

Auntie, Auntie!

Martha Hindo

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Auntie, Auntie! is a heartfelt picture book in which an adult delivers encouragement during a family visit.

An aunt's hopes for her nephew inspire Martha Hindo's sunny picture book, *Auntie, Auntie!*, about a family's loving role play.

On a visit to her nephew's home, an aunt asks whether the boy is himself or a bear today. From this enthusiastic greeting, other questions follow, all concerning whom each person is pretending to be. Both relatives play at being astronauts, Santa Claus, a race car driver, and pioneers. Their fun interactions lead to an earnest expression of her support for her "superhero" nephew, whose future career could entail much.

The inviting, comic book-inspired packaging segues into colorful scenes that depict the different roles that the aunt and nephew assume. They are designed in a cheerful, consistent manner, with engaging costumes and props that complement their activities, such as constructing a play house together. But beyond these events, the central characters are generic. Despite their liveliness, neither is fleshed out enough to contextualize their unique bond for outsiders. Instead, the book focuses on delivering its message about family support—resulting in a tale that sums up its aims in neat form, without making room for surprises.

Further, the book's early dynamism is lost as it progresses; its full-page illustrations contrast with facing pages of text, without enough variation to support its pop art flourishes and cartoon themes. Its adherence to a realistic framework means that its backgrounds remain within the nephew's home and yard, too, underplaying its adventurous tones. Predictable rhymes and verbose adult responses further undermine the book's general appeal. Still, the text's patterned question and response structure is reassuring.

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KAREN RIGBY (April 12, 2022)

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