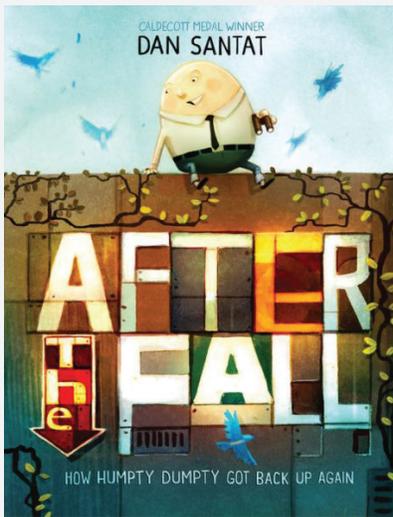


## First Opinion: Humpty Dumpty, the One Who Flew

Santat, Dan. *After the Fall (How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again)*. New York, Roaring Brook Press, 2017.

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Not everyone has the same response to “the Great Fall”. Humpty Dumpty is scared. The fear is real, as is being afraid of accidents. But so is his love for “being close to the birds” (unpaged). Humpty Dumpty never envisions himself flying, yet he has a restless and loving heart as he desires to climb “that ladder again” and settle “for watching birds from the ground” (unpaged). To move beyond the boundaries of his restricted life, he embraces new ideas, like making an airplane that nothing can stop. However, soon he starts to feel that flying a paper plane is not “the same as being up in the sky with the birds” (unpaged). When his heart fills with a desire to fight against what is not love, he is determined to “climb that wall” (unpaged).

Although there is a saying that love is blind, true love—the love that empowers—is not sightless. In the world of Dan Santat’s *After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again*, love has a bright eye, envisioning far more than what natural eyes can see. Love sees the depths of Humpty Dumpty’s broken heart, the part that cannot “be healed with bandages and glue” (unpaged) and guides him to an incredible world. What Dan Santat uncovers in the 40 pages of *After the Fall* is the truth of love: love has the power to change; it has the power to tell a new story. This is precisely what happened for Humpty Dumpty. As he follows his love, he releases a new source of vitality into the world.

Humpty Dumpty's darkest feelings enable him to release the fear of climbing and reveal his most glorious power. With love, his desperate and hopeless feelings are subject to change. Despite the fact that love is not comfortable, despite all his painful wounds and injuries, Humpty Dumpty steps out and, in a real battle with his fearful thoughts, he decides to climb the ladder.

The higher he gets, the more nervous he feels. Although he is terrified, he does not stop climbing. As the terrified Humpty Dumpty keeps climbing, "one step at a time" (unpaged), his love gains more power, enabling him to sing the march of victory on top of the old, scary wall with his arms held high in freedom. When fear is conquered, as J.K. Rowling emphasizes in her 2008 Harvard Commencement Speech, "what we achieve inwardly will change outer reality."

Not only is Humpty Dumpty able to overcome his past, fearful experience; he is also able to become a new being. Humpty's brilliant transformation will resonate with any young reader who has ever felt anxious and fearful. Dan Santat narrates the story of Humpty Dumpty's recovery from fear, failure, and trauma. Themes of self-inquiry and overcoming fear and procrastination are certain to provoke discussions in classrooms, especially in early elementary grades.

It is worthwhile to remember in the *Harry Potter* series when Dumbledore asks Harry to "[p]ity the living, and above all, those who live without love" (Rowling 724) since the highest magic that love can do is to prosper, to change to be prospered. Also, as Rowling emphasizes in her 2008 Harvard Commencement Speech, "we do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already." Dan Santat's *After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again* invites us to do just one thing that we truly love to do, one thing that we are incredibly, totally afraid of doing. As Humpty Dumpty reminds us, we cannot avoid accidents; accidents happen ("they always do," unpaged). However, Santat's story encourages us to wait and see where love can take us. If we get discouraged creeping along, it is good to remember that Humpty Dumpty is no longer afraid.

### **Works Cited**

- Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows*. United States, Scholastic, 2007.
- . "The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination." University of Harvard, Massachusetts, 5 June 2008. Commencement Speech.

### **About the Author**

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*ies and Young Adults*, "Cultural Authenticity in Susan Fletcher's *Shadow Spinner*" published by *Children's Literature*, and "The character in the mask: An analysis of mask in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*" published by *Good Grief! Children and Comics*.