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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ YOUNG ADULT FICTION

## Momo

**Michael Ende**
**Marcel Dzama, illustrator**
McSweeney's McMullens
Hardcover $22.00 (309pp)
978-1-938073-14-4

*Simple, elegant prose makes this new edition of a classic tale relatable and touching, resonating with modern readers.*

Momo, a young orphan living on her own in the amphitheater of a nameless European city, is a gifted and empathetic listener who lives in the moment. When shadowy gray men begin infiltrating the city, her talents are the best weapon humanity has against their invasion. This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the book's original publication in 1973. Long out of print, this surreal fantasy, by the author of *The Neverending Story*, is a modern classic for all ages.

This edition puts Ende's novel in the hands of a new translator and a new illustrator, to good effect. Lucas Zwirner's translation elegantly captures the dreamy and philosophical tone readers expect from an Ende novel. The cover art and interior illustrations, by Marcel Dzama, give the book an updated appearance. Black and white drawings sprinkled throughout the text capture important characters and events in detail, adding a pleasing visual dimension to the story.

The plot progresses in a simple and linear way, with tension building as the gray men exert their influence more heavily around the city. They are time thieves, and their battle with Momo is a conflict between efficiency and consumerism versus individuality and joy. As the people of the city begin to put their personal needs second to time efficiency, life becomes less pleasing. After a visit from a gray man, a barber with a gift for gab and a meaningful personal life chooses to discard his personal connections with others so he can work more quickly, but in the process becomes almost unrecognizable to an old friend: "so changed, so nervous, so weary and sad … the man has become his own shadow." A bartender chases off the old men who used to linger communally in his business all day to make room for a steady turnover of higher paying customers. One at a time, adults succumb to time pressure until Momo meets the mysterious Professor Hora and his future-telling turtle, Cassiopeia, who launch her on a quest to save the city.

Ende comments, "time is life, and life exists in our hearts, and the more of it that the people saved, the less they actually had." That sentiment will resonate strongly with a modern reader of just about any age. The themes of work and life balance, the importance of human relationships, and being in control of your own time management are relevant and important today. Libraries will find this visually appealing version a worthy update to the previous edition. The all-ages appeal and simple yet elegant text make this an ideal family read aloud, great for gift giving and home libraries.

CAROLYN BAILEY (Fall 2013)

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