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You Are Special

Kristie Hinckley
Book Review

Title: You Are Special
Author: Max Lucado
Illustrator: Sergio Martinez
Reviewer: Kristie Hinckley
Publisher: Crossway Books
Publication Year: 1997
ISBN: 9780891079316
Number of Pages: 32
Interest Level: Preschool, Primary, Intermediate, Young Adult
Rating: Outstanding

Review

You are special! That is the main message of this book, but Max Lucado helps the reader believe that message through Punchinello and the wooden village of Wemmicks in You Are Special. Punchinello is a little wooden doll whose paint is chipping and who can’t jump and do flips like the other Wemmicks. Most days he can’t do anything right, and the other Wemmicks place bad dots on him rather than good stars. One day he meets a Wemmick who doesn’t have any stickers on her. And Punchinello decides he wants to be like that. He discovers that the key is to visit the woodcarver every day. He visits the woodcarver and learns that what other people think doesn’t matter. The only thing that matters is what the woodcarver, Punchinello’s maker, thinks of him—and he thinks Punchinello is special.

Sergio Martinez powerfully shows through his illustrations that we dehumanize people through our judgments. He uses colored pencils to bring the Wemmicks to life. A miniature version of a portion of each illustration is placed in a circle above the text on every page. The illustrator keeps his illustrations sketch-like and portrays light and shadows very well through his artwork in this book. The less important aspects of the scenery on each page are faded out in order to focus the reader’s attention on the more critical aspects of the illustrations and text. Readers of all ages will enjoy this book. They may even be able to hear the woodcutter’s voice in their minds and think about how they will let the stars and dots (what other people think about them) fall to the ground as they focus on what really matters to them.