

Rosa's Room

Barbara Bottner

Beth Spiegel, Illustrator

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Anyone who has moved as a child remembers the event as a significant and potentially scary milestone of childhood. However, Rosa approaches the situation with determination and style in this picture book, which reads like a how-to manual on settling into a new home for the early elementary set. Rosa's poise and persistence are not surprising since she springs to life from the pen of the creator of other strong and appealing heroines, like Bootsie from *Bootsie Barker Bites*.

This picture book is written to be read by or to the very youngest readers, with just a simply-written sentence or two on each page. In just a few words, the author creates a delicious tension as the reader follows Rosa's quest to settle into her new surroundings and wonders just what will it take to help her feel comfortable. Rosa starts with a room that "seemed empty," and fills it with the trappings of childhood, one item at a time. Crayons are arranged in the desk on Monday, her treasure box is displayed on Tuesday, and Thursday brings a trip to the library where "Rosa borrowed five new books. She placed them around her room."

The author studied art in Paris and worked as a theatrical set designer before trying her hand at writing. She has since published more than a dozen energetic, humorous children's books, and illustrated several of them, as well as working in journalism, script writing, and teaching.

The illustrator has received several awards for her work editing television documentaries and directing animated films. This is her first children's book. Her delicate and detailed watercolor illustrations reflect Rosa's progress as her empty space is transformed into a pastel-hued paradise of flowers, kites, and butterflies.

Although Rosa continuously adds to her surroundings, picking flowers in the park and even recruiting her mother to sew a new bedspread, she never quite feels finished. Finally, "on Sunday," Rosa spies what she's been missing-she looks out her window and sees a girl her age. Rosa invites the girl, Lili, to visit her room. Having found a friend, Rosa seems to have finally made a home for herself-a wonderful message that any child who finds herself in a new environment can take to heart.

CAROLYN BAILEY (September / October 2004)

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