Down by the River: A Family Fly Fishing Story by A. Weiner

Sandy Campbell

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Abstract

Weiner, Andrew. *Down by the River: A Family Fly Fishing Story*. Harry N. Abrams, 2018.

This is a beautifully illustrated book that tells a simple story about a boy, Art, who goes on a fly-fishing trip with his mother and grandfather. The story recalls a time when Art’s grandfather taught his mother to fish. April Chu has used a subdued palette for her two-page riverine landscapes, with lots of green and rich autumn colours in the environment. The book has a calm and peaceful feel about it that mirrors the contemplative nature of fly-fishing.

The text is simple and descriptive of a day spent on the river. The reading level is too difficult for the intended Kindergarten to Grade 2 audience, so an adult will need to read the book aloud, especially those sentences that could confuse young readers with difficult concepts or complicated jargon: “The line arced forward and the fly landed softly a few feet above the rock. It drifted with the current past the rock. There was a splash and the line went tight.”

The last three pages contain information about fly fishing, the clothing worn by fly fishers and where to get more information about the sport. The end pages are decorated with images of intricate flys with such fun and mysterious names as: “Ian’s Crunch Caddis,” “Black Fur Ant,” and “Purple Parachute Adams.”

This book is a good introduction to fly fishing for younger children that also tells a charming story. Highly recommended for school and public libraries.

Highly Recommended: 4 stars out of 4

Reviewer: Sandy Campbell

Sandy is a Health Sciences Librarian at the University of Alberta, who has written hundreds of book reviews across many disciplines. Sandy thinks that sharing books with children is one of the greatest gifts anyone can give.

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Current Issue

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The Deakin Review of Children's Literature is an electronic quarterly review of contemporary English-language materials of interest to children and young adults. Of particular use to librarians, parents, teachers and anyone working with young people, we also publish news and opinions relevant to children’s literacy.

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Down by the River also offers a basic introduction to fly fishing, and April Chu’s illustrations convey its intricacies and intimacies from varying perspectives -- close up, far away, and from a soaring osprey’s-eye view -- in an autumnal palette of green, orange, yellow, red. Back matter explains and illustrates fly fishing practices (such as “catch and release”) and vocabulary, and endpapers showcase the diversity of flies crafted by humans to fool the fish. Continue reading Show less.

Talk to your kids about:

- Do you like hearing family stories?
- Have you ever tried a new sport and found it frustrating? Did you keep trying or give up?

Book details:

Author: Andrew Weiner. Down by the River. A Family Fly Fishing Story. By Andrew Weiner. Illustrator April Chu. EBOOK. "I read Down by the River to my five-year-old granddaughter before fishing the next day. She loved it. It added a lot of excitement and knowledge to her fishing experience." — Yvon Chouinard, Founder of Patagonia Inc. Weiner’s text
weaves a lovely tale of a family outing on the river with detailed but not overwhelming technical information about our much loved past-time. With dialog and instruction between a boy, his mother and his grandfather (accompanied by their dog!) "Down by the River" connects us to nature as well as to a fabled tradition of angling literature originating with Izaak Walton's Compleat Angler of 1653. April Chu's drawings are exquisite!