

Book Review

Title: *My Friend Isabelle*

Author: Eliza Woloson

Illustrator: Bryan Gough.

Publisher: Woodbine House, 2003.

Cloth, ISBN: 1-890627-50-X, 28 pp.

Cost: \$14.95 USD

Reviewer: Rhonda S. Black

My Friend Isabelle is a delightful book for children ages two to six. The story is told from the perspective of Charlie, Isabelle's friend. Charlie talks about how he and Isabelle are different. Although they are the same age, Charlie is tall, Isabelle is short; Charlie runs fast, Isabelle takes her time; and Charlie knows lots of words, some of Isabelle's words are hard to understand. Charlie tells the reader that his mother says differences are what make the world great. Charlie then talks about how he and Isabelle play together every Friday. The focus shifts to their similarities, such as "we cry when one of us forgets to share," and they both like to slide by themselves without help when they go to the park.

Charlie concludes the story by stating life is more fun with friends like Isabelle. A one-page afterward explains that Isabelle is a child with Down syndrome. What is outstanding about this book is that the story line never mentions that Isabelle has a disability. This book is similar to *Where's Chimpy* (Rabe & Schmidt, 1991) which received much positive attention for creating a story about Misty looking for her lost stuffed chimpanzee. The story didn't mention that Misty had Down syndrome, although one could tell from the photographs. *My Friend Isabelle* makes a similarly strong statement by portraying Isabelle as a child, not a child with a disability. The message in *My Friend Isabelle* is that **everyone** is different. Isabelle is a valuable child who is desirable as a friend.

A portion of the royalties of this book are donated to the National Down Syndrome Society. In addition, this book is currently a nominee for the 2004 Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award. See the following web site for further details.

<http://www.geocities.com/marissajohnstun/dollygrayaward.html>

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Reference

Rabe, B., & Schmidt, D. (1991). *Where's Chimpy*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.