



The Red Hat

David Teague , Antoinette Portis (Illustrations)

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"Once upon a time, high atop the world, there lived a boy named Billy Hightower and the wind. When a new neighbor appears--a girl in a red hat--Billy Hightower can hardly wait to meet her and introduce himself. But the wind has other ideas"--

The Red Hat Details

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Author : David Teague , Antoinette Portis (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review The Red Hat for online ebook

Laura Harrison says

One of my favorite picture books of 2016.

Heather says

Love love love how the wind is illustrated: swirling lines that shine/shimmer when you turn the pages.

Mary says

Well, if I lived in a penthouse apartment, I wouldn't want to encourage my children to think they could jump off the top with a blanket for a parachute and land safely. Since I don't live in a penthouse, I would happily read this to my children. It is a cute, very basic story which is fabulously illustrated! I loved the twist at the end which says the beginning, once they finally meet!

First Line: "Billy Hightower lived atop the world's tallest building."

Meredith Spidel says

What a sweet story that captivates my children! A delight to receive an advanced copy of this book for review. I know this will be a favorite for a long while to come!

Erin says

My 2nd grader kept wanting to read this because he really liked the story.

Barb Middleton says

I really like the design of this book and the energy created by use of angles and swirls. Some students think of the text as two friends while other students think it is love and go "ew." It's funny the different reactions to the last page. I see something different in the pictures every time I read it and am more engrossed in them than text. Beautiful illustrations.

Cheryl says

The story is evocative of a fairy tale quest, maybe a bit Rapunzel, maybe a bit East of the Sun, West of the Moon, but mostly original. Nice, charming, fresh. But the art really makes it a winner. And the ink (?) used for the wind, so subtle that it looks different, depending on your light source, as you read, really adds a wow factor. Not in-your-face like the awful Rainbow Fish, but an artistic statement that makes the wind a character in the book.

Tasha says

A boy named Billy Hightower lives at the top of the tallest building in the world, so high that he is above the clouds. Then one day, another building is built nearby. Billy soon sees a girl on top of the building wearing a red hat. Billy tries to call to her, but the wind sweeps away his words before she can hear them. He tries to send her a note via paper airplane, but the wind snatches that away too. The kite doesn't work either. When Billy tries to use a blanket to fly across the gap to the girl, the wind pushes him down to street level and takes the girl's hat too. The vicious wind continues to push Billy around, but soon Billy has figured out where the girl lives and finds a way through the wind to see her.

Teague keeps his text very simple in this picture book. He tells a straight forward story, but one that also is about loneliness and how important it is to reach another person. It is also clearly a book about love, about obstacles and finding an alternate way to connect and be together. Children may see it as a book more about wind, and that is completely wonderful too. Some of the best books work on different levels.

Portis' illustrations use a little gimmick of the wind being shiny on the page. But these illustrations are beautiful in their simplicity and the wind itself is so capricious and involved in the story that it deserves its own style and feel. Done in only a few colors, the red pops on the page, the color of love.

A lovely picture book that can be enjoyed on different levels by different readers. It would make an interesting discussion for slightly older children about imagery and hidden meanings. Appropriate for ages 3-5.

Sarah DiPascal says

so cute :')

Shawn Deal says

I really liked this book as it endeavoured to tell the very beginning of a love story. With that said, the book is still great to read for children as they do not quite catch the overall subtle meaning of the story that us adults do.

Paige M says

Love the illustrations. Not sure if I'd use it for storytime. Wind & weather.

Alexandria says

When you live above the clouds, making friends is hard. And when a new friend moves in across the way but the wind keeps snatching your words away, fantastic measures must be taken!

David Teague reminds us of the adventure that making friends can be, particularly for children. With stark colors and wonderful opportunities to spice the narrative with sounds and different voices, this is a great book to read aloud for a variety of age ranges.

KC says

A boy in a city looks out atop his building only to see a girl across the way atop of her building. And so it brings...

