review



**Ridge Writers on Books: For the young, younger and young at heart**  
by DONNA McCROHAN ROSENTHAL  
Published July 4, 2012, Rigeview California

Martha Sears West takes the unique approach that “old people can remember being young, but children can’t remember being old” or to put it another way, she “hopes the occasional reader will chortle, ‘Aha!’ – possibly out loud, and in a library.” Reviewers have compared her playful verse to Shel Silverstein, A.A. Milne and Ogden Nash.

In “**Rhymes and Doodles from A Wind-up Toy**” (text/illus., paperback, 106 pages) lost email circles about “In Saturn’s rings/ With luggage we’ve lost/ And other things” and “Looking sharp while acting rude/ Won’t compensate for your attitude.”

West’s other titles include “**Jake, Dad and the Worm**” (text/illus. West, 2010, paperback, 40 pages, \$11.95) about a lad who laments, “When there are things I want to do/ I’m never big enough” until observing a persistent earthworm shows him how much he absolutely can do.

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## Jake, Dad and the Worm

By Martha Sears West. Paperback. 34 pages. ISBN: 9781453890707

When a small boy continues to fail at skateboarding, stilts, entertaining with his kazoo, he feels even smaller. Fortunately, he has an unusually perceptive dad.

Together they find easier, simpler fun things to do, but these activities begin to wane. A lowly worm becomes his inspiration and encouragement. As the worm perseveres with courage, Jake's father points out how important a worm's work is to growing plants.

Dad reminds him of all the skills Jake has that the worm can't do. As Jake watches the tiny worm closely, he is surprised by its acrobatic tricks. It becomes obvious that the worm is challenged to move beyond its fear to try difficult tasks. Jake's imagination sees the worm become "super-worm," cape and all, and perform its acrobatics in a circus.

The author uses soft, cozy watercolors to draw the young reader in and help him identify with Jake. The illustrations extend the imagination of each reader as she extends the text.

Martha West dedicates the story to this spineless creature whose bones add up to zero.

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## Author and Illustrator Martha Sears West with her two books, "A Wind-Up Toy" and "Jake, Dad, and the Worm."

(photo by Jennifer Meyers/*Herald Journal*)

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Martha Sears West says her grandchildren love her books and her neighbors say wonderful things about her artwork, but she can't rely on what they think. "You just can't trust friends and family," the newly published Logan resident says.

That's why waiting to receive her first objective review on "Rhymes and Doodles from a Wind-up Toy" was so agonizing. It came just days ago from *ForeWord* Clarion, thrilling West by **giving her five out of five stars on her book of poetry**. "Rhymes and Doodles" has come on the heels of "Jake, Dad and the Worm," a whimsical narrative about a child who discovers even though he is young, he can still learn and explore before he grows up. For West, who lives with her husband, Steve, in a classical home tucked away in a quaint Island neighborhood, these books represent a lifetime of thoughts and memories.

"Jake, Dad and the Worm" was actually born more than 30 years ago, when the Wests were raising their three children in Maryland. **Martha remembers hearing her family applaud a little worm who was slowly making his way through their backyard. "I was amazed and pleased to see that they enjoyed something so simple,"** she said.

So, a few years ago when she threw around the idea of writing and illustrating her own book, Steve suggested making the famous worm the focus of the book. Martha ran with the idea, after being encouraged by her well-written daughter and professional artist. "I thought, 'If he thinks I can do it, I can do it,'" she remembers of her thoughts following a conversation with son Allan West, who lives in Tokyo and paints large-scale pieces.

West remembers her love affair with writing and artwork beginning early. As a 12-year-old she and a close friend spent their free time writing poetry. Also as a child, she received oil paints from her uncle, Jack Sears, a known writer and artist at the time. Throughout the following years, she cultivated both talents, going so far in high school as to receive a scholarship to attend the Chouinard Art School in Los Angeles every Saturday for months. After high school, West

attended the University of Utah, where she mulled an art major but ultimately settled on French teaching after deciding to go after something she didn't know much about. "It's better for your character," she says.

After she and her husband married, they lived in Salt Lake before moving to the Washington, D.C., area where they raised their three children. When Steve retired 17 years ago, they planned to move to Seattle - to stay "on the water" - but stopped in Logan so Martha could see where Steve had spent his summers as a childhood. That's when she saw their current home, which reminded her of her childhood house in Bethesda, Md. With the Logan River running through its backyard, it fit the "on the water" requirement, she said, laughing.

Throughout all of those years, West has kept a pen in hand and paintbrush nearby. Her own artwork - in addition to her son's - grace the walls of her home. "For many, many years I've written a poem a day," she said, adding that they usually are drafted for specific people in mind. Over the past couple of years, she started working on poems that applied to a broader audience. Those are what make up her 95-page "Rhymes and Doodles" book. But she admits they're all written with a specific purpose in mind. One is dedicated to her daughter's mother-in-law, a kind and gentle woman. Another describes a "minimally invasive" surgery and its aftermath. **And a treasured poem is dedicated to her mother, who after a stroke at 87 couldn't remember who Martha was, choosing to call her a "happenmaker" because she made things happen.**

West, who went back to school in her 50s to get a degree in linguistics, said she has other books coming. Her ideas for writing come to her sometimes late at night - prompting her to call herself a "wind-up toy," as referenced in one of her book titles.

For now, she's cherishing her first review and looking forward to having her books available to the public at The Book Table, which she said has agreed to sell them. —*Emilie Wheeler*