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El Deafo

Abigail Packard

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Book Review

Title: El Deafo

Author: Cece Bell

Reviewer: Abigail Packard

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams

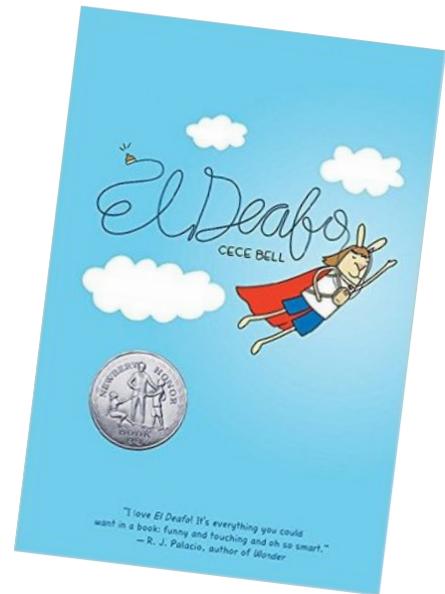
Publication Year: 2014

ISBN: 9781419712173

Number of Pages: 248

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding



Review

At four years old, Cece is rushed to the hospital by her parents and she is treated for meningitis. As a result of this disease, Cece loses the ability to hear. Because Cece has grown up speaking, listening, and hearing her parents decide to help her by getting her hearing aids and taking her to a special kindergarten where she learns to lip-read. She is later integrated into the regular school system and she uses the Phonic Ear, a hearing aid that she wears under her shirt and connects to her ears with cords, amplifying the voice of her teacher when they wear a special microphone. She's thrilled to be able to hear the teacher and learn at school. Then she discovers that she has a newfound superpower: she can hear her teacher wherever they are in the school—in the hallway, in the teacher's lounge, or even in the bathroom! Despite her awesome superpower, Cece is nervous to share it with others and help them truly understand how to treat her as a deaf person. Through trial and error, Cece learns that it's better to open herself up and share her differences with others because differences, not similarities, are what truly make us super.

Cece Bell has crafted a touching, funny, and insightful memoir in this quirky, approachable graphic novel. All of the characters are drawn as bunnies instead of humans which makes the artwork very soft and friendly. She also pulls in some pop culture from the time and shows daydreaming excerpts as funny, comic book strips featuring herself as "El Deafo." Bell masterfully and tactfully handles the topic of life with disabilities, specifically stating in the author's note that this is based upon her own experiences and there is no one perfect way to approach life with a disability. This book is an excellent tool for teachers, parents, and librarians to use in creating an awareness and understanding of disabilities that people live with every day. Bell's wonderful graphic novel is just that: novel, particularly in today's world where graphic novels are just beginning to gain momentum as a more serious form of literature. Bell's *El Deafo* is an exemplary piece of literature perfect for any reader's collection.