



Mockingbird

Allen Ahlberg Paul Howard illus.

Candlewick Press (Aug 5, 1998)

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This quietly beautiful picture book for toddlers and preschoolers takes the traditional lullaby, “Hush, little baby,” as its premise, adapting the lyrics somewhat so that various extended family members may bestow treats and presents on a beloved child. The story moves quickly in its musically inspired rhythm, so that re-reading becomes necessary in order to save the subtle, picturesque details. The very young reader will doubtless wish to re-read in any case, as the catchy, familiar rhythm seems to compel repetition.

While the pastel-hued Victoria characters have the old-fashioned feel of Beatrix Potter or Cicely Mary Barker illustrations, Paul Howard’s watercolor and crayon paintings feature charming contemporary touches that modern families will appreciate, such as father baking a cake and bathing the child in an ornate basin.

Clearly geared toward a white, solidly middle-class audience, *Mockingbird* excels in its evocation of a half-remembered, half-mythical era of loving, multigenerational family life. Candlewick Press’ reliably classy presentation in a conveniently sized hardcover and large, easy-to-read font makes this book a worthy addition to the family treasury of stories.

JOSEPHINE ARROWOOD (September / October 1998)

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