Betsy says

There is a story out there, and I don't know if it is true, that the great children's librarian Anne Carroll Moore had such a low opinion of children's books that involved "gimmicks" (read: interactive elements of any sort) that upon encountering them she'd dismiss each and every one with a single word: Truck. If it was seen as below contempt, it was "truck". Pat the Bunny, for example, was not to her taste, but it did usher in a new era of children's literature. Books that, to this day, utilize different tricks to engage the interest of child readers. In the best of cases the art and the text of a picture book are supposed to be of the highest possible caliber. To paraphrase Walter de la Mare, only the rarest kind of best is good enough for our kids, yes? That said, not all picture books have to attempt to be works of great, grand literature and artistic merit. There are funny books and silly ones that do just as well. Take it a step even farther, and I'd say that the interactive elements that so horrified Ms. Moore back in the day have great potential to aid in storytelling. Though she would be (rightly) disgusted by books like *Rainbow Fish* that entice children through methods cheap and deeply unappealing, I fancy *The Red Hat* would have given her pause. After considering the book seriously, a person can't dismiss it merely because it tends towards the shiny. Lovingly written and elegantly drawn, Teague and Portis flirt with transparent spot gloss, but it's their storytelling and artistic choices that will keep their young readers riveted.

With a name like Billy Hightower, it's little wonder that the boy in question lives "atop the world's tallest building". It's a beautiful view, but a lonely one, so when a construction crew one day builds a tower across the way, the appearance of a girl in a red hat intrigues Billy. Desperate to connect with her, he attempts various methods of communication, only to be stumped by the wind at every turn. Shouting fails. Paper airplanes plummet. A kite dances just out of reach. Then Billy tries the boldest method of reaching the girl

possible, only to find that he himself is snatched from her grasp. Fortunately a soft landing and a good old-fashioned elevator trump the wind at last. Curlicues of spot gloss evoke the whirly-twirly wind and all its tricky ways.

Great Moments of Spot Gloss in Picture Book History: Um . . . hm. That's a stumper. I'm not saying it's never happened. I'm just saying that when I myself try to conjure up a book, any book, that's ever used it to proper effect, I pull up a blank. Now what do I mean exactly when I say this book is using this kind of "gloss"? Well, it's a subtle layer of shininess. Not glittery, or anything so tawdry as that. From cover to interior spreads, these spirals of gloss evoke the invisible wind. They're lovely but clearly mischievous, tossing messages and teasing the ties of a hat. Look at the book a couple times and you notice that the only part of the book that does not contain this shiny wind is the final two-page image of our heroes. They're outdoors but the wind has been defeated in the face of Billy's persistence. If you feel a peace looking at the two kids eyeing one another, it may have less to do with what you see than what you don't.

Naturally Antoinette Portis is to be credited here, though I don't know if the idea of using the spot gloss necessarily originated with her. It is possible that the book's editor tossed Portis the manuscript with the clear understanding that gloss would be the name of the game. That said, I felt like the illustrator was given a great deal of room to grow with this book. I remember back in the day when her books *Not a Box* and *Not a Stick* were the height of 32-page minimalism. She has such a strong sense of design, but even when she was doing books like *Wait* and the rather gloriously titled *Princess Super Kitty* her color scheme was standard. In *The Red Hat* all you have to look at are great swath of blue, the black and white of the characters, an occasional jab of gray, and the moments when red makes an appearance. There is always a little jolt of red (around Billy's neck, on a street light, from a carpet, etc). It's the red coupled with that blue that really makes the book pop. By all rights a red, white, and blue cover should strike you on some level as patriotic. Not the case here.

Not that the book is without flaw. For the most part I enjoyed the pacing of the story. I loved the fairytale element of Billy tossed high into the sky by a jealous wind. I loved the color scheme, the gloss, and the characters. What I did not love was a moment near the end of the book where pertinent text is completely obscured by its placement on the art. Billy has flown and landed from the sky. He's on the ground below, the wind buffeting him like made. He enters the girl's building and takes the elevator up. The story says, "At the elevator, he punched UP, and he knocked at the first door on the top floor." We see him extending his hand to the girl, her hat clutched in the other. Then you turn the page and it just says, "The Beginning." Wait, what? I had to go back and really check before I realized that there was a whole slew of text and dialogue hidden at the bottom of that previous spread. Against a speckled gray and white floor the black text is expertly camouflaged. I know that some designers cringe at the thought of suddenly interjecting a white text box around a selection of writing, but in this particular case I'm afraid it was almost a necessity. Either than or toning down the speckles to the lightest of light grays.

Aside from that, it's sublime. A sweet story of friendship (possibly leading to more someday) from the top of the world. Do we really believe that Billy lives on the top of the highest building in the world? Billy apparently does, and that's good enough for us. But even the tallest building can find its match. And even the loneliest of kids can, through sheer pig-headed persistence, make their voices heard. A windy, shiny book without a hint of bluster.

For ages 3-6.

Patricia McLaughlin says

A prime example of an adult translating a childhood memory into a children's story, with disastrous results; five stars for the whimsical rendering of the wind by the illustrator.
