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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ PICTURE BOOKS

Black and White

Marty Crisp
Sherry Neidigh, illustrator
Rising Moon (Jul 25, 2000)
Unknown $12.95 (24pp)
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Bud receives a new black and white dog, but is cautioned not to name him until it's clear whether or not he'll get along with the other animals. "'Watch that dog closely now,' Bud's mother said." When Bud turns his back, however, the dog disappears and the hide and seek game begins.

It turns out Bud lives on a farm where all of the animals are black and white. As the dog enters the different pens, he blends with the enclosed animals so that Bud can't find him. "Have you seen my dog?" he repeatedly asks. After visiting seven other animals, the dog reaches the field where the Holstein cows reside. As a cow reaches out with her long, pink tongue to slurp the top of the dog's head, Bud and his mother spot the dog. "'Why that dog fits in just fine,' Bud's mother said. 'It's as plain as black and white.'" Now Bud can name his dog.

The text is short and simple. It sets the stage for a continuous turning of the page, utilizing repetitious phrasing and clearly defined linear action. Readers enjoy the sense of knowing something a book character does not. Bud may have a hard time spotting the dog yet toddlers will have no trouble identifying his whereabouts.

The colored pencil and gouache illustrations are full of textured detail. They show close-up views of the animals in question with the dog easily discernable among them. Posed like still life paintings, the small groupings are prime examples of camouflage yet they remain clearly visible against the browns and greens of the farmyard. The few close-up pictures of Bud and his mother also look staged. Their bodies are slightly stiff, their hair is perfectly coiffed and their faces radiate calm. While all of this tends to create an idyllic view of farm living, none of it diminishes the book's goal—to provide a fun, first introduction to some really cool animals, all of whom are identified by specific breed on the back page.

This book is guaranteed to open readers' eyes to a distinctive black and white world. With its bold easy to read typeface and focused, realistic drawings of farm animals, this book will attract the attention of toddlers.
MARTHA TOPOL (July / August 2000)

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