

The Cousins Are Coming

Kay Jones

Peter Trimarco, Illustrator

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Forthright and sweet, this picture book depicts an enjoyable, loving visit with family.

In Kay Jones's boisterous picture book *The Cousins Are Coming*, children anticipate a day full of lighthearted adventures.

A brother and his two sisters watch for their cousins' arrival. They're excited to embark on a day of make-believe with costumes, to spy on their parents, to sift through family photographs and talk about the subjects' vintage clothing and hairstyles, to share meals, and to play outdoors. A sleepover is scheduled, too—and, they hope, even more fun the next day.

Because the children are unnamed, they are somewhat generic, though. This is furthered by the narrative's use of the collective "we" instead of a distinctive narrator. And because the topic is contained, there are few surprises in the tale. Instead, it focuses on the day's progression, honoring its events with perky rhymes. And the children's conversations are lively—their rambunctious interactions even include the opinions of their pets.

The cartoon illustrations do much to elevate the work, with fun embellishments that stretch the scale of objects: a larger-than-life board game includes a wheelbarrow full of play money; elsewhere, an ice cream dessert is drizzled in chocolate towers. They make use of a soft palette and minimized backgrounds, drawing attention to the children's actions, which are sometimes disorderly and at other times silly. The children flash accusatory looks at each other over who caused a disturbance; there are tumbles of sleeping bags and instances of flying popcorn and peas shot across the table. There's also subtle nostalgia to these images—no electronic devices other than the living room television are depicted.

In the upbeat picture book *The Cousins Are Coming*, a family visit is a treasured opportunity for plenty of play.

KAREN RIGBY (May 22, 2023)

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