

LEVELED BOOK • U

# Chick-a-Dude



Written by Alyse Sweeney  
Illustrated by Frank Mayo



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[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

## Focus Question

What do Christine and her family learn from their experience with Chick-a-Dude?



Words to Know	
kiln	rescue
mimicked	roast
nurturing	territory
orphaned	volunteered
pottery	

Chick-a-Dude  
 Level U Leveled Book  
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## An Unexpected Guest

*Ffffffft.* Christine's mom struck the match and lit the **kiln** as the potters circled the furnace. They pictured the freshly sculpted beads, bowls, mugs, and vases waiting to bake on the kiln shelf at 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. They imagined how the glaze would make each earthenware piece come alive in brilliant, shiny colors.

Since second grade, Christine Brice came to her mom's **pottery** studio on Fridays after school. Christine's mom created unique clay beads for jewelry, but Christine was more interested in the potter's wheel. So she learned to sculpt pottery from her mom's friend and business partner, Mrs. Rodriguez, who created earthenware bowls on a potter's wheel. Her mom said apprenticing under an expert was one of the best ways to learn a craft.

"Your vases are so unique, Christine," cooed Mrs. Rodriguez, wiping her clay-covered hands with a towel. "I bet they sell out at the craft fair."

"I'm just excited they're considered good enough to be entered in the community-wide fair!" squealed Christine.

"Shhhh! Do you hear that sound?" interrupted Mrs. Brice.



The potters froze everything except their eyes, which shot up to the rafters.

*Chirp, chirp, chirp.*

“Well, I’ll be!” exclaimed Mrs. Rodriguez.

A baby robin struggled out of a dark corner. *Scritch scratch. Scritch scratch.* The chick walked shakily along the rafters—unaware that its life was in danger not only from the increasing heat, but also from an accidental tumble to the wooden planks below.

“It’s too late to turn off the kiln!” panicked Mrs. Brice. “That chick will **roast** up there!”

“Ladies, we’ve got to **rescue** that little fella!” said Mrs. Rodriguez, heading for the heavy metal ladder. Single-handedly, she carried in and set up the twelve-foot-ladder. Then, like a firefighter rescuing a kitten from a tree, she boldly ascended the enormous ladder while carrying an empty box. She managed to coax the chick toward the box with chirping noises. The potters gathered around when she and the chick safely reached the ground.

“Well, chick,” said Mrs. Brice, “we saved you from roasting like a marshmallow, but now what?”







## Welcome to Our Home

Smiling broadly, Christine rolled into the house holding the box on her lap.

“What’s in the box?” asked Mr. Brice, his curiosity piqued, knowing the fired pottery wouldn’t be ready until the next day. That was what typically made his daughter smile like a Cheshire cat.

“Yeah, what’s in the box?” echoed Christine’s brother, Rick.

The chick answered the question for both of them with a chirp like a high-pitched whistle.





Christine spoke a mile a minute as she described the rescue and how they waited for the mama bird to return. She explained how they waited and waited, but the chick's mother failed to appear, so Christine **volunteered** to care for the chick until it was strong enough to fly.

"Rick, would you grab the aquarium from the attic? I think it will be perfect," said Christine.

As Rick flew out of the kitchen, Misty entered. She slowly headed to the box—ears perked, tail stiff, hair up. Her nose twitched as rapidly as a hummingbird's wings—furiously sniffing the chick she couldn't see. Then she broke into a deep and angry bark.





“Uh-oh,” said Christine, grabbing Misty’s collar just in time. Misty obeyed commands most of the time, however, the temptation appeared to be too much for her training. She struggled against Christine’s grip as Mrs. Brice and Rick transferred the chick from the box to the aquarium. Mrs. Brice cleared a high shelf in the kitchen for the chick’s aquarium—safe from their 110-pound bounding Labrador retriever, Misty. Mrs. Brice lined the aquarium with newspaper, placed a shallow dish of water in the corner, and folded one of Rick’s soccer socks into a cozy nest.

