ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Blueberry Shoe
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A baby's shoe gets lost and readers follow the path of the shoe from one situation to another until it comes full circle back to its original owner.

As the shoe first gets lost somewhere on Ptarmigan Mountain, Mama exclaims, "Lost our shoe! Now what will we do?" As the text succinctly responds, "There was only one thing to do." They search back up the mountain but no shoe can be found. Vole then finds the shoe, a tiny nest just her size. She makes it her home, using gnawed bits of shoelace for bedding. Yet the next day, after nibbling an array of mountain flowers for breakfast, the shoe becomes lost to her. Vole now echoes Mama's sentiments, "lost my nest. Now what will I do?" This provides the text with repetitive phrasing that continues as the shoe moves on from Vole to Fox the Bear and back to Baby. Each animal has the "curious morsel" for only a short time, yet each plays a role in the shoe's transformation into a small container with fox teeth holes for draining and roots and a single blueberry plant growing out of the top. When Baby recognizes the shoe (a dubious feat after a whole year!) he dubs it "my blueberry shoe," takes it home and plants it in the garden.

This is an energetic and engaging story. Based in the familiar patterning of cause and effect the tale unfolds naturally giving insight into the various animals and their habits. While readers are privy to the linear connection between all the characters, the family within the tale can only wonder at the transformed shoe. This gives readers a superior sense of ownership, as if they too are somehow a part of the progressive events.

Colorful linocuts are printed on attractive, leaf-patterned backgrounds. There is no empty white space on the page. While the people look a bit stiff at times, with rigid expressions and frozen poses, the animals, against their dark backgrounds, have natural rhythm and energy. The illustrations are a vital and vibrant contributor to this book.

Blueberry Shoe will lend itself well to story hours. Preschoolers will delight in the bold illustrations, playful sense of adventure and satisfying conclusion.