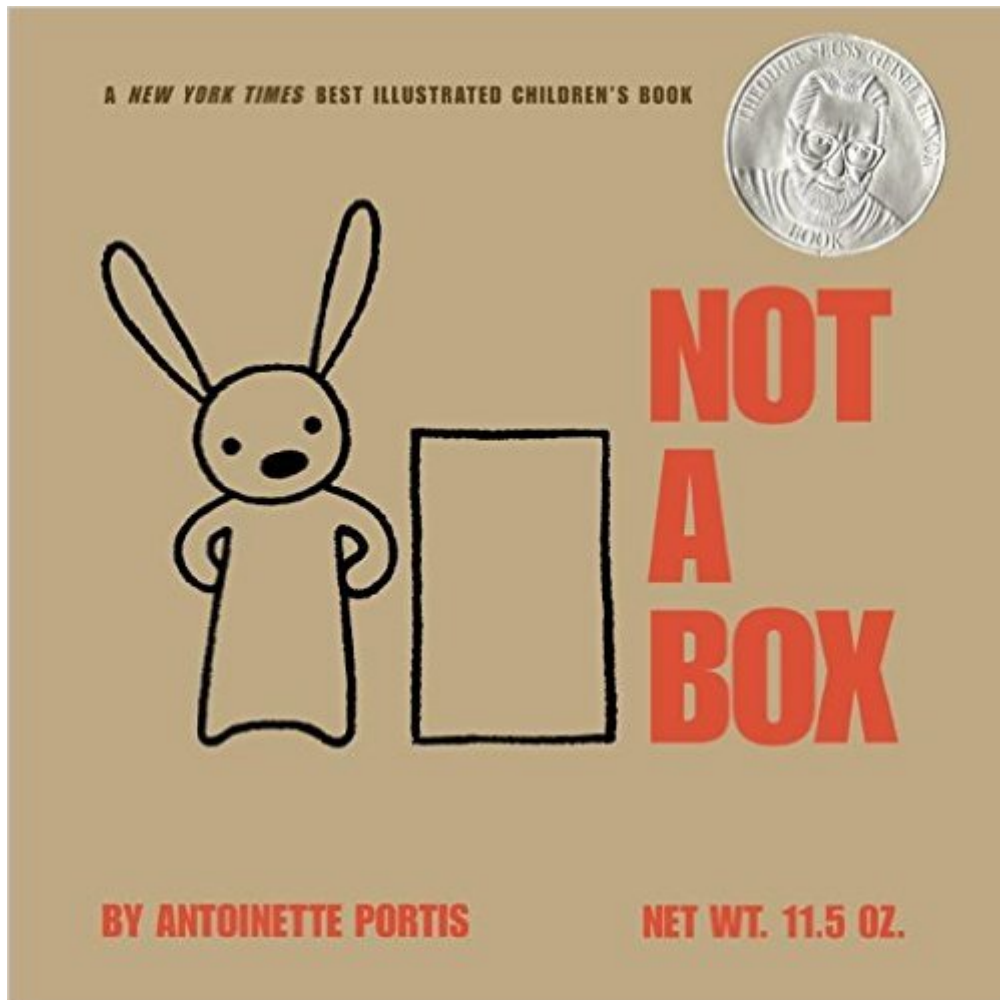


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# Not A Box



## Synopsis

A box is just a box . . . unless it's not a box. From mountain to rocket ship, a small rabbit shows that a box will go as far as the imagination allows. Inspired by a memory of sitting in a box on her driveway with her sister, Antoinette Portis captures the thrill when pretend feels so real that it actually becomes real—when the imagination takes over and inside a cardboard box, a child is transported to a world where anything is possible.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins (December 12, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061123226

ISBN-13: 978-0061123221

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (193 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #4,991 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Rabbits #140 in Books > Children's Books > Activities, Crafts & Games > Activity Books #171 in Books > Children's Books > Early Learning > Basic Concepts

Grade Level: Preschool and up

## Customer Reviews

Pay attention, folks! Are you looking for the perfect book for a preschool child this holiday season? Then I've got the book for you: Antoinette Portis' "Not A Box." Every so often you run across a book that screams "instant classic." "Not A Box" is that book for me this year. As you can tell from the cover, "Not A Box" features simple, iconic line drawings of a rabbit and a box. Portis dedicates the book "to children everywhere sitting in cardboard boxes" and celebrates the magic a large box brings to a child. The book opens with a question: "Why are you sitting in a box?" The young rabbit replies, offended, "it's not a box." And the illustration shows him sitting in a racecar. And, so on. Rabbit climbs a mountain, fights a fire, wears a robot costume. His box is anything, but "it's NOT NOT NOT NOT a box!" What it is, though, is highly, highly, highly, highly recommended.

