



Have You Seen My Dragon?

Steve Light

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In the heart of the city, among the taxis and towers, a small boy travels uptown and down, searching for his friend. Readers will certainly spot the glorious beast, plus an array of big-city icons they can count. Is the dragon taking the crosstown bus, or breathing his fiery breath below a busy street? Maybe he took a taxi to the zoo or is playing with the dogs in the park.

Have You Seen My Dragon? Details

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From Reader Review Have You Seen My Dragon? for online ebook

Paula says

I came home from - I don't know, BEA or some damn thing - with a promotional poster for this book. I NEVER bring home posters, because they get bent and crimped and I just get cranky about that and I try to avoid crankiness. But I toughed it out for this poster, which was pretty much the dust jacket of the final book.

And I KNEW IT. The minute I got that thing out of the tube, my ten-year-old and his father were belly-down on the floor coloring the whooooole thing in. They found every fire hydrant and colored it red. All the pipes below the street were a spaghetti rainbow. Each windowsill was blue. That poster hangs on my wall to this day. And yet? It took me forever to get my hands on the actual book.

Which also didn't disappoint. So much to look at, so many little jokes! Such a love letter to the city.

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Dani - Perspective of a Writer says

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In the heart of the city, among the taxis and towers, a small boy travels uptown and down, searching for his friend. Readers will certainly spot the glorious beast, plus an array of big-city icons they can count. Is the dragon taking the crosstown bus, or breathing his fiery breath below a busy street? Maybe he took a taxi to the zoo or is playing with the dogs in the park.

This is one of those books that a child takes in the car on a road trip because it is so intricate with details that one can pour over for hours on end and still be entertained. There is no point to the story and no message to be had. It is ALL about the illustrations and as that is the purpose of the book it works for me!

The art is fantastic! This is what I want to hang on my child's wall to inspire creativity and imagination! The end paper map was my favorite as it gives form to the loose story that is present. I personally LOVE the dragon on each page and finding that was MY top priority. My nephew wasn't as into the dragon as I was though he was delighted to see him swimming on one of the spreads.

The counting element was a little basic... the answer right there in a bar rather than a part of the text... also why not reference the colors too?! I do love that the numbers go up to 20! I do LOVE the idea that the book can double as a coloring book and almost become a keepsake!

BOTTOM LINE: Black and White Drawings for the dragon WIN!

You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ Perspective of a Writer. See my picture book reviews in a special feature called Boo's Picture Gallery...

Laura McLoughlin says

A very pretty counting book. Although 20 is a bit high for a 3 year old (she loses interest after about 12). Also, the illustrations are begging to be colored, but it is a library book so I shall resist.

Sylvester says

4* art
4* concept

Squirt could care less about the counting, but he sure likes hiding the dragon from me with his hands. Lots of fun, and he asks questions about the pictures.

Holly says

Fun black-and-white illustrations with the main topic of each page in color. Kids will have fun looking for the dragon on each page. They will also be able to find images to count along (2 hot dogs, 3 buses, etc.)

An adventurous and enjoyable read.

Miriam says

I was a little disappointed that although the illustrations were full of lines they were not full of details. That is, there aren't that many hidden things for kids to find or pick out -- it's just a drawing style that happens to involve lots of (extraneous, imo) lines.

That aside, it is a cute counting book. Nice punchy use of color. The scenes are all recognizably New York, so it might be fun for a local or a kid who was traveling there.

The Library Lady says

Sort of a *Have You Seen My Duckling?* for an older age group, and with dragons.

Light does more with black and white and fine lines than most hipster illustrators can do with the zillions of colors in their Adobe Paint programs. Lots of fun, though it made me homesick for my beloved New York City.

Jesse says

This would make an excellent coloring book! I found myself wanting to add to his very spare use of color. I loved that the story was added to my including counting opportunities, as well as the challenge of finding where the dragon was in each panel.

