

BOOK CORNER

by Sharon Levin, sharonlevin@mindspring.com

Peace and Unity, what a wonderful theme for a newsletter and a conference. Last October I was lucky enough to attend the IBBY/Reading the World conference on Multicultural Literature for children (IBBY is the International Board on Books for Youth) a group that is filled with people trying to promote peace, understanding and unity through the literature for our children, our hope and future. It was so encouraging to be with these wonderful people during a time that was so uncertain (and continues to be that way).

There will be another Reading the World Conference in San Francisco March 1 & 2, 2003. (www.readingtheworld.com)

So, onto the books!

King and King by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland (Tricycle Press, 2002). This starts off as the typical prince finding a bride story, Queen is tired of ruling, orders prince to get married. She harasses him enough until he agrees and they invite princesses from all over the world to come parade before the prince. He's bored, the queen is disappointed and it looks hopeless until the last princess comes in accompanied by her brother, Prince Lee (get it? Princely? Someone had to point that out to me, I'm a little slow) and the two princes' eyes meet and they fall in love. They get married and rule as King and King. Well, all I can say is, it's about time! A fun story with a message that doesn't hit you over the head with a baseball bat (unlike *Heather Has Two Mommies* which broke new ground, but is NOT a well written book). The art is unique with sprinklings of Dutch words in paper cut outs and all kinds of princesses. I was a little uncomfortable that the princess from Bombay seemed to be teased about the length of her arms, but that could be me being oversensitive, since no one else seems to be bothered by it. All in all, a wonderful addition to bookshelves anywhere.

Visiting Day by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by James Ransome (Scholastic 2002) The first time I read this book I said, "Hmm." The second time I said, "Aah." This is about a little girl and her grandma getting ready to visit her daddy. Grandma is "smiling her secret just-for-Daddy-and-me smile and me lying in bed, smiling my just-for-Grandma-and-Daddy smile." Daddy is in prison, we don't know why in this book and it

doesn't matter. This book is about family love that extends beyond time and prison walls. This book is the story of too many children in this country and it's touching, heart-wrenching and beautiful. Many of you may believe that it doesn't apply to anyone you know, but one never knows. It is a part of the story of both the author and illustrator and in fact was a closely held family secret, for the illustrator, until this book. The illustrations are rich, beautiful and occasionally painful especially the illustration of the father and daughter parting until the next month. This is a treasure.

A Place to Grow by Soyung Pak, illustrated by Marcelino Truong (Arthur A. Levine Books, 2002) All families, like seeds, need a place to grow. A place with sunshine (hope), rain, good land (love and nurturing). This is the story of Soyung Pak's family's emigration from South Korea to the United States. When she asks her father why seeds travel he says, "a seed needs land to grow." When she answers that there is land everywhere he says, "Not good land.." "Good land is warm and safe, like a cozy home." Are there parts that will make grown ups uncomfortable? Well, the mention of "too many guns and not enough love." might fit. Just (AS ALWAYS) know your audience and take it from there.

Lizzy's Do's and Don'ts by Jessica Harper, illustrated by Lindsay Harper duPont (Harper/Collins 2002) Well, this book felt like it described my life. All Lizzy's mom seems to say is 'Don't!' "Don't shout indoors. Don't tickle so hard. don't take the deck and lose one card. Don't, don't, don't!" Lizzy decides it's her turn and say's "Don't act too tough. Don't say 2 chocolates are enough. Don't, don't, don't!" Then they start listing all kinds of wonderful 'Do's'. A wonderful book to share with a child, especially on one of those really tough days.

Rain Romp by Jane Kurtz, illustrated by Dyanna Wolcott (Greenwillow Books, 2002) A delightful romp and stomp through a gray day and a gray mood. The words are lyrical and

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