



## President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath

*Mac Barnett , Chris Van Dusen (Illustrations)*

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**President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath** Mac Barnett , Chris Van Dusen (Illustrations)  
George Washington crossed the Delaware in the dead of night.

Abraham Lincoln saved the Union.

William Howard Taft got stuck in a bathtub and then got unstuck. This is his story.

## President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath Details

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Author : Mac Barnett , Chris Van Dusen (Illustrations)

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## **From Reader Review President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath for online ebook**

### **Great Books says**

Based loosely on the legend that the robust twenty-seventh president got stuck in the bathtub, this story grows more preposterous by the page as different cabinet members offer unlikely solutions to solve the problem. The hilarious caricature illustrations make this a book that will captivate young readers. Reviewer 12.

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### **Michele Knott says**

Maybe the story is true, maybe not, but it's funny to read! Mac Barnett did a great job writing this amusing story and Chris Van Dusen's illustrations will have kids rolling on the floor.

Young children will enjoy this humorous story, but I think older kids will actually appreciate the government people and terms that are mentioned in the story.

Read the story once for the humor, go back and look for the details that you missed the first time!

Although, I will say, after reading the reviews, I do agree with what people said. It's a shame that this is what President Taft is being known for, his enormity within the bathtub. Makes for a funny story, but in the days where we work so hard to not tolerate bullying, is this the story we want passed around about a past president? It's not to say I won't use this picture book, but I think I would also make sure students understood the important things President Taft did for our country as well.

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### **Beyondthebookends says**

This is the true story of President Taft getting stuck in the bath and Mac Barnett's storytelling adds a hilarious twist. Chris Van Dusen's illustrations enhance the story and take the book to the next level. (You know Chris Van Dusen is our favorite!)

We have a round up of a dozen patriotic picture books to teach kids about US History at  
<https://www.beyondthebookends.com/201...>

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### **babyhippoface says**

27th President of the United States, William Howard Taft was the only president to serve as chief justice of the Supreme Court. (He also gave us the federal income tax, but I'm trying to overlook that.) But if you ask most people what they remember about William Howard Taft, it's usually only that he was our largest president, weighing in at over 300 pounds.

I'm pretty sure that's not what I would want to be remembered for, but there are some memorable stories to go along with it. This funny new picture book by Mac Barnett and Chris Van Dusen immortalizes the day President Taft got stuck in his bathtub (or did he?). The illustrations are colorful and robust, the story is told

well, and I guarantee kids will get some laughs out of the President's embarrassment in the pictures.

The Author's Note of the back includes a photograph of the Taft's actual bathtub with four men seated inside and room for more. There's also a list of facts pertaining to President Taft and bathtubs, and speculation as to whether he ever really was stuck in the bathtub or not. No newspapers, letters, or diaries confirmed that he ever was really stuck in the White House tub, but it sure makes an entertaining story.

Whether or not it's actually appropriate for us to be laughing at a very personal moment in the life of a President can be debated. It's easy to see how some people would find this book offensive and degrading. I'm trying to look at it from the other point of view: is there a way to use this book in the classroom?

As I read the book I kept being reminded of Audrey Wood's *King Bidgood's in the Bathtub*. There are several similarities here, including the stream of people being brought in in an attempt to get the big men out of the tub. Each suggestion is either rejected or fails. The simple solution turns out to be the best in each case, and the men in the bathtub are not spared embarrassment in either book. I think these two titles would pair fantastically well for a compare/contrast lesson that would have the kids really giggling. Whether or not it fits into the curriculum, outside of just learning to use compare and contrast, I couldn't say, but it sure would be a lot of fun.

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### **Nancy says**

What a hoot! Whether Taft really got stuck in the tub or if it's urban legend, this is a fun book. Looking forward to reading it to my classes.

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### **Caryn Caldwell says**

While it has never been proven, legend has it that President Taft was so large that he once got stuck in his bathtub. This book explores what might have happened that day -- provided it actually did happen, that is.

Although the book aims for humor over accuracy, the first page does introduce Taft's other accomplishments, while an author's note at the end explains the mythology of the bathtub story and outlines many other facts about President Taft. The illustration of Taft's barely-concealed naked bottom as he is flung out the window is just scandalous enough for hilarity, without being inappropriate for the classroom. Some of the more-sophisticated humor may go over younger students' heads, however, so this one may work better in the older elementary grades, or even in middle school. This would be a fun, funny introduction to units on presidents or on folk legends and tall tales.

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### **Ryan says**

I will forever remember that Taft was stuck in a bath. This fun story has great illustrations. Plus at the end there is history of rafts tubs and even a picture of one with four men in it.

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### **Hayley says**

The title pretty much gives away why this gets 5 stars. President Taft is stuck in the bath. There you go. I'm yours, book. You had me at President Taft is stuck in the bath.

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### **Jill says**

It may be that I have no sense of humor, but I have nothing positive to say about this book. It purports to be about the 27th President of the United States, who also was the only president also to serve as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. But all this book tells you about Taft is that he was fat. And then it proceeds to make fun of him, portraying him as ridiculous, repulsive, and feckless.

