



Janjak and Freda Go to the Citadel

Elizabeth Turnbull

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Three young people learn that “when you have friends, you don’t have to do hard things by yourself” in this heartwarming picture book.

In Elizabeth Turnbull’s picture book *Janjak and Freda Go to the Citadel*, two children take a trip to visit the citadel in Haiti; on the way, they make a new friend. Illustrated with colorful, friendly images of smiling children against a lush green landscape, the story combines specific historical details with a lesson about friendship and against ableism.

Janjak and Freda are on a long tap-tap trip, accompanied by their godmother. Eager to stretch their legs, they kick a soccer ball around before losing it in the bushes. When they seek out their ball, they find not only their toy, but a new friend, Wilgens, who carries a walking stick and has a crooked leg. The children become friends and decide to head up the mountain together, taking turns riding a donkey to their mutual excitement.

As the children and story progress to the mountaintop, details proliferate the text. It notes that the citadel is 200 years old and has 50,000 cannonballs for its 160 cannons. Some of the history of the storied place is relayed this way, though its significance is not as established. Indeed, the historical monument ends up being less of a focal point than expected.

Bits of Haitian culture come through the story—both because the text is bilingual (the story is told in both English and Creole) and because of the rich, painted tap-taps, donkey rides, and fragrant lemon trees that are part of its landscape. Later, when one of the children has an accident, the three band together and help each other, proving the story’s central premise with charm: “When you have friends, you don’t have to do hard things by yourself.”

Three children befriend and rely on each other in the sweet, direct, and colorful picture book *Janjak and Freda Go to the Citadel*, which incorporates Haitian culture into its strong lesson in kindness.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (September 2, 2021)

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