



2019

Cicada

Karen Abbott

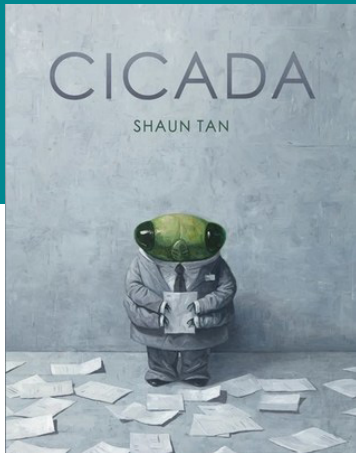
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Book Review

Cicada

Author

Shaun Tan

Illustrator

Shaun Tan

Reviewer

Karen Abbott

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

32

Year

2019

Publisher

Arthur A. Levine Books

ISBN

9781338298390

Mr. Cicada works seventeen long years at a nameless corporation while absorbing abuse, ignorance, and zero appreciation. Despite his circumstances, he works hard and persists in doing his job better and with more effort than those around him. At the end of his career he climbs to the top of the building, where one might fear that he is going to end his miserable life, but no, Cicada sheds his skin and is reborn as a creature with wings. In his new form, Cicada laughs with his other free Cicada friends at the people and circumstances that he has overcome.

This is a thought provoking book and I'm not sure that it belongs in a children's book section. It feels more like a book that one cubical dweller would present to another cubical dweller upon retirement. On one level it is the story of a tortured and unappreciated insect and might be a great way to open conversation with children about bullying and/or persistence and/or immigration. On the other hand, the main themes are about adult angst and are an illustrated version of the quote from Henry David Thoreau, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them". Cicadas sing. And this cicada seems to air his song with dull reverberation in the repeated text at the bottom of each paragraph before finding happiness in the end. The illustrations are superlative in dark, dusky greys where Cicada's green life force is the only thing that shines. This is a great book, but it is only superficially for children.