Recently there was an article in Publisher's Weekly describing the recent downturn in picture book sales and what publishing companies were going to do to combat this trend. Possible solutions that

were mentioned included making picture books as sparkly, glittery, and full of eye-catching razzle dazzle-ish as possible. No mention was made of whether the stories matching these bombastic visual monstrosities would be any good. So after hearing a story like this it does my withered little heart good to know that there is still room out there for a book like, "Not a Box". "Not a Box" is not flashy. It doesn't seduce the child's visual senses with tacky holographic papered stimuli. Drawn with meticulous care and simple imagery, author Antoinette Portis's book is a sublime joy to both look at and to read. In an age where books have to be either sporting their own personal lighting system or go for the gross-out jokes to get attention, make some room in your home for this small, unassuming delight. As the story opens and the reader flips through the publication and title page, a small bunny spots and tugs away a box that it has found. Now we see the bunny sitting quietly within his treasure as someone (perhaps the reader) asks, "Why are sitting in a box?" A turn of the page and it's the same bunny in the same box, but now red lines have appeared around them to sketch out a fabulous racing car. The opposite page is now bright red and at the bottom of it sit the words, "It's not a box." Turn the page and now the bunny is standing on top of the box. When asked why, the red lines have turned the box into an alpine peak with the bunny at the crest of the summit. "It's not a box." And so it goes until the reader finally asks of the bunny (with, perhaps, a note of impatience in the question), "Well, what is it then?" The bunny ponders this, in the same position as Rodin's, "The Thinker", then comes up with a fabulous answer. As we see it blasting off into space it waves good-bye from its rocket-box to say, "It's my Not-a-Box!" The last image is of a distant bunny soaring past the planet Saturn. Who amongst us was enamored of cardboard boxes when they were young? Yeah, exactly. All of us. This book brought to mind those old Peanuts comic strips where Snoopy would sit on top of his doghouse and become a WWI Flying Ace. It's that same thought of taking the familiar and giving it that added twist of imagination to make it fantastic. More impressive is the fact that the readership for this book is vast. Both kids who can read on their own and the youngest of children will be able to understand the sense of play going on here. Plus, and I can't stress this enough, there's a kind of child-friendly wit at work here. Kids will get the joke of the bunny (who's sexless state allows it to be either a boy or a girl depending on the reader) that continually contradicts the person asking it these seemingly inane questions. As for the art, Portis's style is so simple that it brings to mind the work of Netherlands' artist Dick Bruna (creator of Miffy). Thick black or red lines make each and every image completely understandable to young readers. The text is also simple and spare enough that no lengthy explanations are required. Fans of good design will applaud Portis's sense of clean lines and meticulous colors. Only three colors ever really make it into the book: red, light brown, and a light cream. And while I would not have plucked those three as

ideal picture book mates myself, here they work together in a kind of perfect little syncopation. Recently someone asked me to recommend picture books with simple words that also had a heart to them. This kind of a request is less easy than it sounds, and I had to admit to being a little bit stumped. That is, until I chanced upon "Not a Box". Consider this the quiet, funny, unassuming antidote to the crass world of marketing out there. A classic.

This was taped a month before Kaiden turns three. He loves to "read."

I remember the lure of a box, especially those wonderfully long refrigerator sized boxes. This book evokes that magic of the imagination. Even the cover of the book mimics it. It is brown paper with no dust jacket, on the front it proclaims in weight in oz. On the back a red arrow points out "this end up". Inside is a classic story. A bunny with a box (or as learned by the end, the bunny's "not-a-box") and a powerful imagination. Each page the bunny is asked what he is doing with the box and he always replies it is "not a box" and the reader gets a visual explanation of what the bunny is doing. Climbing a mountain--instead of standing on top of a box. This book is a treasure and would be great to read out loud to a group of younger kids.

As the previous review stated, this book has basic graphic pictures, perfect for the pre-reader who looks to the picture for story assistance. The text has repetition of the "it's not a box" phrase which aids the pre-reader in word recognition and soon they'll be shouting it out at the right time. They'll also be able to figure out other vocabulary from the pictures and the repetition. Parents will enjoy reading this book to their children, it's quick, it's fun and it perfectly captures the childhood joy of playing in a cardboard box. Children will enjoy listening to this book because they can correctly anticipate and shout out the story. I highly recommend this book for preschool or kindergarten classes. The previous reviewer is correct in claiming instant classic status for this text.

Antoinette Portis, Not a Box (Harper, 2006) If you have a kid-- or a pet-- or you were a kid (--or a pet)-- who would get all the cool toys for Christmas and then end up playing with the box, this is a book for you. It's about a rabbit, and a box. A box that's not a box. It's a lot of things, but it's not a box. It's exceptionally simple. You'd read it to an infant, maybe a young toddler. But after the kids outgrow it, you will return to it again and again, because it's got the simple charm that marks all the enduring kids' books, as well as the kind of quick, rhythmic vocabulary that will stay with you for years after only a few readings. This is great-- even if you don't have kids, you want it. \*\*\*\*

The little bunny has something that looks a lot like a box. It is for sitting in, standing on, squirting, wearing, and more. Whatever this rectangular thing is, it is Not A Box! The magic of cardboard is encapsulated in this cute little book. From the cardboard cover to the simple colors and drawings, the simplicity of imaginary play will delight small children everywhere. But Parents Beware! It is absolutely essential to have an empty cardboard box on hand when you go to read this book, for your child will want an adventure of her/his own. Reviewed by Christina Wantz Fixemer 01/16/2007

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