Betsy says

When I grew up in Kalamazoo, Michigan I would get this little thrill every time my city appeared in a children's book. Which is to say, every time it was mentioned in *Horton Hatches the Egg*. Honestly, for all that it had a cool name it really didn't come up anywhere else. New York kids must be rather jaded in this regard. Anytime a city book is set somewhere other than Manhattan or Brooklyn, they probably scratch their little heads in confusion (I can attest to this personally as my two-year-old calls any and all cities she sees in books "New York City" and will not be corrected). As a NYC transplant I'd probably mind this more if it weren't for the fact that so many of these books are so doggone splendid. Take Steve Light's latest, *Have You Seen My Dragon?* A riot of minuscule details, numbers, colors, familiar city elements, and a magnificent, fantastic creature always hidden in plain sight, Light gives us a city dragon worth remembering long after the pages are turned.

You would think it would be difficult to mislay a dragon. You would be wrong. When our story begins a young boy is asking a doorman whether or not he's seen his dragon. "No? I will look for him." Never you mind that if the boy merely turned his head 90 degrees to the left he'd see his ginormous pet sniffing an understandably wary pup. From here it's a race across the city. Everywhere the boy goes the numbers go up. The dragon perches atop a hot dog stand where they are selling "2 Hot dogs". It peers down from a roof at the "3 Buses" below. It gets a quick drink from one of the "5 Water towers." On the endpapers you can see the circuitous path the dragon takes through a slightly compacted lower Manhattan until, at last, the boy spots him in Chinatown, smiling widely from between the "20 Lanterns".

There is a perception out there that it is near impossible to publish a black and white picture book in today's market. This may be so, but Light comes pretty darn close to doing so. Though there is a different color for every number in the book, most of what you're seeing is just good old-fashioned pen and inks. More to the point, the man has gone rather wild in his details. I haven't seen intricate work at this level since I read Mark Alan Stamaty's picture book cult classic *Who Needs Donuts*. Whether he's detailing the myriad wires that curl around the sewer pipes below the street or paying homage to the detailing on St. Patrick's Cathedral, there's a method to the man's madness. Now add in the fact that Light isn't afraid to go vertical with his two-page spreads and that he occasionally gets incredibly creative with his perspective (the "8 Fire hydrants"

two-page spread is an exercise in internal logic) and you have a rather beautiful affair. Little wonder that he chose to only dot the pages with color. It's lovely to watch how the artist uses these colors to direct your eye across the page.

If the name "Steve Light" has been triggering some kind of latent amnesia in your cranium, it probably has to do with his board books with Chronicle Books. Let me tell you right now that if you have not read Trucks Go, Trains Go or Diggers Go aloud to a small child then your life, nice as it is, is little more than a pale hollow shell of what it might someday be. In those three books Light used bright, thick paints to convey an array of vehicles. He then gave each and every one of them original, amazing sounds, ideal of reading aloud either one-on-one or to a large group. *Have You Seen My Dragon* differs widely from that series in terms of look and feel. But what it does have in common is the age of the audience (toddler heaven is what we have going on here) and the read aloud potential. Good readalouds are rarities. For every 100 picture books published in a given season, maybe four of them are titles you'd like to test on a group of squirmy squirmers. And this, ladies and gentlemen, should be one of those four. It's simple and interactive and I can already hear a room of small fry screaming at you as to where the dragon is "hiding".

There may be the occasional New York child that complains that the buses in the book are purple when, in fact, our buses are no such of a thing. Meh. I say purple buses would be a heckuva lot more fun, so if Mr. Light wants to bestow that particular hue to them, let him. And that goes for the blue subway cars as well. Slightly more problematic are the "monkeys". You will find that for the number 6 one is supposed to find "6 Monkeys". The zoo picture is, if you follow the map, sort of supposed to be the Central Park Zoo, but it doesn't really resemble it. That's okay too. Artistic liberties I am a-okay with. Far more of a problem is the fact that the monkeys in question have no tails. Yup, what we're dealing with here is a page of six apes. It's a classic Curious George problem and not one that sinks the book or anything. Still, wouldn't mind a tail or two on those primates. It would be just the thing.

All told, I see a lot of New York City picture books in a given year. This one goes beyond our city's borders. It's the kind of book that's going to appeal to any kid that's drawn to the hustle and bustle of a metropolitan area. The words "New York City" never even appear in the text, allowing a lot of young readers to simply think of the location as an everycity. Lithe and lovely, overflowing with good will and copious details, expect the sentence, "Have you seen 'Have You Seen My Dragon?'" to appear on the lips of parents and children everywhere. Because if you haven't seen it, now's the time.

