

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Michelle Fella Przybylowski

Silence

By Lemniscates

Washington, DC: Magination, 2012

Silence, or the act of being silent, allows the human spirit to be present in the moment—to heighten our senses to all that surrounds us. Lemniscates' *Silence* offers readers time to stop and reflect on the quiet that opens the door to exploring what has been blocked by the sounds all around us and enables us to be mindful.

In the last decade, focus on mindfulness in many schools, including the Cheltenham Township School District, has increased. This focus is based on studies that provided evidence that mindfulness significantly improved student behavior in all four areas measured—paying attention, self-control, classroom participation, and respect for others. What is mindfulness? It is the practice of bringing attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment. When you are mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance without judging them good or bad. Mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience instead of letting life pass by you. Are you awakened? *Silence* presents the opportunity for you to explore the mindfulness connection.

Lemniscates, a professional studio of illustration established in Barcelona, began in 2010 to create its own complete children's book projects, and produced *Silence* after years of experience illustrating for prestigious children's book publishers in Catalonia and abroad. The aim of their books is to stimulate children's talents by creating stories with tenderness and imagination while simultaneously dealing with real life. Open this book, then turn the pages, and discover what the authors and illustrators offer through their beautiful illustrations and

simple reflective words. The title, *Silence*, leads readers to consider what they hear: "What do you hear when you are completely silent?" The reader is invited to experience being silent and still, because through silence we may explore possibilities leading to sound, for music begins with silence. Silence is key to establishing time and space for improvisation, and improvisation leads to composition.

This book inspired me to explore the concept of silence with my kindergarten and first grade students. I began the lesson by creating an environment of silence. Students were asked to lie still on the floor and begin to focus on their breathing, listening for the sound of their own breath. Prompting questions—"Can you hear your breath?" "What else do you hear?"—led them to notice a fan whirring, children talking, laughter, and even pure silence. Through guided exploration they had an opportunity to find silence in various forms. "How does silence sound to you?" "Can you move silently?" "What things are silent?" "What is silence?" These questions brought out other thoughts and ideas, providing a springboard for musical exploration and composition: "Do the answers inspire movement?" "Does the silence lead you to sound?"

From the opening lines, "In the silence," the illustrations promote a feeling of quietude and serenity throughout the book. The pages transport the reader from the hushed stillness of being underwater to a landscape with clouds and a red kite. A girl dressed in red transports the reader on her "silent" journey through the world around her. She moves from day into night: "I can hear what the stars tell me." But can we really "hear" what the stars are telling us or is it through the silence that we can "hear" what the mind is speaking? The little girl's daily actions take her from dancing to running, from swimming to stillness, filling the pages with



movement. She travels from spring into summer where the trees are chattering, and from fall, with tumbling leaves, into winter where the snow is twinkling. Who is this little girl? Follow her page by page, using your imagination to understand her descriptive, thought-provoking statements as they guide you to consider how to be silent or if silence can be felt.

We are surrounded by sound, but silence provides the inspiration to opening our ears and our minds to the world around and within us. It is through silence we are able to explore our inner selves. *Silence* is a valuable source for ways to introduce the concept into your classes. This book heightened my students' understanding

of silence and piqued their curiosity. The end result was their desire to “play” more with it, to discover the abundant joy in the intriguing world of silence. ■

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