FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ PICTURE BOOKS

Who Made This Cake?

Chihiro Nakagawa
Junji Koyose, illustrator
Front Street (September 2008)
Unknown $16.95 (32pp)
978-1-59078-595-9

Every confectionary artist's dream is to have people ask admiringly, "Who made this cake?" Readers will surely be surprised at the answer provided in this colorful book. The opening endpapers show more one hundred tiny people frolicking on their way to work. There, they become serious, even diligent, as they take their places on hydraulic shovels, excavators, and flatbed dump trucks. "Here we go!" they say. They are construction engineers who build cakes. They mix the ingredients, bake the cake, and then decorate it with strawberries, whipped cream, and of course, candles. The grand finale occurs when a yellow and blue helicopter positions a large cookie that reads "Happy Birthday" in the center of the cake.

The finished product is welcomed by an anxious toddler. The construction workers like to see how their work is received, so they line up outside the boy's window as mom brings the cake in, but they disappear before party time. The closing endpapers show the little people at play (painting, reading, playing instruments, and so on) after satisfying another customer.

The author, who has translated other books from Japanese in addition to this one, graduated from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts & Music. Here she strategically positions key action "off stage": the title page shows a mom holding the telephone to her ear while a business man on the page before it tells her, "All right, leave it to us!" Mom and her family leave and readers are left to wonder if the eggs and mixing utensils left on the counter mean that the workers will bake the cake in mom's kitchen, or if, as most of the subsequent detailed and lifelike illustrations imply, the workers are outside in an actual construction site. Either way, this first-time illustrator of children's books, who is well-known in Japan for his paintings of motorcycles, creates a world of work that readers can lose themselves in.

Children will have fun repeating the sounds that appear in large letters (e.g., *grrrrr* and *ccccrash*) and trying to identify the trucks in the construction fleet. This book stimulates the imagination, encouraging readers to look at ordinary objects in extraordinary ways. Kids mesmerized by the magic in the kitchen that produces their favorite dishes will giggle at the sight of gigantic eggs and enormous strawberries carried by a crane, and they might even want to try baking themselves.
(August 18, 2009)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.