

# A Gold Star for Mary Amato

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Alison Morris -- December 12th, 2007

With a nod to the beloved "star charts" that often graced the walls of my elementary school classrooms, I think I'll start giving out (virtual) gold stars to people, publishers, books, experiences — anything that wows me in a given week or on a particular day. I'd like to give the first of these to author [Mary Amato](#), whom I've never met, never corresponded with, and whose novels I've (sorry, Mary!) never read, though I can boast that I've read the f&g of her forthcoming picture book *The Chicken of the Family* and found it to be very funny. Here's why Mary gets ShelfTalker's first gold star....

One recent afternoon a mother and her daughter (approximately age 10) came into the store looking for a copy of Mary's middle grade novel *The Naked Mole Rat Letters*. As I escorted them over to our Intermediate Fiction section the woman explained that her daughter (and she) had actually already read the book and were hoping maybe the author had written others. I showed them the only other (sorry again, Mary!) title we had in stock but then looked up Mary's others, many of which we'd carried previously, and asked if the woman would like me to order any of them for her. "I think we'd like to order one of each!" she said enthusiastically. As her daughter turned away to browse she explained sotto voce, "I've got a reluctant reader who's excited about reading someone's books. I want to do what I can to keep her going here!" As her daughter returned to the desk and our conversation the mother went on to explain that they'd read *The Naked Mole Rat Letters* together. In fact, her daughter had read most of it aloud to her.

This whole conversation made me want to hug these two customers AND hug Mary Amato for turning a hesitant reader on to at least one book, with the prospect of more to follow. And it's made this not-the-least-bit-reluctant reader that much more eager to pick up *The Naked Mole Rat Letterstoo*.

So, here it is, Mary. Your own gold star. Earn enough of them (from me and others) and perhaps you can have a pizza party at the end of the year, or take the hamster home for the weekend.