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Mostly Monty

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Hurwitz, Johanna. *Mostly Monty*. Illustrated by Anik McGrory. Candlewick Press, 2007. ISBN 9780763628314. \$15.99. 86 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Asthma--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

This book is about Montgomery Gerald Morris, a.k.a. Monty, a first-grader who is about to turn six years old. Monty has asthma and it has affected not only his physical body, but also his emotions, his thinking patterns, and his self-esteem. Monty feels like it is his asthma that keeps him from having friends and having fun like other children. He wants to be somebody else; he wants to have a pet; and he wants friends! Monty's thinking begins to transform from his interactions with his first grade teacher, Mrs. Meaney. The school secretary Mrs. Remsen, and Monty's neighbor, Mrs. Carlton, also help Monty recognize that he has specific talents, interesting ideas, can do things that are fun, and can make friends.

Hurwitz weaves into the story line factual information about asthma and corrects misunderstandings about this particular health challenge. The author has a good feel for telling a story from a child's point of view. McGrory's illustrations are very expressive, as shown in one particular illustration found on page 49. This illustration shows Monty watching the teddy bear he brought home from Mrs. Carlton's garage sale, go 'round and 'round in the dryer. You can feel Monty's emotions as he hopes that laundering the bear will make him safe for him to keep. The story is very up-beat. By the end of the book, Monty is "feeling pretty good. It wasn't because his asthma hadn't bothered him in many weeks. It wasn't from eating ice cream with fudge sauce. It wasn't even from having new friends. It was mostly because he was glad to be himself. He liked being Monty after all." (p. 86)