

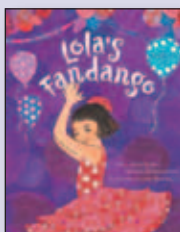
Reading Matters

by Jean Dugan

As pleased as I am that my grandchildren Caroline and Ryan are moving into another stage of reading — one that I hope will sustain them all their lives — at nine and six they still enjoy snuggling with a good picture book. Sometimes I read to them, sometimes they read to me, over and over. A well-written and beautifully-illustrated picture book is a delight to all the senses, to be enjoyed by all. Here are some new titles to share — especially if you don't mind a bit of noise!

Feeling the Rhythm

Anna Witte's *Lola's Fandango* is all polka dots and fiery colors, snapping fingers, tapping shoes, and swirling skirts. Lola's sister Clementina has a longer braid, her pictures are more lifelike, little Lola even thinks her sister's name is more beautiful. But Papi says that Lola has something better — she has *duende*, attitude.



Lola wants to be good at something too. The discovery of a gorgeous pair of dancing shoes in the bottom of the closet leads to her determination to be a flamenco dancer like her Mami. Papi teaches her to sense the rhythm of flamenco everywhere she goes: in the traffic outside their apartment, in the flight of pigeons overhead, and in the sound of her footsteps on the way to market. Her mother's frowns can't stop her, nor can the complaints of the neighbor downstairs who doesn't appreciate the constant *toca toca tica* of fandango on his ceiling. She's a girl with attitude. Kids will clap 123 456 along with Lola as she jumps up on the table in her very own fandango shoes to surprise Mami with her special gift. *Toca toca tica!*

Seeing the Little Things All Around Us

There are no shaking ceilings in *No One but You* by Douglas Wood. It's a quiet and poetic expedition through the tiniest treasures of nature, with lovely textured oil paintings by P. J. Lynch. We've all tasted strawberries, or smelled the earth after rain — but no two of us experience these tastes and smells, the sounds, sights, and feelings of the outdoor world in the same way. Children will want to share their own observations . . .



*No one on earth can look up at the stars,
These stars, right now,
With your own eyes,
And feel your own special place on this earth.*

How empowering to know just how extraordinary our everyday discoveries are!

In the same vein, but with a very different tone is *Seasons*, written and illustrated by Anne Crausaz. As the seasons change, a child notices differences in her familiar world and she remembers each with a single statement on a simple two-page watercolor spread, evoking the sweet and sour taste of the first blackberries, the crackling of leaves, the chill of a snowball, the smell of wood fires, the green of spring that begins and ends and begins again in this charming little book.



Keeping Each Other Warm

What better sense of comfort is there than being wrapped in a warm hand-knit sweater or a cozy pair of socks? Annabelle, the heroine of the lovely book *Extra Yarn* by Mac Barnett, lives "in a cold little town, where everywhere you looked was either the white of snow or the black of soot



from chimneys." Jon Klassen's illustrations are grim indeed. So when she discovers a box inexplicably filled with yarn of every color, Annabelle goes home and knits herself a fuzzy sweater. And with the extra yarn she knits one

for her dog — and one for her friend, and one for his dog. And for the mailboxes, and the trees, and even the pickup truck as "things began to change in that little town" where kindness banishes greed and happiness can depend on something as simple as a bit of extra yarn.

References

- Extra Yarn* by Mac Barnett; illustrated by Jon Klassen; HarperCollins, 2012; all ages.
Lola's Fandango by Anna Witte; illustrated by Micha Archer; Barefoot Books, 2011; ages 4-8.
No One But You by Douglas Wood; illustrated by P. J. Lynch; Candlewick Press, 2011; ages 4-8.
Seasons by Anne Crausaz; Kane Miller, 2011; ages 2-6.



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.