Clarion Review

Picture Books

Valentine's Journey
Pauline Jacqueline Adams
Pauline Jacqueline Adams, illustrator
Xlibris
978-1-4771-0984-7
Two Stars (out of Five)

Valentine's Journey is about a year in the life of a puppy. Pauline Adams has written the book in order to remember the puppyhood of her precious dog. She tells her story from the dog's imagined perspective.

From the moment her family finds her on the Internet, Valentine is a beloved puppy. She joins them after a long airplane ride, and she is happy from the first moment she meets her Nanny and Pappy and her big sister, Karen. Throughout her first year she has lots of fun. She meets more of her family, plays in the garden, goes to obedience training, and enjoys several holidays.

Though the everyday moments of Valentine's life are no doubt very important to Adams, there is, unfortunately, not much here to interest readers. There is minimal plot, and the author is not trying to illustrate a point or teach a lesson. Children can learn so much from reading, but this book offers very little in the way of education.

More significantly, the story is poorly structured and the text is full of errors in both grammar and punctuation. Paragraphs start and end randomly. Rather than expressing a specific thought, each paragraph covers multiple ideas and often long stretches of time. There are run-on sentences and sentence fragments and frequent changes in verb tense. For example, Adams writes: "the weather is very nice out today, Nanny and I will go outside and work. She will tie me under a shade tree where she can see me while she is working. She is busy working, and I am busy digging in the dirt and mulch under the shade tree. Nanny turns around and sees me digging in the dirt and said 'What do you think you are doing, little girl?'"

There are two valuable components of Adams's book. The author's love for her dog shines through on every page. Many children will be able to relate to the affection the author has

for her pet and may even come to care about Valentine as well. Additionally, the author has also illustrated the book. Though her human figures are somewhat stiff and oddly proportioned, her dogs are well painted and again express the love and joy she finds in these animals.

Valentine's Journey would be most appropriate for children under age six. The lack of a structured story along with the errors in grammar and punctuation, however, will undermine its appeal to a general audience.

Catherine Thureson