When Rick asked what robin chicks eat, Mr. Brice grabbed a plastic cup and headed to the garage for shovels and flashlights. “Worms,” he called over his shoulder. “Let’s get digging, gang!”

“Chirp, chirp, chirp!” Christine squeaked as she dropped worms into the chick’s gaping beak after her family’s garden-digging adventure.

She then helped her parents prepare the family’s dinner. After their own stomachs were full, the Brices watched the chick gobble up more worms, then they all headed to bed.





Before crawling under the covers with her novel, Christine went online using her computer and Web browser and learned that in addition to worms, robins eat berries and fruits, such as grapes, cherries, and tomatoes.

At breakfast, Christine **mimicked** a mama bird by “chirp, chirp, chirping” as she dropped worms and grape halves into the chick’s waiting beak. Over buckwheat waffles and strawberries, the family voted to name the chick Chick-a-Dude because, as Rick commented, “He looks like a cool dude when he sticks out his chest.”

### **Wearing Out His Welcome**

All morning, Chick-a-Dude looked to the nearest person for food whenever he heard, “Chirp, chirp, chirp.” Everyone enjoyed the fluffy chick—everyone, that is, except Misty, whose stress level had not decreased since the Brices took Chick-a-Dude into their home. That afternoon, while Christine wrote invitations in her bedroom for her upcoming birthday party, Misty sat beneath Chick-a-Dude’s aquarium in the kitchen and stared at the unwelcome houseguest.

“WOOF! WOOF!”



A terrified Chick-a-Dude sprung into the air as though lifted like a puppet by a string and landed—plonk!—in an empty stew pot on the stovetop.





Christine heard the commotion and raced to the kitchen. “I think we need to get you to a safer place,” she told Chick-a-Dude, “and give you your **territory** back,” she told Misty.

### **A Home of His Own**

“You must be Christine and Chick-a-Dude,” guessed a woman named Kay as they entered the yard gate. “We spoke on the phone. I’m so glad you found us on the Internet.”

“My mom drove me right over after we spoke.”

“You did the right thing by bringing Chick-a-Dude to the Wildlife Rescue Center,” said Kay. “Hundreds of species of injured or **orphaned** wildlife—mammals, birds, and reptiles—come through these doors, and our staff is trained to provide the best possible care for all of them.”

Kay went on to explain that a veterinarian would examine Chick-a-Dude. Then, because Chick-a-Dude already had his flight feathers, he’d stay in the flight cage where he’d practice flying with other rescued birds. He’d be fed every 30 minutes by hand—food and vitamins. After two or three weeks of all this **nurturing**, he’d be released into the wild near other robins where he should thrive.





“What a relief!” said Christine, scooping pasta onto everyone’s plate that evening. “Chick-a-Dude’s going to be A-Okay.”

“That chick was totally cool,” added Rick. “I’ll miss the little guy’s ‘chirp, chirp, chirping’.”

“Grrrrrrr WOOF!” Misty growled as she slept curled up on her pillow.

“Misty won’t,” giggled Mrs. Brice.



## Glossary

<b>kiln</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a special oven for burning, baking, and drying materials such as clay, brick, or glass (p. 4)
<b>mimicked</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	imitated or copied (p. 10)
<b>nurturing</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	giving care and nourishment to a living thing in order to help it develop and grow (p. 12)
<b>orphaned</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having no mother or father (p. 12)
<b>pottery</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	the art of making objects, such as bowls and vases, out of hardened clay (p. 4)
<b>rescue</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to save from danger (p. 5)
<b>roast</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to cook something by exposing it to a dry heat, such as in an oven or over a fire (p. 5)
<b>territory</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an area of land or water that animals or groups of animals defend and live in (p. 12)
<b>volunteered</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	offered to do work for free (p. 8)



# Chick-a-Dude

*A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 1,117*

## Connections

### Writing

Write a new ending for this story describing what would happen if Christine's family had decided to keep Chick-a-Dude as a second pet.

### Social Studies

Create a welcome kit for a student who is new to your school. Present on your welcome kit and explain why you included each item.



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