

Reviewed by **Brittany Grant**

## Red Sled

Written and Illustrated by Lita Judge  
New York, NY: Athenum Books for Young Readers, 2011

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**W**inter is an exciting time for children. It's the season to make snowmen, throw snowballs, and ride sleds down hills. *Red Sled*, with its illustrations and use of onomatopoeia, perfectly captures the magic of winter through the eyes of a child.

*Red Sled* tells the story of a bleak winter's night. A girl heads into her warm cabin after propping her red sled against the building's side. Quietly, a bear tiptoes up to the sled and decides to borrow it for a ride.

A myriad of woodland friends—a moose, a mouse, a rabbit, raccoons, an opossum, and a porcupine—quickly join the bear on his nighttime adventure. The sled fills up with animals and lands at the bottom of the hill with a “fluoomp....ft.” The bear softly tiptoes back to the cabin to return the sled. When the little girl wakes in the morning, she discovers the tracks and waits for nightfall to join the animals on their moonlit forest sled ride.

This book's watercolor and pencil illustrations are breathtaking. The young girl's red hat along with the red sled vividly contrast with the bleak colors of a winter's night. The characters' facial expressions convey a range of emotions from pure joy to terror.

This storybook is tailor-made for a winter lesson with younger children. The minimal words in

*Red Sled* are onomatopoeic and allow the illustrations to tell the story. Letter sizes grow and shrink on the pages, encouraging exploration of dynamics. The letters

also move up and down across each page, inviting children to explore vocal ranges or the ranges of barred instruments. For example, at one point in the story, the bear and the rabbit make different sounds simultaneously. One starts high while the other starts low, and their written voices curve up and down before landing on the same “eo-oeoe.” This provides an opportunity to divide a classroom of students into groups and allow the children to explore the sounds of the two parts against each other, vocally or instrumentally.

Words in this book, such as *scrinch scrunch* and *gadung*, are perfect for experimenting with different timbres using unpitched percussion to enhance the sound of the words. Children will also want to add movement to this tale, mimicking the bear as he quietly tiptoes up to the house, or pretending to ride the sled down the hill until it crashes at the bottom.

*Red Sled* is the perfect addition to any winter lesson plan. One can only imagine how many times the teacher will hear, “Let's do it again!” from students after they've experienced this book in the classroom. Those four little words are truly the hallmark of a good children's book. ■

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