

Second Reaction: The Arrival

Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007

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Shaun Tan's graphic novel, *The Arrival*, is a father's tale of his journey migrating from his home land and his family leaving them in an unsafe environment to go to the unknown. In this graphic novel, we as the readers, capture and embrace the despair, isolation, and pride as the family embarks on many everyday trials throughout this book.

Throughout the father's journey amidst the unfamiliarity and challenges navigating the new country, there are moments of beauty and connection that serve to bring hope amidst the uncertainty. This visual storytelling goes beyond language and cultural barriers to speak to human experience. "The Arrival" offers a timely glimpse into the immigrant experience, resonating with readers across cultures and generations. By forgoing text and cultural references,

Tan's story becomes universal, allowing readers from diverse backgrounds to find common ground in this journey.

I shared this book with my 12 year old daughter. As a young reader with a keen eye for imaginative artwork, my daughter was immediately drawn to the enchanting illustrations of Shaun Tan's "The Arrival." Before we sat down to enjoy the book together she was drawn to the beautiful cover art. Picking it up and diving into it initially without delay. With each turn of the page, she embarked on a journey through a world brimming with fantastical creatures, intricate cityscapes, and futuristic landscapes, all of which captured her imagination in detail.

She was truly captivated with the way in which the story unfolded through the pictures themselves. As someone who appreciates visual storytelling, she found herself immersed in the details of each panel, piecing together the narrative as she moved through the story. As a learner who struggles with reading as well as writing, Dahlia is more likely to pick up a graphic novel than a chapter book any day. She didn't let the size or depth of this book slow her down from the protagonist's initial departure from his homeland to his encounters with kind strangers in a new land, every scene felt like a window into a new and exciting world.

Despite her appreciation for the imaginative artwork, my daughter did express some difficulty in understanding the plot throughout the entirety of the story. As a young reader, she found herself occasionally struggling to follow the father's journey amidst the absence of text as well as the abundance of characters introduced throughout the story. Perhaps that is due to the author's ability to capture many ages and ranges of readers. While my 12 year old may not understand the father's need to protect and provide for a family, as a mother I get it. What a great ability to reach so many readers while using only pictures.

Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* is a visual masterpiece that captures the imagination of young readers like my daughter with its illustrations and captivating world-building. While the plot may be evasive at times (in her perspective), the sheer beauty and intricacy of the artwork make it a journey worth taking, inviting readers to explore a world of wonder and possibility with each turn of the page.

My son, a 10 year old boy in 5th grade was equally as invested but for different reasons. Anderson was intrigued by the futuristic feel, the mythical creatures, and the plight of the young man leaving his family in search of something more. He was fascinated by the ship, wondering if it was the Titanic. He was also curious to find out if this story took place during a depression, and if that is why the man had to leave his family to better their future. Anderson looked at the characters, the details and the relationships he made when moving to the new land. He was thankful the man wasn't alone and that he had found a companion with the little creature, and among the nice citizens. He thought the illustrations were kind of plain with the limited colors, but was intrigued with the detailed pictures and the ability to tell the story so completely with no words at all.

All three of us enjoyed reading *The Arrival*, all for different reasons. I believe it spoke to each of us for different reasons. Ranging from ten, twelve, and forty one years olds we have all gained insight from this beautiful wordless graphic novel.

About the Author

Cassie Cloninger is a California native, living currently in North Carolina. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Birth through Kindergarten Education, Montessori Teaching Certificate, and holds a Literacy Education Graduate Certificate. She is a Kindergarten Teacher at The O'Neal School in Southern Pines, NC and a mom of two amazing children.