



The Boys

Jeff Newman

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This wordless picture book tells the story of a quiet boy working to overcome his shyness and finding the courage to play baseball with the other kids in the park... With the help of a few old timers from the nearby park bench, our boy is coaxed out of his shell and into the game. Beautifully illustrated, this is the story about the young finding out how much fun it is to live life... And the old finding out how much life there still is to love.

The Boys Details

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Author : Jeff Newman

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From Reader Review The Boys for online ebook

Rosa Cline says

When I first picked this book up I was like 'what kind of book is this' I flipped through it and since it didn't have any text other than the days of the week I put it aside since I was reading outloud to my adult special needs son. But then I thought the little boy on the cover looked cute, so I picked it up and 'read' it. Each page is very nicely illustrated with emotions and lessons learned. It teaches a little boy in the most incredible way how to overcome his shyness and join the other kids in their baseball play. And the way he finds his courage is through four elderly men that he watches and mimics every day sitting on a bench in the park. The elderly men see the little boy sitting out on his fun, and so they begin to act like a little boy themselves. Bringing happiness in the end not only to the little boy but to the elderly men as well. What started out as a book I was just going to send back to the library unopened ended up being a very nice book.

Sandy Brehl says

Except for the pages labeled with days of a single week, this is a wordless but eloquent book. When a young boy moves to a new neighborhood his world turns around in the space of one week. First overcome with shyness, he packs away his baseball gear. Then, day by day, he joins, identifies with, is challenged by a quartet of old gents on a park bench. Eventually they lead him to participating in the baseball game, and they, too, leave their bench to participate as his cheering gallery.

White space, bold minimalist strokes, and vivid facial and body expressions speak volumes.

Sarah BT says

I love this little picture book! It's a wordless picture book (the only words are the days of the week) and it's the story of one boy's week and his desire to play baseball in his new town.

The illustrations are cute, although at times felt a bit undone. (There's a bird on one page that appears to be missing a head!) The storyline may be a bit hard for younger kids to follow, but with the help of adult guiding them, I think they would enjoy it. I'm not sure if kids would get the humor as much as kids, but I found it hilarious!

The whole book reminded me of a Pixar short. Definitely worth looking at.

Alice says

okay People! What am I missing? In general I hate wordless books, but this book....I loathe! I just don't get it! I do not like the artwork, I can't tell if it is girl or a boy (thanks cover for clarifying that) and I just don't get it...I was bored from the first page.

I looked through it again to see what the buzz with the 5 and 4 stars ratings. I still don't get it! Are the old

men playing games playing on the monkey bars or is the kid imagining it? SO lost and so bored just writing thisplease don't read this book...unless you need help falling asleep...then you are golden!

Katie Fitzgerald says

This wordless picture book shows a little boy afraid to fail on the baseball field sitting on the sidelines with a bunch of old men. Sick of seeing a young man wasting his youth, the old guys get together and play ball themselves. Reading this book is almost like watching a cartoon. The faces of the characters are really well-drawn, and some of the images are laugh-out-loud funny.

Read at Read-Along Story Time on 4/4/13: <http://storytimesecrets.blogspot.com/...>

Betsy says

See this purple foot-shaped bruise on the back of my left leg? Wanna know how I got it? Of course you do, oh imaginary people I'm talking to in my head. Yeah, I got that by kicking myself for not having a copy of *The Boys* by Jeff Newman on hand the other day. I will endeavor to explain. You see I was working the children's reference desk in my library when a mother walked up to me with an interesting request. "Do you have any wordless picture books?" she asked. Do I! Merrily I skipped back and grabbed the lady a couple copies of Museum Trip, Home, Flotsam, and The Lion and the Mouse. After I'd handed them over and basked in that feeling of doing a good job it occurred to me . . . where was *The Boys*? That magnificent best-wordless-book-I've-seen-in-years title hadn't been purchased by my library yet when the woman asked. In the future, though, folks will have a hard time escaping my new Newman love. This book is remarkable without having to breathe so much as a word.

