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Juvenile Fiction

Rosita and Sian Search for a Great Work of Art
Sue Robishaw
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Stuck in a rigid structured environment, unlike "Before Things Changed and Large Factories came," Rosita and Sian search for a Great Work of Art to win a contest challenge and capture the prize of flying in a Great Sailplane. Written in allegorical form this book best presents itself as a read-aloud story to be shared by adults and children. Sian and Rosita visit a librarian, a painter, the band director, theatre director and a dancer to understand just what a great work of art is. Robishaw bestows such names as Mr. Wondrum, Mr. Bindform, Mrs. Antilaf and Mrs. Sansdiverse to the bound-up adult characters. In their frustration, Rosita and Sian turn to a nonconforming friend, Tara Parvaneh, who guides them into creating their own work of art not to win the contest, but to just have fun. The pair decide to write a play to encompass all the arts to present on deadline day.

Tara Parvaneh introduces the children to a hermit who still knows how to create colors other than purple, brown and gray. He teaches them to mine and grind calcite, ochre, malachite and azurite to make colors for their paint. The whole town including Rosita and Sean gather to present their works of art for the contest. All are pronounced winners and thereafter can be seen smiling more, having more fun and even learning to fly the sailplane.

The story is told in first person by Rosita. Her voice is lyrical often repeating throughout the book, "Sian didn't need to say anything—I know how he felt, and he knew how I felt, because Sian and I are friends." Rosita can be found dancing around the quiet, introspective Sian creating movement in a story with minimal action. An adult reading to children could help them explore the author's choice of character names; discover works of art that the author never names but references; and find the deeper meaning of the allegory.

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