

Am I small? A Picture Story

Philipp Winterberg

Philipp Winterberg, Translator

Nadja Wichmann, Illustrator

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Does size matter? Winterberg and Wichmann show and tell children why it does not in this colorful and imaginative story.

Philipp Winterberg and Nadja Wichmann team up to tell the simple and delightful story of a girl who worries about her size in their vibrant picture book *Am I small?*

Tamia, the young protagonist of the story, overhears the unseen narrator introduce her, saying that “Tamia is still very small.” Taking exception to this, Tamia wanders through a fantastic landscape of cute, sometimes unidentifiable animals and creatures. Asking a large creature, “Am I small?” she is told, “You are teeny-weeny!” She then asks another, “Am I teeny-weeny?” and is told, “You are mini!” This continues until she asks a turtle, smaller than she is, “Am I microscopic?” and hears in reply, “You? You are big!” The pattern then goes in reverse, as Tamia is told she is “huge” and “gigantic,” and she finally realizes that she is all of these things, and also that, in the end, her size is “just right.”

Wichmann, a German artist, and Winterberg, author of several other picture books, make a formidable partnership. Wichmann’s colorful and imaginative drawings make Tamia’s explorations immensely enjoyable—there’s a fish with wings wearing a paper hat, a worm with a party hat, and a talking moon, among other visual treats. Fuzzy-haired Tamia and the animals and creatures she meets bear a unique blend of European and Japanese art sensibilities, and every page is worth staring at for several minutes after the text has been read.

That text is simple but effective, giving the illustrations the spotlight they deserve while still propelling the story. The only misstep comes when a reply to Tamia’s question is placed higher on the page than the question itself; though the text fits the illustration, the traditional left-to-right, top-down method of reading doesn’t work.

Winterberg and Wichmann have created versions of *Am I small?* in various languages: there are bilingual editions matching English with French, German, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Russian, Italian, and Hindi. There are also single-language editions in Bosnian, Albanian, Nepali, Swahili, Polish, Dutch, and many other languages. Clearly, the authors want to spread *Am I small?* far and wide, and the book seems a likely candidate for success.

The book’s message is well delivered—children will realize that they are bigger than some things (and people) and smaller than others, but also that size really has little to do with living life. And, just as a small child gains a boost to his or her ego when surrounded by younger, smaller children, young readers will emerge from this book feeling slightly more confident about themselves—whatever their size.

PETER DABBENE (January 23, 2014)

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