



Castle of Books

Books Reviewed:

[Castle of Books](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Carey Fluker Hunt](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This unusual picturebook poses a question *'why do we need books?'* then invites us to draw our own conclusions by exploring a series of visual and verbal clues.

Two girls are contemplating an array of books. Are we here *to observe*? A chunky volume falls off the shelf and lands with a *thunk!* on one girl's head. Why did it fall? And what will the girls discover when they open it?

Blah, blah, blah? The answer is left to our imagination and the girls start quarrelling. *Rrrriip?!* It's hard to tear a book in half, but the girls have managed it. What emerges from the loose leaves flying round the room? And are we here *to invent, to imagine, to travel or to grow*? Maybe we just need *to be amazed*. Whatever happens, we're sure to find answers of some kind. After all, as the final spread assures us - mischievously? *Now I understand!*

Set against plain backgrounds and largely unconfined by boundaries, Sanna's spare and stylish artwork allows itself the visual and imaginative space it needs to thrive. Spines and covers are suggested by comb-like sweeps of coloured ink with pages drawn in fine black pen, and similar treatment is given to the girls' clothing and hair. Scribbled text erupts from an open book in the form of a shark that, once loosed, becomes a wordy ocean, and origami-like creatures suggest themselves and are constructed, only to become gigantic birds that carry both girls away.

This isn't a standard picturebook for younger readers. It may well appeal to them, particularly when introduced and moderated by a supportive adult, but its apparently simple premise quickly becomes a sophisticated visual exploration and **Castle of Books** is more likely to find an audience amongst older booklovers and those interested in the art of illustration than in a KS1 classroom. But for those children who do engage with it - and for adults willing to take the time to explore it with them, or use it as a springboard for creative activities and responses - it will offer its own rewards.

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