

# Reading Matters

## Finding Peace in Our Hearts through Children's Books by Jean Dugan

In *Whimsy's Heavy Things*: Confidence, healthy friendships, finding joy in little things — these are all signs of good emotional health. For children, stories are a great way to start a discussion when things aren't going so well inside their heads and hearts — and if, like Whimsy below, they have heavy things to carry around. In fact, isn't talking about difficulties and differences the first step toward peace? Here are some good picture books to get started.



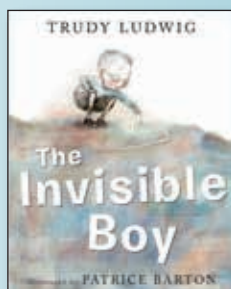
Jean Dugan, a long-time friend of Exchange, has been connecting kids with books for over 40 years. She helped establish a library program in the elementary schools of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and later brought her love of children's literature to the public library there. This is one more opportunity for her to share the best new books with children and those who care about them.

We all carry heavy things around with us, whether in our hearts or on the back burners of our minds. Whimsy's 'heavy things' look like big, hairy bowling balls, and she pulls them around heaped in a little red wagon. She just can't get rid of them. They won't fly or swim away and they won't hide under the rug. You know how it is when you try to make your own heavy things disappear. But Whimsy has a brilliant idea: Why not break up the heavy things into smaller things, and see how useful they might be? Good advice for anyone whose burdens are as overwhelming as Whimsy's.



**Whimsy's Heavy Things** by Julie Kraulis (Tundra Books, 2013); Ages 3-7.

Brian is invisible. Well, not really, but that's the way he feels: at the lunch table, when birthday party invitations are handed out or when it's time to choose teams for kickball. His classmates and their friends are alive in living color, but not Brian; Patrice Barton has sketched him into her illustrations so faintly that he seems to fade into the page. Then the lunchroom gang teases Justin for bringing Korean barbecue in his lunchbox and Brian wonders, "Which is worse, being laughed at or feeling invisible?" Small gestures lead to bigger things, to friendship, inclusiveness, and most important to Brian (now very visible in a dinosaur-green shirt) being noticed at last. Author Trudy Ludwig has included some helpful and age-appropriate questions about friendship to help stimulate discussion.



**The Invisible Boy** by Trudy Ludwig, illustrated by Patrice Barton (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); Ages 4-8.

Rosie Revere is an inventor, an engineer, a maker of gadgets and gizmos who lost all confidence the day her uncle laughed at one of her creations. Now she builds in secret: amazing contraptions that all seem to run on cheese and never see the light of day because of the embarrassing memory of Uncle Fred's snake-repelling hat. Now Aunt Rose asks a favor; she's always wanted to fly and wants Rosie to make her dream come true. The cheese copter crashes, and Aunt Rose laughs, not in derision but in delight as she reminds Rosie, "The only true failure can come if you quit." Rosie goes on to become a great engineer, joining the ranks of the many women aviators noted in David Roberts' inventive illustrations.



**Rosie Revere, Engineer** by Andrea Beaty, illustrated by David Roberts (Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2013); Ages 5-8.

What you do with a rainy day sometimes depends on your attitude. If you wake up feeling that life has sent you more than your share of clouds, you might not be looking forward to the day ahead. However, if you've got a brand new pair of toddler-size rain boots, and some puddles to jump in, life is pretty good. Little boy and grumpy neighbor meet at the Rain or Shine Café, where a smile and an act of kindness break through the clouds at last. Now look who's jumping in puddles!



**Rain** by Linda Ashman, illustrated by Christian Robinson (Houghton Mifflin, 2013); Ages 2-5.

“For there to be peace in the world, there must be peace in nations. . . .” So begins Wendy Anderson Halperin’s aptly titled **Peace**. And like the world, peace is a circle; peace in nations depends on peace in cities, in neighborhoods, in schools, in homes, and finally in our hearts, where it turns back around and ultimately effects peace in the world. Halperin has packed the pages of this lovely book with tiny watercolor illustrations that beg for discussion of how each of us can bring peace to our homes and neighborhoods. In one scenario, trees

that have been chopped down are replaced with young saplings by children. In another, dishes get washed more quickly when there are many hands to do the work. Music is shared. A boy gives up his seat on the bus. I’ve spent hours looking at these small but wonderful pictures. Even very young children will find the sequences fascinating. Older kids and adults will enjoy reading the many quotes about peace that are woven throughout.

**Peace** by Wendy Anderson Halperin (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013); All ages.