The illustrations by Chris Van Dusen are bound to make children laugh, which is also unfortunate, since they all show a vastly obese man in a bathtub with rolls of fat hanging over the side, who can't get out, despite the efforts of many different people to help him.

In contradistinction to the man presented in this book, Taft was a talented man who had a number of accomplishments before, during, and after his presidency. He was Solicitor General of the United States, Governor-General of the Philippines, and under his good friend President Theodore Roosevelt he served as Secretary of War. He was also Roosevelt's handpicked presidential successor.

As President, Taft continued Roosevelt's trust-busting reforms and made an effort to help African Americans and unskilled laborers. He reorganized the State Department and instituted the program, still used today, of "Dollar Diplomacy."

Upon leaving the White House in 1913, Taft taught at Yale Law School, worked to oppose prohibition, and advocated world peace, ultimately founding the League to Enforce Peace. From 1921 to 1930 he served on the Supreme Court.

Not one of these accomplishments are presented in this book. As far as any kid reading this will know, the only thing Taft was memorable for was for being fat, which equals, in this book, laughable and repulsive.

**Evaluation:** Given the one-dimensional and unfair presentation of President Taft, as well as the problem children have in school with acceptance, bullying, cruelty, and the rest, I find this book reprehensible.

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### **Shanshad Whelan says**

Oh dear. I'm sure this was meant to be a hilarious idea. Chris Van Dusen's illustrations are bright and bold and certainly in keeping with the wild text--however I don't think I've ever wanted to see that much bare naked president in my life--even if it is just a drawing.

This tale takes an anecdote that may or may not have been true and turns it into a wild romp of people trying to get the president unstuck from the bathtub.

Now I have no problems with bathtubs or people in them. King Bidgood's in the Bathtub by Don and Audrey Wood manages a similar theme without the er . . . excessive skin, fat rolls and carefully manages shots to cover up particular bits.

Also the whole thing is sort of dependent on the "fat joke" idea. I'm not really a fan of mocking another's weight--and Taft is depicted as not just portly, but hugely obese.

The issue of mocking a president? I'm less concerned since there are plenty of books that do so--but I'm fairly uncomfortable with this particular story and illustration. Just can't find it funny.

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### **Pamela says**

I find it interesting that the most negative reviews of this book often start out with, "Maybe I just don't have a sense of humor." Clearly, these readers are not completely out of the loop, because they recognize that they do not have a sense of humor.

If you are looking for a serious, thoughtful picture book, do not pick up a book by Mac Barnett. His work is quirky and hilarious and irreverently funny. A lot of it is adult-directed as well. So why people are expecting a Very Serious Story with A Lot of Historicity and Thoughtful Discussion of President Taft's Many Fantastic Accomplishments from Mac Barnett???

Actually, Barnett *does* provide notes at the end AND he mentions some of Taft's accomplishments as well. They're not ignored. If you feel very strongly about President Taft's achievements (as some have enumerated ad infinitum in other reviews), you can share that with your child when reading this book. Or, you can skip reading this book, and just tell your child about all the things Taft did.

Others have actually said this book encourages bullying and is itself bullying President Taft. Bullying is systematic behavior. That's a serious charge. We are so focused on bullying in our culture today that somehow the representation of someone in a book who is part of a marginalized group automatically becomes "bullying." \*One\* character in this book brings up Taft's weight, and Taft dismisses him right away. Yes. President Taft was a large man. He was fat. It would be bizarre to depict him in a picture book as *not* fat. And if *anyone* says that it's just my "thin privilege" speaking, you don't know me.

I think most of the humor in this book comes, not from President Taft's size, as other readers have suggested, but from the messiness of government and presidential succession. (Yes, I know, Barnett does not go in the correct order, nor was the Amendment even an Amendment back when Taft was President, but adults will recognize the concept right away. And guess what? THIS IS FICTION. Cripes). In one scene, the Secretary of the Treasury shrieks, "Throw money at the problem!" The Secretary of the Interior (which, let's face it, isn't the most glamorous or well-known seat) is transformed into a sort of Zen-Hippie guru.

In the end, it's Taft's wife who figures out how to solve the problem where a bunch of dudes failed. Ha.

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### **Shandra says**

Funny, yet not. I felt uncomfortable with the book's angle of making fun of a man stuck in the bath due to his size. I did find the facts on the last page interesting, as I had never heard this story before. No one knows if it's true, but apparently it has been rumored since Taft's presidency... Still, not sure I would read this for storytime. Maybe one on one with some discussion.

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### **San Diego Book Review says**

Reviewed by Melanie Dillon for San Diego Book Review

Oh no! President William Howard Taft has gotten himself stuck in his tub! What is a world leader to do? Call all his advisers, of course. But can they solve his problem? Mac Barnett's book, 'President Taft is Stuck in the Bath' is a very cute way to introduce children to the prospect that history is more than dates and important events. History is full of fun anecdotes like this! Children are taken through a silly string of problem solving until finally a logical solution is found.

**You can read this entire review and others like it at [San Diego Book Review](#).**

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### **Amy Vaterlaus says**

This was such a fun book with great illustrations! I am excited to see what Jase thinks of this one =)

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### **Jon(athan) Nakapalau says**

Of all the things to go down in history for!

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