



My Name is Not Isabella

Jennifer Fosberry

Mike Litwin, Illustrator

Monkey Barrel Press (September 2008)

Hardcover \$19.99 (32pp)

978-0-9802000-7-2

Isabella's mother wakes her up with a rousing, "Good Morning, Isabella," only to find that Isabella is not the person occupying her daughter's bed. This girl insists, "My name is not Isabella! I am Sally, the greatest, toughest astronaut who ever was!" All throughout the day, the girl (yes, Isabella) becomes notable women, including Sally Ride, Annie Oakley, Rosa Parks, Marie Curie, Elizabeth Blackwell, and Mommy.

The mixed-media illustrations are often humorous, but always complementary to the text. When Isabella, who has a large head and a small body, becomes Rosa Parks, she declares, "I am ROSA, the greatest, bravest activist who ever was!" while standing up on top of the seat in the first row of the school bus as bug-eyed spectators glare in astonishment. Mom quips, "Well, Rosa, MARCH out there and take your seat on the bus." Readers will find Isabella's stuffed animal adorable as he is seen on each page, changing as she tries on each new identity. On one page, he reluctantly holds a bulls-eye so Isabella/Annie Oakley can "shoot" maple syrup at it. Later, he stands with arms folded, daring anyone who even thinks of forcing Isabella/Rosa Parks to give up her seat to try it and see what happens.

The illustrator studied at the East Carolina University School of Art in Greenville, North Carolina, and the author studied physics at SUNY Geneseo and SUNY Binghamton. This is Fosberry's first book. Her decision to add Mommy to the list of courageous, determined, and successful women speaks volumes to readers young, old, male, and female. This story was inspired by the author's own daughter's determination and strength, and speaks frankly about self-identity and self affirmation as Isabella decides at the end that she is actually herself. "Isabella [is] the sweetest, kindest, smartest, bravest, fastest, toughest, greatest girl that ever was..." because she possesses the best parts of all of the women she looks up to.

The women's biographies, including Mommy who is described as "...a wonderful mom [who] has a big imagination...loves her children...[and] is smart and funny and tells great stories," can be springboards for discussions with boys and girls about social consciousness, heroism, motivation, and hard work. Readers who want to know more about the courageous women Isabella admires can read the list of works the author consulted. This educational book reminds readers of all ages that individuals can make major contributions to society.

(August 15, 2008)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.