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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ PICTURE BOOKS

One Watermelon Seed

Celia Barker Lottridge
Karen Patkau, illustrator
Fitzhenry and Whiteside (Mar 12, 2008)
Unknown $19.95 (32pp)
978-1-55455-034-0

A luscious watermelon slice on a blue-green background forms the hard-to-resist cover of *One Watermelon Seed*. Once enticed inside, the reader will discover a brightly colored celebration of both gardening and counting.

Max and Josephine, supervised by a curious black cat, fill their fertile plot with ever-increasing numbers of plants. They start with a single watermelon seed and continue until ten corn plants are sprouting along the picket fence.

The working and waiting begins on the next double-page spread, which is a memorable explosion of color: there's Josephine in a yellow hat, a yawning black cat, a scarecrow with an orange vest, a purple watering can partially hidden by bright red strawberries, and a tangle of exuberant green against a soft blue sky.

Harvest time arrives and as the children pick, the reader is invited to count by tens along with them. (Throughout the counting pages, the relevant sequence of figures is printed below the words.) The bounty includes sixty delicious blueberries, perfect strawberries that look ready to be plucked right off the page, and "ninety potatoes, nobby and brown." Soon it's winter. As the cat looks out the window to check on a snow-covered scarecrow, Max and Josephine continue to delight in their tasty harvest.

This is a new edition of a book first published in 1986. Celia Barker Lottridge has written many children's books, including *The Wind Wagon* and *Wings to Fly*; while visual artist Karen Patkau's other works include *Creatures Great and Small*, which she both wrote and illustrated.

As a bonus, the final illustration invites children to look for the creatures, from hummingbirds to earthworms, that flit through the book's pages. Luxuriant illustrations, a counting lesson that goes beyond 1 to 10, and the fun of hunting for hidden creatures: this new edition of *One Watermelon Seed* is sure to be a hit with both preschoolers and those who read to them.

JULIE FALKNER (June 16, 2008)

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