



2016

Suite for Human Nature

Rachel Wadham

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Wadham, Rachel (2016) "Suite for Human Nature," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 37 : Iss. 5 , Article 19.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol37/iss5/19>

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Book Review

Title: Suite for Human Nature
Author: Diane Charlotte Lampert
Illustrator: Eric Puybaret
Reviewer: Rachel Wadham
Publisher: Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books
Publication Year: 2016
ISBN: 9781416953739
Number of Pages: 48
Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Excellent



Review

Based on a musical composition by lyricist Lampert and musician Wynton Marsalis, this folkloric allegory tells the tale of Mother Nature and her children. Mother Nature wants to have a child so she creates a boy and names him Fear. Leaving him with the humans to tend to the earth she returns to find all in turmoil. Determined to make things right she creates Envy but finds the outcome is not as expected. Again she tries with Hate and Greed, then again with a sister, Fickle. Nothing turns out and born down by grief she finally listens to the advice of the winds creating a set of twins named Love. Mother Nature finds that it is Love that finally tempers the others and while they are not always completely successful everything is as she hoped it would be.

Written to celebrate humanity in all its aspects this story offers a poignant look at the weaknesses and strength humankind. Given its musical origins the text has a very lyrical quality even though the majority is comprised of very brief sentences. The personification of the virtues is captured beautifully with the words but is even more powerful with the combination of the stunning illustrations. The illustrations have both a highly realistic style balanced by the stylized caricatures of the virtues that works perfectly to balance the lyrical quality of the text. While the story and illustrations are approachable for children the deeply contemplative theme and message will likely resonate most clearly with adults.