



Rocks, Jeans, and Busy Machines

Alane Rivera

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Through Violet's open closet door, readers can see six green shirts, three pairs of jeans, and three pairs of thick brown shoes. These outfits and her hard hat reveal that Violet is a construction worker. *Rocks, Jeans, and Busy Machines* is designed to inform young children about structural engineering and was named a finalist in the Next Generation Indie Book Awards.

En route to the park, Violet and her friend Pedro see construction workers using busy machines to pour a concrete foundation. Violet explains that concrete is made of "sand, small rocks, water and cement," and is exceptionally strong. She tells Pedro that cement "is like the sand that was at the beach your family visited last summer!" Unfortunately, young readers may find it hard to make the connection between sand and cement; this should have been explained more fully. Violet continues, "The engineer who designed the building will make it strong enough to stand up to the most powerful wind you can imagine, and even heavy snow!" Pedro and Violet imagine clouds pelting a tall building with snow, rain, lightning, and wind. Later, Violet stresses an engineer's responsibility for making bridges strong.

Alane Rivera holds a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She works as an engineer for CPS Energy. Raymundo Rivera has masters' degrees in business administration and biomedical engineering. Together, the co-authors run Rivera Engineering in San Antonio.

Phillip Sada's brightly colored drawings will attract children's attention. Sada teaches photography and art at the high school level and does freelance illustration and photography.

The age designation for this book is five to nine, but nine-year-olds will probably find it too simple. Since a girl named Darla only appears on a page that introduces characters, explaining that she will be in a future book would have helped avoid confusion.

The smiles on the faces of Violet and Pedro reinforce the positive impression of engineering that the authors present in this first book in a planned series to stimulate interest in engineering. Reading about the work of engineers will broaden children's understanding of the jobs people do, and Violet's knowledge of engineering imparts the message that this field is open to girls as well as boys.

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