

Owen and Eleanor Make Things Up

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Owen and Eleanor Make Things Up is the second in a series of books for young readers starring cheeky Eleanor and her neighbor and sidekick Owen, both second graders.

In this installment, Eleanor has a school assignment to write a true story about one of her experiences. She is required to keep a journal, and her teacher promises to enter the stories in a library contest. Although Owen is homeschooled and doesn't have the same assignment, he decides to enter the contest as well. The kids talk their parents into joining a martial arts class, thinking that this would provide exciting content for their stories. But then Owen has another idea: Is it okay to "imagine" a little drama?

Owen and Eleanor's dialogue is advanced for second graders, but their schemes are intriguing and active. Their ability to understand and resolve ethical dilemmas is a main theme, with a nod to the power of imagination. Another underlying theme is the importance of friendship; a background story concerns the falling out of two other friends, and Owen and Eleanor are astute observers of these troubles.

Eleanor and Owen themselves depict a friendship that works, despite their differences in gender, race, personalities, and schooling situations.

Illustrations complement rather than tell the story, depicting, for example, the kids practicing their karate moves, or a pensive Owen writing in his journal. Owen's and Eleanor's handwritten journal entries enhance the story well.

Blending just the right amount of heart and life lessons, *Owen and Eleanor Make Things Up* is entertaining and educational.

HILARY DANINHIRSCH (January/February 2019)

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