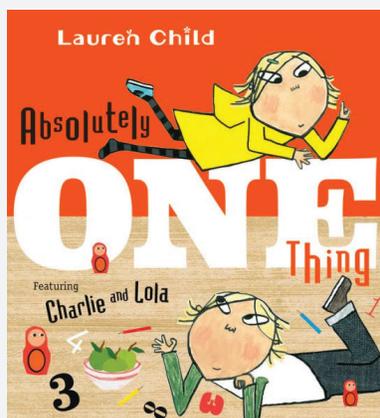


First Opinion: The Sum of It All in *Absolutely One Thing*

Child, Lauren. *Absolutely One Thing*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2015. Print.

Melissa Comer



Charlie, along with his little sister Lola, have been given the absolute best news ever. As a treat, the siblings can pick one thing each when they go to the store with their mother, but they have to get there first. So begins the lighthearted look into the world of children, mathematics, and their understanding of it. In an attempt to explain to Lola that one thing each actually means two total things, Charlie introduces division to help clarify what they can buy. Using concrete examples, in this case apples, he tells Lola that two divided by two equals one, one for him and one for her. Faced with a deadline of 10 minutes, Charlie adds up the time it takes him to brush his teeth, eat breakfast, and find Lola's left shoe. Showing his ability to use subtraction, Charlie reveals that he has exceeded the limit by nine minutes only to find that Lola needs half a second more. Not surprisingly, Lola's half second turns into two minutes, or 120 seconds. On the way to the store, Charlie introduces multiplication and place value when he explains to Lola that ten hundreds make a thousand, or $10 \times 100 = 1000$. He also shares that a thousand is not the most; there are millions, billions, and trillions. Upon arriving at the store, young Lola quickly employs the art of negotiation. Mom reminds them they can get one thing; Lola comes back with the number three, to which Mom stands firm on one thing. Unwilling to end the conversation without giving it her best shot, Lola counters with two things, only to have Mom reduce the amount to zero. Knowing that she has been bested, Lola returns to the original offer of one thing at which Mom replies, "Absolutely one thing."

Making mathematics applicable to everyday life, Lauren Child clearly shows readers that mathematics is not just a subject to be studied in a textbook. Rather, it is a personal interaction with numbers, equations, and units of time. Through the use of *Absolutely One Thing*, readers, especially young ones, will recognize that mathematics impacts daily living. They'll discover that all of us, young and old alike, encounter multiple facets of the subject, including concepts such as addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication, quite often.

Using *Absolutely One Thing* as a classroom resource, students will form a real-life connection with required mathematics curricula. Suitable as a read-aloud for those in kindergarten through first grade, second graders and up would be able to read the book independently. However, it would best serve as an interactive read for all ages and grade levels. One activity that teachers could use with this book includes investigating real-life mathematics as it applies to them (e.g., amount of time allocated for recess or number of total students in class). Another example of a classroom activity includes practicing visual reflections using chart paper or post-it notes. Students could respond to the stem, "My key takeaway about mathematics after reading this text is..." Building on the meaningful context presented for the mathematics content, students could really delve into the sum of it all.

About the Author

Melissa Comer, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee, teaches literacy courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Working closely with in-service and pre-service teachers, she investigates methodology and pedagogy centering on innovative and active engagement strategies. Presenting and publishing at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels on various literacy topics, Melissa's current focus is on exploring culture through personal stories and on integrating technology and instruction within the literacy curriculum.