

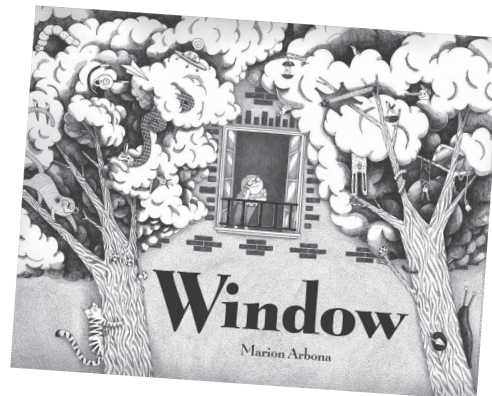
# CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Scott Roether

## Window

Written and Illustrated by Marion Arbona

Kids Can Press, 2020



**W**indow by Marion Arbona begins before the story's title page with a young girl daydreaming while peering through a classroom window. She yearns to walk the streets of what appears to be a bustling, expansive city. This book is wordless, minus the title and a few descriptive lines on the back cover—"Have you ever wondered what's behind that window? There could be extraordinary things to see in your very own neighborhood. Open the window and look inside ...". These understated sentences invite the reader to experience the many possibilities within a book delightfully simple in concept but executed with complex and adept illustrations. It features playful vignettes hidden behind a number of flaps, each embellished with a window ranging from unadorned to ornate.

Arbona's black and white felt-tip drawings depict a series of scenes, serving almost as "windows" into fantasy and fiction, dreamscapes and nightmares, the true-to-life and the imaginary. If we look closely, we see hints of what might be hiding on the other side of the windowpane. The author's intricate illustrations could be an extension and modernization of Jean Marzollo and Walter Wick's popular *I Spy* children's books. The rich details invite us to journey through our own imaginations and those of the little girl and our students. Additionally,

the illustrations offer numerous opportunities to explore pattern, line, and texture and relate them to the corresponding terms within elemental music and movement. Though significantly disparate worlds hide behind each of the pages, a certain cohesion is notable in the author's drawings, throughout which she incorporates similar texture, style, and techniques.

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Students will find value in composing their own music, movement, and visual interpretations of Arbona's artwork, with many of the conceptual components catering to the upper elementary and middle school age levels.

Although some students might be stumped by the lack of explanation behind each of the windows, others will feel emboldened to create stories for each of the vignettes. This could easily be extended into writing activities either in the music room or with students' grade-level language arts teachers, perhaps with a poetic or fictional narrative focus. The author offers boundless other artistic opportunities: potential dramatic play, singing, movement or vocal exploration, and playing rhythmic or melodic ostinati. The series of illustrations are simply begging to be made into a whimsical program, with students portraying the fanciful scenes full of characters concealed behind each of the windows. I can already hear *Andante* from page 46 of *Music for Children* Volume IV as the class recreates a scene featuring monster-like creatures through creative movement and dramatic play.

Students will find value in composing their own music, movement, and visual interpretations of Arbona's artwork, with many of the conceptual components catering to the upper elementary and middle school age levels. *Window's* pages, though conceptually advanced, offer playful possibilities for young students as well, with careful facilitation.

The story ends with the explorer recounting the day in her bedroom, drawing her own illustrations, leading the reader to wonder whether she truly experienced the series of windows or if her journey was a figment of her imagination. Where will your students' imaginations take them? ■

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