A new boy moves to a strange city and though he's nervous he puts on his sneakers and takes his bat and ball to the local park to play with the other kids. Unfortunately, the boy can't bring himself to ask the other children to let him play and contents himself with sitting with the old men on the nearby park bench. Wednesday he brings some bread to feed the birds and the men look concerned. Thursday he makes himself some old man pants and slicks his hair back, so as to better fit in. On Friday, the old men take matters into their own hands. They play on the playground equipment. They ride bikes. Finally, on Sunday, they decide to play some baseball. The boy, unmoved until now, is unable to resist and ends up knocking one out of the park. So when Monday comes along, he works up his courage, asks some kids to play, and gets to shine amongst his peers at last. Using words only to convey days of the week, this is a gentle story of how men who have experienced life encourage a boy to live his own.

Newman has done an excellent job at conveying a story without missing a beat. At the same time, he creates little problems for himself and then solves them. One of the old men wears dark glasses at all times. So when the guys start shooting one another glances and queries about the kid, that old man has to make physical signs to show his concern. Shrugs. Outstretched hands. Look too at how Newman lays out a scene. He deftly goes from close-ups to two-page spreads to action sequences where characters stand against a pure white background. It's like a graphic novel without the panels. And at the end of the book the scenes pull back from the boy's face as he finally gets to play with boys his age, to a distant look at a power shot, to a final even further spread where all our characters are mere stick figures, and blue and green shapes give just the merest impression of park and city.

That kind of pull back has all the feeling of an animated sequence. I kept glancing at Newman's bio on the back flap of this book to see if he had some kind of job in animation (survey says: he lives in Milwaukee, so probably not so much). I only wondered because these images felt like classic storyboarding for Pixar movies like *Up*. There's a retro throwback feel to the way Newman tosses his gouache and inks upon a page. And I'm not talking about the old-fashioned story of a kid who wants to play baseball (and not a girl in sight, no less). I'm talking about the way these pages are painted. The thick black lines that jump between delicate details and broad strokes. Newman can convey a power hit to a baseball by merely painting a light hexagon in yellow and then overlay it with a slightly askew black outlined hexagon, adding in the standard black movement lines around the ball and bat. There's a style to this book. A style and a skill. Storytelling like this doesn't happen by accident.

Multiple readings yield their own rewards too. You begin to notice things about the old men, like the fact that while three of them change clothes every day, one of them (the grumpy one) always wears the same red shirt, grey pant combo. Heck, you'd also notice that the grumpy one only really pays attention to the kid when he sees how the pigeons prefer the boy to him. And when the boy trades in his old men for young boys, you might notice that the boys correlate to the old guys in terms of looks (there are four of them, one always wears a striped shirt, etc.). They're little details, maybe not immediately apparent, but when you notice them you realize how much love went into this book.

And he's just so good at character too! You know these old men. They're the fellows who had their day and now are content to hang out with their buddies in the park, reading books or feeding pigeons. And they are seriously worried about this boy when he keeps coming back. You know the boy too, for that matter. One of my favorite sequences is of the old guys pedaling by him on their bikes and wheels while the kid waves his stick/cane at them. The words "You, whippersnappers" have never been so perfectly conveyed without language before. Without wasting a page, Newman gets you to believe in the boy's quickie transfiguration from kid to old fogey. The view of him combing his hair back against his head is a kind of reverse *Saturday Night Fever*.

I hope I did it justice. As a person who spent much of her childhood recess periods hanging out with the recess monitor (yep, I was that kid) I identified with this book immediately. I think that any kid who has ever felt nervous about approaching their peers will find something to love in this story, though. Newman is probably best known at this point for his previous picture book, *Hippo No Rhino*. That book was cute, but this one is shows a mastery of art and heart that would be difficult for any author/illustrator to capture in just 40 pages. Brilliant brilliant brilliant.

Ages 4-8.

Kristen says

Practically wordless, I love love love the old men's faces and the lengths they go to in order to help a new kid get up the gumption to join the local baseball game.

babyhippoface says

I absolutely love this book. With no text other than the days of the week marking the passage of time, Jeff

Newman has told a fantastic story of a shy little boy's whose inspiration comes from an unlikely source.

