

Maddie and Mabel

Kari Allen

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In the early reader *Maddie and Mabel*, two sisters act in counter to each other, each trying to figure out how she fits into their special relationship.

Maddie is the older sister; Mabel is the younger. Maddie tries to boss her little sister around, while Mabel strives to be her own person, even as she emulates her sister. The girls play, fight, and make up with each other; in so doing, they learn valuable lessons about their connections to one another.

The story line is often idyllic: the sisters build forts, share memories, and imagine musicals, too. But there are also conflicts: when Maddie forgets to include her sister in the production of their play, an argument ensues. And when Maddie is left alone in the disagreement's wake, she realizes that she treasures her sister.

Detailed illustrations complement Maddie and Mabel's everyday adventures: Maddie pairs high tops with dresses, both girls wear bunny slippers, and a wooden platform serves as a tree fort. The girls' faces are expressive, too.

Though each independent chapter features its own climax and resolution, the book is cohesive on the whole. And its work ends in an interactive way, with three suggestions for audience engagement: children can talk about the sisters' adventures with their caregivers; they can discuss how the world might be made kinder through the lessons that the girls learn; or they can be encouraged to draw connections between Maddie and Mabel's lives and their own.

Maddie and Mabel play, fight, and make up with grace and charm in Kari Allen's positive early reader about resolving conflicts and cherishing one's family.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (March / April 2022)

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