

Nothing

Michael Molinet

Michael Molinet, Illustrator

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A dazzling graphic novel about the power of a child's imagination, Nothing shows that worlds exist in what's unsaid.

Every day is an adventure for those with boundless imaginations, as a boy shows in Michael Molinet's exciting graphic novel for young readers, *Nothing*.

A boy and his mother have a nighttime ritual of discussing his day, but their takes on its situations vary widely. As she inquires about his morning routines, time at school, and after school experiences, she believes she's getting too taciturn responses: her son replies "nothing" to most first questions. Further prodding results in somewhat expanded answers, but to her, they seem to amount to the mundane: he had breakfast, learned a little, and played in the creek with a new friend. She tries to reassure him that more exciting days will come, but oh: if she could see inside his head! A "nothing" day, the boy knows, is never really "nothing."

Molinet's dazzling graphic novel panels show the boy whizzing through adventure after adventure in his mind: getting up is equated to bouncing into a bright world, wherein everything is a challenge, and every accomplishment—even ones as simple as getting dressed—carries its own rewards. Images evocative of movie sets and science fiction dreams show him skipping between experiences in his mind, and each is as boisterous as the next. He imagines his teachers as aliens, the school playground as an extra-planetary space, and a school assembly as in intergalactic arena. Viking ships glide through his thoughts, as do unicorns, lions, and fairy hovels. He can't wait for more of these supposedly humdrum routines.

A glorious depiction of the wonders that exist in the spaces between what children choose to articulate, and the dreams they opt to hold close, Molinet's graphic novel is one that rewards visual attention—and that encourages careful listening. Though the boy's mother is a supportive figure, she remains at the periphery of his escapades—a black and white being in a world awash with color. There's love throughout their exchanges, but also a sense of an unbridgeable gulf. Though the story ends with buzzing expectations for expeditions yet to come, there's also a slight sense of sadness because of this.

A boy's wide imagination has an alchemistic impact on his daily routines in the exciting, melancholy graphic novel *Nothing*.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September 24, 2021)

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