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The Most Magnificent Thing



Synopsis

Award-winning author and illustrator Ashley Spires has created a charming picture book about an unnamed girl and her very best friend, who happens to be a dog. The girl has a wonderful idea. She is going to make the most MAGNIFICENT thing! She knows just how it will look. She knows just how it will work. All she has to do is make it, and she makes things all the time. Easy-peasy! But making her magnificent thing is anything but easy, and the girl tries and fails, repeatedly. Eventually, the girl gets really, really mad. She is so mad, in fact, that she quits. But after her dog convinces her to take a walk, she comes back to her project with renewed enthusiasm and manages to get it just right. For the early grades' exploration of character education, this funny book offers a perfect example of the rewards of perseverance and creativity. The girl's frustration and anger are vividly depicted in the detailed art, and the story offers good options for dealing honestly with these feelings, while at the same time reassuring children that it's okay to make mistakes. The clever use of verbs in groups of threes is both fun and functional, offering opportunities for wonderful vocabulary enrichment. The girl doesn't just "make" her magnificent thing --- she "tinkers and hammers and measures," she "smoothes and wrenches and fiddles," she "twists and tweaks and fastens." These precise action words are likely to fire up the imaginations of youngsters eager to create their own inventions and is a great tie-in to learning about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (292 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Customer Reviews

I was at a conference of math enthusiasts the other day to discuss kids and the state of math related children's books. Not my usual scene but I was open to it. Despite what some might fear, the day was thoroughly fascinating and the mathematicians in attendance made many fine and salient points that I had never thought to consider. At one point they took it upon themselves to correct some common math-related misunderstandings that have grown over the years. Most fascinating was the idea of trial and error. Kids today live in an era where it often feels to them that if they don't get something right the first time then they should just give it up and try something else. It's hard to make them understand that in a lot of professions, math amongst them, much of the job consists of making mistakes and tinkering for long periods of time before getting to the ultimate solution. It got me to thinking about how there really aren't a lot of children's books out there that tackle this subject. Or, for those few that do, tackle it well. The remarkable thing then about a book like "The Most Magnificent Thing" by Ashley Spires isn't just the way in which she's gone about discussing this issue, but also the fact that it works as brilliantly as it does. This is the anti-perfection picture book. The one that dares to suggest that maybe a little trial and error is necessary when trying to get something right. A girl and her dog are best friends. They do everything together from exploring to racing to making things. So when the girl has an idea one day for "the most MAGNIFICENT thing" that they can make together, the dog has no objection. Plans are drawn up, supplies gathered, and the work begins. And everything seems to be fine until it becomes infinitely clear that the thing she has made?

As you may have guessed the protagonist is attempting to create a most magnificent thing. Frustrated by her lack of immediate and not so immediate success the girl continues to make her idea for the most magnificent thing come to life, over and over again. I love all the different ways the girl tries to make the magnificent thing better, one time she makes it long, then she tries short, then rough, smooth, big, small... At the peak of her frustration she explodes, "it's not her finest moment" and she quits. She gains a little perspective with the help of her assistant (her pug-ish pup). And comes back to examine the many wrong things she made only to realize they all have things about them that she likes. After closely examining all of the wrong things she finally knows how to make her thing magnificent and she does! It's not perfect, it leans, it's heavy, it's not the best color but it's just what she wanted and she's no longer disappointed. This is a sweet book, I like that the

protagonist isn't named, she's just "the girl", she could be any girl. The story has a nice sense of humor to it, the assistant adds the levity with his contributions, he circles, he tugs, he wags, then later "suggests" a much needed walk. I also like the way the neighbors found uses for the girls failures, they might not be the magnificent thing but they're not worthless, they will serve someone else's purpose. But what I like most about this story is the way the author conveys the emotions the girl goes through in the process of creating her magnificent thing, Ms. Spires gets it just right. The girl is consumed and a little oblivious of the world around her as she works toward her goal.

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