For ages 2-6.

Erin says

This is a visually gorgeous picture book, the detailed line drawings all black and white except for the green of the dragon, which is used to great effect. It's a hide and seek book, a fantasy, and a love letter to New York City, and a counting book, all in one.

It's the kind of book where I sort of regret not having more of an art background so that I could talk in a more sophisticated way about picture book art and how it works. A lot of the time when I'm approaching a picture book, I come at it from a rather "functional" perspective--i.e., will this book work for story time?

Have You Seen My Dragon? reminds me of all the other meanings a picture book can have, and is a good reminder to me not to overlook those titles that are better "lap books" for one child and their adult, than

"story time books" that work well with a group.

Although I very much consider *Have You Seen My Dragon?* primarily a lap book, I did use it successful at my evening pajama story time at my old branch. That story time rarely had more than 8 kids, and the older kids especially really liked to come up close and point out different things that they noticed in the illustrations.

Cheryl says

Oh! Much too fun & exciting; I'm only halfway done and I'm having to catch my breath.

I want to own a copy just so I can color in the pages. I mean, I know that the colored bits are of the countable objects, as this is a counting book, but I still want to color the rest of the buildings, cars, people, pigeons, etc. Maybe the artist has some coloring pp on a website...

And I'm learning a bit about the city, too - making me realize just how wonderful a picture book can be that doesn't take place on farm or suburb. I'm familiar with small-town water towers on the prairie - but it never occurred to me that ppl in cities use water towers, too, so they have enough pressure for faucets....

Love the apes at the zoo. Look carefully. Heck, look carefully, whether or not you're familiar with city life.... Apparently it's distinctly NYC, and those in the know can use the maps in the endpaper to find their way among icons and landmarks....

(ok, done)

I also appreciate that the counting goes up to the number 20.

Only 2 changes would be needed, imo, to make it a five star book. The colored items could be structured to make it a concept book for colors (perhaps as roygbbiv) so it could be used for both colors and counting, and the titles (13 Ice-Cream Cones) could be omitted or moved to an end-note, to make it be an easy puzzle-book (because the countable items are easy enough to spot and, usually, to label).

Once again, Candlewick Press has produced a winner!

Beverly says

I prefer more realistic looking dragons, but this is a very cute counting book and very cleverly executed. There is a lot of detail in the illustrations; a reader could pore over each page for hours. And there is so much for the reader to do: look for the dragon, look for the little boy looking for the dragon; and count the colored items on each page. The end paper map of the dragon's meanderings is an added plus.

Heidi-Marie says

Love this!! You can work on counting, colors, searching, and even map reading (of sorts) all while

embracing the fun things of New York City and enjoying a boy's search for his dragon. So many possibilities in this book. A fabulous lap-read or read-alone. But I must try in storytime as well.

2/18/15 Used in my Friends theme. The kids adored this book! They loved looking for the dragon. They loved counting--even though it went all the way up to 20. I also had them calling out what the color (other than black and white) was on each page spread. Huge success with this.

1/23/16 Used in Special Needs storytime. We used shaker eggs and shook them as we counted the different items. Older sibling was very in to it, and I saw some smiles from the younger, special needs sibling. So cute!

4/26/17 Used as Early Literacy moment in N theme (because of Numbers). Had them tell me the color, what the item was, count the items, and then write that number on the iPad. Had just enough kids to do 7. Did that with all of them helping me until 10 (counting them all on each page). Then I went through the rest a little more quickly until the final page where we counted up to 20. It was great. They loved the book.

Rachel Watkins says

A counting book that gives tribute to urban life, you'll want to move to the city Steve Light has illustrated in this picture book. Clever use of only spots of color in otherwise black and white pictures means you're not overstimulated as Light's illustrations are detailed and complex. The author's bio at the end of the month shares a sweet story that inspired this book: on trips to NYC as a child, Light's father would tell him the steam coming from the manhole covers was dragon's breath!