Day One: father and son unload a moving van. Boy unpacks his box of beloved baseball gear, then heads for the local park, where a group of kids are engaged in a lively game. He is too shy to ask for a place on the field, so he seats himself on a bench beside four older gentlemen who are reading, feeding the pigeons, or just watching the world go by in general. Though no one speaks, the gentlemen take note of the boy's unhappiness.

Day Two: Boy packs away his baseball gear, grabs a loaf of bread and heads to the park to sit beside the older men and feed the pigeons.

Day Three: Boy again heads to the park bench, but this time he has combed his hair back off his forehead in true "old man" style and is wearing a bowtie and pink plaid pants. Yep, he's becoming one of them.

I'll let you read the book yourself to find out what happens. It is so worth it.

Newman's spare gouache-and-ink illustrations are reminiscent of the 1950's and '60's, and they are perfect. Excellent use of bold streaks and white space. There is no need for words; the characters' facial expressions and body language tell the story.

There is nothing about this book that I did not love. It's a gem.

Alex Swink says

“The Boys” starts with the sadness of a little boy who is nervous to interact with other children. So, he turns to the bench and assimilates into the “old man” group that rests there. This book teaches the reader to be bold, to interact with people of all ages, and do the things you love.

David says

A wordless picture book about a young boy finding the courage, with the help of some old timers, to join the game at the park. (Goodreads summary)

The Boys by Jeff Newman is an essentially wordless book, naming days of the week to indicate when action took place. The illustrations are rendered in gouache and ink and effectively tell the story through body language & facial expressions. There's a retro feel to the illustrations. The sequence where the boy is harrassed/encouraged by the old men to get into the action shows the boy with enlarged manga-type eyes, which jarred me a little. I wonder if the story will be enjoyed as much by children as it will by older, more sophisticated and nostalgic adult readers. For ages 4 to 8, and themed story-times on baseball, friendship, or shyness.

Michelle says

Fun wordless picture book with amazing and expressive illustrations

Jess Brown says

I adored this nearly wordless picture book! By telling the story through the days of the week, Newman sets up the sweet tale of a little boy trying to find a way to fit in. I love that the story could take you almost anywhere that you and your little one reading it are willing to go (and therein lies the wonder and imagination in wordless picture books). I could see it going from early elementary on up--you really can make it work!

Tasha says

I only opened this book to get a feel for the sort of book it was. I was immediately captivated by the art, the wordless story. I set it down with misty eyes and a wide smile. What a book!

My problem is that I want you to discover it and I don't want to mess any of its wonder of wordlessness up for you. I've tried to put words to it, but it seems to minimize the story, as if pinning it down removes the life from it. So I will briefly tell you the premise and proceed to gush about it in more general terms.

A young boy moves to a new town. He heads to the park with his bat, ball and glove. He watches from behind a tree but is too shy to approach the playing children on the baseball diamond. So he plunks himself down on a bench near some older gentlemen. The story continues from there. It is fresh, winning, and sweetly surprising. There is a universal quality to it, a subtle humor, and a lovely simplicity.

Newman has created a book that is an instant classic. His use of a vintage style works well with the subject, giving the book a timeless feel. The only words in the book are the days of the week as time passes, otherwise all of the story is told in the illustrations. Newman tells this story in the slump of shoulders, bowed head, glaring eyes, and a determined set of a jaw. There is never any doubt what the young boy is feeling because it is shown so clearly and yet with subtle skill.

Get this book, read it, read it again (because you must) and then decide what lucky person you will hand it to next. It is a book to read with someone on your lap, to savor and to simply enjoy.

Green Bean says

In this wordless picture book, a bashful boy works up the courage to join the other kids in a neighborhood baseball game. Thanks to the gentle nudging of a group of "old-timers" that he meets on a park bench, the boy transforms from a shy bystander to an active participant as his confidence grows. Newman deftly illustrates how the old men coax the boy to evolve with his gesture-filled character sketches paired with bold brushstrokes. No need for words.

Melanie says

A little boy is too shy to join the local baseball game. Instead he chooses to hang out with the older gentlemen on the sidelines. This hilariously turns out to include dressing like the older men. The gentlemen decide someone needs a little push in the right direction. So they begin to lead the little boy into common activities for young children until the boy is confident enough to join the local boys in a pick up game of baseball. Fabulous!
