

COLLECTING THE WORLD IN A SCRAPBOOK

Amanda's book. Kerry Westell. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick Press, 1991. 24 pp., \$15.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-185-1, 1-55037-182-7

A young girl named Amanda receives a scrapbook as a birthday present from her parents and decides to cut out and collect everything she likes, including rooms out of her family's house, the moon, clouds, sky, and sun. She proceeds to paste them all into her book, and soon enough her parents and neighbours start to notice that important things are missing, and the city becomes disorganized, not to say chaotic. There is no light outside, and the birds are walking around on the ground. Amanda ends up jumping into her scrapbook after her cat, who has noticed the light spilling out. She runs magically over the pages of the book, catches her cat on the moon, and together they wait until a breeze ruffles the pages and blows everything back into the world again.

Amanda's adventure is enchanting: she talks to her cat, collects untouchable items, and makes the biggest hodge-podge of a mess that a five- to eight-year-old child can imagine. Westell uses devices such as repetition and incongruity to add humour to the story and Ohi's illustrations take an almost surreal delight in *discordia concors*: rhinos show up at picnics while bicycles rest in trees and umbrellas float by unattached to any human hand. The book frees youngsters to use their imaginations. As a bonus it may also give them a new perspective on things we come to take for granted, like the sky, the moon, and the sun, and teach children to treasure them.

The unflappable main character, Amanda, is easy for children to relate to, being a normal little girl, living with her parents in a normal house. She has birthdays like anyone else, and has a pet cat. Her first person point-of-view ensures that there will be no difficult vocabulary or complicated ideas for children to contend with. This perspective will appeal to children, because the story is being told by someone their own age, an insider—it comes *across* to them rather than *down*.

Ruth Ohi's large and abundant watercolours are the book's big strength, adding greatly to the story, and taking up whole pages around the text. The illustrations both judiciously reflect the story and, through their multitude of colours, evoke the desired feelings. Cool blues and purples show the lack of light and warmth, while warmer reds, yellows and oranges used in illustrations of the sky and sun give a feeling of warmth and security, as do the earth tones, browns and creams, used to illustrate Amanda's house. The varied colour tones contrast effectively with Amanda's business-as-usual tone of voice which anchors everything.

Altogether, *Amanda's book* is fun, perfect for bedtime, and might encourage young readers to start collections of their own.

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