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## Ballerina's Don't Wear Glasses

**Ainslie Manson**
**Dean Griffiths, illustrator**
Orca Book Publishers (January 2001)
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Ben wished he could trade in his sister, Allison, for a happy-go-lucky puppy! While Ben and his friends were having a snowball fight after school, Allison showed up in the middle of it. When his friends made fun of Allison for being in the school ballet, Ben became mad and a fight started. With that, the best snowball fight in the whole world was over when it had just begun.

In the house Ben noticed that Allison had been crying. When he asked her what was the matter, Allison said, “Everything is the matter. I’m not a proper ballerina.” She believed that ballerinas didn’t have pigtails or missing teeth and they certainly didn’t wear glasses! Along with that, Allison had been given the last, and worst, swan dress in the pile. It was too big and too long. Ben offered to help her by altering, pinning, and sewing her dress. “Monsieur Ben, at your service,” he said, circling Allison and rubbing his chin thoughtfully. “Mademoiselle, it will be belle in no time…très, très belle!” After dinner, Ben and Allison headed to the school where Ben would leave her and go to his hockey practice. Then Allison remembered that Mom was supposed to put her hair up. Ben pulled a lace from his skate and tied her pigtails on top of her head. Allison thanked him with a big grin and bounced into school. Ben realized he couldn’t skate without his lace and decided to watch his sister being a swan. As Ben and his mother watched Allison, she looked like a real swan. As Allison took her bow at the end, Ben clapped and clapped. Maybe he wouldn’t trade her for a happy-go-lucky puppy after all!

Manson’s method of writing is such that it makes it easy to feel for Ben’s outlook on his sister, yet also feel for Allison. One can sense the closeness develop between Ben and Allison as the story progresses until, at the end, the reader feels as much pride for Ben as Ben does for Allison. Manson has shown how brother and sister come together in time of need and how they are forming bonds that will always be there.

Griffiths, the illustrator, shows a great attention to detail in the watercolor illustrations. It is fascinating to look at the pictures and see all that is taking place. Also, look for the two happy-go-lucky puppies that are incorporated into every drawing.

This book could easily become a child’s favorite to read, or have read to them, many times over.

JUDI OSWALD (June 15, 2000)

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