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The Very Inappropriate Word

Liz Kazandzhy

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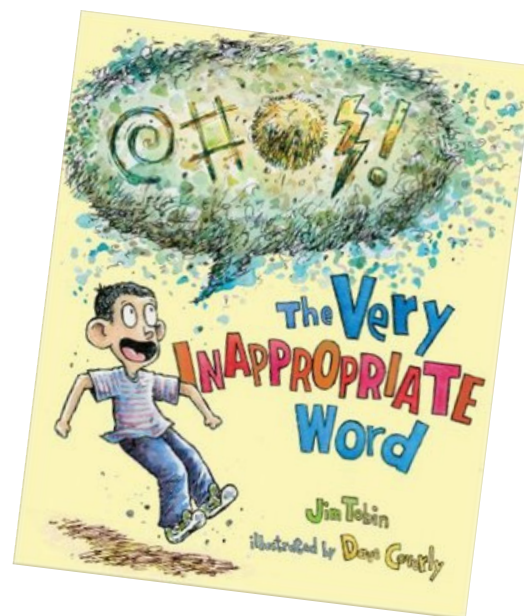
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Book Review

Title: The Very Inappropriate Word
Author: Jim Tobin
Illustrator: Dave Coverly
Reviewer: Liz Kazandzhy
Publisher: Henry Holt and Co. (BYR)
Publication Year: 2013
ISBN: 9780805094749
Number of Pages: 36
Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding



Review

Michael is a boy that collects words. Every day he discovers all kinds of different words, and then takes them home and puts them in his room. One day, he came across a word on the bus that he had never heard before, and he soon learned that it's an "inappropriate" word. He put it away before using it, but then he started noticing that word everywhere he went. He decided to try it out at school, and soon all the kids were passing it around. It was all fun and games until the teacher found out and disciplined Michael by sending him to the library to find new spelling words. But there he found so many new and fascinating words that he completely lost track of the inappropriate word, bringing home instead whole wagons full of new vocabulary.

At first glance, adults might have reservations about the content of *The Very Inappropriate Word* and its suitability for children. However, this book is actually a brilliantly creative way to cover an important topic and promote a positive message about language use. The subtle meaning behind it is basically that (1) inappropriate words exist and people sometimes use them, (2) inappropriate words elicit a reaction that other words do not, and (3) it is much better to be educated and use a variety of awesome words than limiting yourself to profanity. Of course, children might be tempted to either ask about or demonstrate their own knowledge of inappropriate words when reading this story, but it still remains quite an effective tool for discussing the topic of profanity. Questionable content aside, the book itself contains an interesting plot and delightful illustrations that will make any reader more deeply appreciate the power and awesomeness of language. For example, every word is presented in a speech bubble that is creatively shaped like that word, and the variety of words that Michael finds will surely boost the vocabulary of most readers. Because the topic is so unique and relevant, and the story and illustrations so ingenious, this book is highly recommended.

*Profanity is implied, but never goes farther than an enmeshment of random symbols (@#%&!).