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Juvenile Fiction

Why Am I an Only Child?
Jane Annunziata
Marc A. Nemiroff
Margaret Scott, illustrator
Magination Press
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Mixing bold-faced standard computer type with hand-drawn text, this book addresses the issue of being an only child. Eudora is a rhinoceros who feels confused and angry because she's an only child. When she asks her well-dressed parents why this is, their response is that all families are different. This is shown through two wordless pages featuring a menagerie of animals. Eudora is then asked to consider the good points about her single child status. The book ends with her realizing, "I'm an only but I'm not lonely and every family has its own right size." While some children might be concerned about their only-child status, there's so little depth of emotion they will be unmoved by Eudora's predicament. The resolution of the problem feels incomplete, answers are given rather than experienced. The art exists mainly to perk up the dull text. Words may be placed in road signs or on pedestals or, literally, in balloons. The use of animals of different species might distract the reader from the real issues involved. For instance, rabbits are used to illustrate the family with lots of kids. One major drawback to this title is that in an effort to be universal, Eudora never does find out why she's an only child. What her parents do say is, "We would like a MILLION of you," an evasive response most children would recognize as an exaggerated falsehood.

Martha Topol