

Listen to the Rain

by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

Published by Henry Holt and Company, 1988



Reviewed by
Marjie Van Gunten

Martin and Archambault have given us another lyrical book that begs to be extended through music and movement. The rhythmic and onomatopoeic language explores the sound and silence of rain so beautifully that the words can stand alone. The colorful, somewhat abstract watercolors by James Endicott create a surprising juxtaposition to the text and offer a new way of visualizing rain. A cricket clings to a branch as the rain begins and "lightning-flashing thunder-crashing" is illustrated with a fearsome claw.

From "the first wet whisper" to the "lashing gnashing teeth of rain" and "the silence and the solitude of after-rain" the words are music by themselves. With only a few words on each two-page spread, the reader is invited to linger and listen to the crescendo of the storm. This book never fails to bring total silence to a classroom full of squiggly bodies ... silence that continues after the last page as children are transported by the beauty of the language.

Listen to the Rain is an invitation to create a musical rainstorm with body percussion, found sounds (fingers on newspaper makes a great rain sound) and classroom instruments. The developing storm and gradual passing of the rain offer a model for exploring crescendo and *diminuendo*, *accelerando* and

ritardando. The magical quality of quiet - mallets held in suspension - makes a wonderful ending and helps children know that they can hear silence. The words and pictures are also an invitation to a dance of the raindrops ... or leaves in the wind ... or a walk through the "mishy mushy muddy puddle." The possibilities for exploring the expressive elements of

music and movement are as abundant as the raindrops!

Beautiful books like this one develop the artistic sensitivity of children. Even if you never perform the rainstorm in music or movement, this book deserves to be read to children again and again.

Editor's note: See related story on page 43.

Listen to the Rain

By Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

Illustrated by James Endicott

