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All Sorts

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

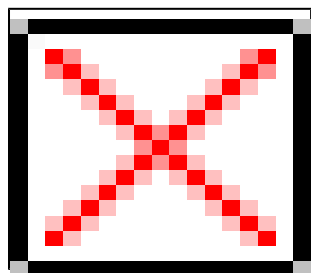
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4



Frankie loves sorting things. She sorts by size, shape and colour. She sorts sets of flowers, trees, vehicles - whatever catches her eye, and she likes a challenge. Animals are tricky, but people are the trickiest. Uniforms helps her sort the marching band and the football team, but where should she put everyone else? And what about herself? A Venn diagram leaves Frankie right in the middle, at the intersection of My Street, My Family and My School. It seems she's the only Frankie. Won't that get lonely?

Luckily the Marching Band strikes up ?such a mix of sizes and shapes and colours of music? that everyone gets all mixed up in a happy dance, and Frankie realises that ?everyone and everything belongs in a muddle.? It seems that everything is sorted, after all!

This quietly effective picturebook offers a taste of many things and brings them together in a way that makes intuitive sense. In the process, it becomes something rather special. Children don't confine their curiosity to individual subjects, and neither does All Sorts. As Frankie investigates mathematical ideas, she experiences the poetry of music and wrestles with substantial existential problems. And weaving through the whole are invitations to consider how we should behave towards each other and how we'd like our world to be.

Every page dances with a multiplicity of images, from arrays of toys and other objects covering Frankie's bedroom floor to rows of colour-coded flowers on a woodland walk, but it's the people who dominate this book. Visible diversity is celebrated on every spread, where children and adults of all ages, sizes and ethnicities chat, play games and go about their busy lives. Care is taken over gender roles ? a man is pushing the baby's stroller, the football team is admirably diverse ? and a wheelchair-user is shown playing with her friends. The final spreads depict a joyfully inclusive street-

dance and party, delivering an upbeat invitation to think about what, exactly, has been sorted.

Despite being set up on the first two spreads, there's at least one big question not directly addressed in this book: namely, why doesn't Frankie sort people by their size or appearance? Children may want to pursue this, and although the text doesn't explicitly talk about respecting differences, it's woven into every spread and may help frame constructive discussions. Two distinct approaches to life - 'orderly sorting' and 'happy muddle' - are also depicted, which may help readers develop personal insight, and understand how others think and feel.

Pippa Goodhart's text is well-pitched for its audience and Emily Rand's illustrations more than do it justice, creating warm-hearted and appealing spreads that capture a flavour of the 'everything' that Frankie is so keen to sort. A muted palette, pale backgrounds and an interest in surface and pattern give the illustrations a decorative feel, but there are changes of pace and viewpoint as the music adds its energy, and lovers of detail will enjoy observing, questioning and imagining throughout the book.

Recommended for Under 5's and children in Foundation Stage/Year 1.

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