

It's Just So...

Brenda Faatz

Peter Trimarco

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Perfect for children in transitional stages, Lizzy's story of adapting to a new school is charming and hopeful.

Vibrant illustrations and an engaging main character help young readers explore themes of resilience, courage, and perseverance in Brenda Faatz's *It's Just So ...*

Lizzy is a bit nervous about her first day at a new school. After all, it's just so ... overwhelming. Lizzy wonders if she'll make friends, and the big new school building is a little scary. *It's Just So ...* follows Lizzy throughout the whole day, from the moment she wakes up, through the bus ride and a lonely lunch, to her building excitement as she comes to realize that the new school may, in fact, be a lot of fun after all.

Lizzy's transition from nervousness to happiness is helped along with the "it's just so" catchphrase. In the beginning, everything is "just so" scary or tall or big. As Lizzy becomes more comfortable through her first day, her growing enthusiasm leads to playful, creative new wording, such as "it's just so ... mathemagical" and "it's just so ... fizz-astro-fantastical." The silly words and rhyming text make it an especially fun book for reading aloud.

The colorful, vivid illustrations are detailed and sure to delight young readers. The changing fonts and text sizes and the varied colors work well with the corresponding illustrations and story narrative. Lizzy's different moods and feelings, from nervousness and loneliness to excitement and contentment, are effectively captured in the drawings, and the renderings of her classes and activities are meticulous and vibrant.

Though a few of the rhymes are a bit overworked, the rhyming text flows smoothly for the most part, and the cleverly playful typography (for instance, the words "outside the lines" are set in a wavy style, bringing the actual text outside the line) makes reading even more fun.

The narrative maintains a positive tone, and Lizzy's enthusiasm is contagious. Good lessons on overcoming fears and staying positive are illustrated through her character. Despite her nervousness, Lizzy remains hopeful throughout her day, and her choice to actively participate in drawing, music, and other subjects soon helps her to overcome her concerns and end her day happily and successfully.

It's Just So ... will be particularly helpful for children experiencing a transitional stage, such as entering a new school or home, and the combination of creative art, amusing rhymes, and a delightful main character is engaging and especially entertaining for reading out loud.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (July 14, 2016)

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