

Book Review

Title: *I Can, Can You?*

Author: Marjorie W. Pitzer

Publisher: Woodbine House, Bethesda, MD, 2004

ISBN: 1-890627-57-7

Cost: \$10.95 USD

Reviewer: Taletha M. Derrington

I Can, Can You? is an attractive board book featuring colorful pictures of children with Down syndrome enjoying a variety of activities. The most appropriate audience is children with Down syndrome from birth through age four and the adults in their lives.

There are few board books for infants and toddlers that feature children with special needs in general, and Down syndrome in particular. The pictures are of real children, as opposed to animals or cartoon children found in many other beginning books, and the wording and scenes highlight these children's abilities. This book gives young children with Down syndrome the opportunity to look at other children who look like they do, and it gives new parents of a baby with Down syndrome hope for their child's potential. For early childhood professionals, the book is a needed literacy tool that may engage young children with Down syndrome more than the average picture book.

Each activity is presented in the form, "I Can, Can You"? The pictures portray these children's abilities and do not single them out as being different, although the back cover states these children have Down syndrome. Large print, simple sentences, and repetition make this a good book for beginning readers of any type. The large, sans serif lettering and simple style make the book accessible to older readers and caregivers with low vision, intellectual, and/or learning disabilities who might wish to share the book with a young child.

Although the book adds to the body of children's literature including children with special needs, the children are predominantly engaged in solitary activities, leading to a sense of separateness that counters the contemporary struggle for inclusion. The opportunity to see that children with Down syndrome can, and like to, do the same things as other children, coupled with the phrases "I Can, Can You?" could foster appreciation and identification of typically developing children with their peers with special needs.

The back cover indicates this is the first edition; if there is another edition, the author might expand the appeal of this book to a wider audience by including pictures of typically developing children and adults interacting with children with Down syndrome. Despite these criticisms, the book is an interesting contribution to young children's literature. The full list price is somewhat high compared to other board books, but better deals may be available at discount bookstores and online resources. Nonetheless, the focus of the book makes it worth the cost. I would recommend this book to parents of young children with Down syndrome and professionals who work with them. Teachers

of integrated preschools and day care centers should also consider using the book to create more learning opportunities about the similarities and differences among all children.

Taletha M. Derrington obtained her B.S. in biology from the California Institute of Technology, and her M.A. in developmental psychology from the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. She is currently working on her doctoral degree at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University.