

The Silver Button



BOB GRAHAM

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At the same moment that Jodie's baby brother takes his first step, a city's worth of moments unfold in a masterful picture book from Bob Graham.

At 9:59 on a Thursday morning, Jodie draws a duck. As her pen hovers in the air, ready to add a silver button to the duck's boot, her little brother Jonathan pushes to his feet, sways, and takes his first step. At the exact same moment, their mom plays a pennywhistle in the kitchen, a man buys fresh bread at the bakery, a baby is born, a soldier says good-bye to his mom, a granddad and granddaughter play with leaves in the park, a blackbird finds a worm. . . . From an ordinary scene of an apartment strewn with child's artwork and toys to a bird's-eye view of a city morning pulsing with life, Bob Graham celebrates a whole world-vision in a single moment, encouraging readers to stop, observe, and savor the world around them.

The Silver Button Details

Date : Published October 8th 2013 by Candlewick Press (first published September 1st 2000)

ISBN : 9780763664374

Author : Bob Graham

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Family, Storytime, Realistic Fiction, Juvenile, Animals

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From Reader Review The Silver Button for online ebook

Dolly says

I have to admit that I didn't get this book at first. I didn't preview it before I started reading it aloud and as I read, I wondered, "Where the heck is this story going?"

Our girls, on the other hand, got it right away. They grasped the metaphysical nature of that one special moment in time and as I read the book again, I marveled at the genius of the concept. Still, I am not sure if younger children will get the context of the story and I would recommend it for older children.

The ink and watercolor illustrations are nicely detailed, as we've come to expect from Bob Graham's books. We enjoyed reading this book together, even if I was clueless the first time around.

Caryn Caldwell says

At 9:59 on Thursday morning, Jodie adds two silver buttons to her picture of a duck. While she bends to add a third, her brother takes his first step. In the other room, her mom plays a penny whistle. Cars rush by on the street outside. A jogger passes. Seagulls fly by. A baby is born in a nearby hospital. By the time the clock ticks another second and Jodie draws the final silver button, everyone in the city has moved and changed. It turns out one second really can make a difference.

The Silver Button is a great reminder that while we are living our own lives, everyone else is living theirs. It would be especially good for younger children who are naturally self-centered but beginning to become curious about what goes on when they are not around. It would also be a good lead-in to discussions about what else could be happening at this very second in other parts of the school, or neighborhood, or city, or even world.

Edward Sullivan says

A wonderfully provocative and ponderous story about perspectives, both intimate and vast.

Andrea says

We picked this up in a cute book shop in Montpelier, VT on our trip in 2018. It was in a sale bin and I didn't read the whole thing before purchasing. The idea of the book is very cute: at precisely 9:59 the little brother takes his first step and in the span of his step the world around him is a flutter of activity. His big sister is drawing, a baby is being born, children are playing outside, etc. It's a fun idea but it just felt really random to me (there's even a page on which a homeless woman walks down the sidewalk with everything she owns). I think it's supposed to be profound - one of the most significant moments for a child is occurs simultaneously with other experiences in the lives of others - sometimes mundane, sometimes exhilarating. For a moment, time stands still as a child achieves something that has been long anticipated and will be much celebrated.

And yet, the world moves on. It's a cool concept and it's something that would normally be right up my alley, but it kind of felt like it was trying too hard and I didn't love the illustrations.

Bookrapt says

This engaging picture book details a moment in time and the myriad of activities simultaneously happening in many places.

At 9.59 on a Thursday morning young Jodie is drawing a picture when her little brother Johnathan pushes himself to his feet. He sways, wobbles a little, gains his balance, tilts forward, and takes his first step. This momentous occasion in a child's life is captured in delightful snapshots of the cute boy with his typical toddler's napkin-padded bottom.

The softly-coloured illustrations widen out to an overall view of the kitchen and the children's mother. In subsequent pages, the scene moves outside then expands further afield to include people in other parts of the city going about their everyday lives. Each location shows exchanges between people, and the activities that occupy their attention at that precise second. Finally, the focus returns to Jodie, Johnathan, and their mother just as the kitchen clock strikes ten.

Published in hardback, this generous-sized picture book offers many opportunities to discuss the diversity of people's lives and the interactions within a community.

Reviewed by Jean Bennett (Bookrapt)

Paula says

No more calls tonight, folks, we have a winner. As Jodie puts the finishing touch on her drawing of a duck, her baby brother pushes to his feet and takes his first... step.

FREEZE.

An ambulance goes by.

A feather from the pigeon nesting in the eaves floats past the window.

Phones ring "in a thousand offices and pockets."

A soldier says goodbye to his mom.

And a dozen other things happen, a dozen everyday, unimportant, momentous, miraculous things happen as Jonathan's foot travels through the air and before Jodie calls to her mother, who rushes in and scoops him into her arms.

And right NOW a baby is taking his first step, and a soldier says goodbye to his mom and a feather falls. And right now, and right NOW.

SNIFFLE.

Clare Cannon says

Sweet if a little over dramatized story about all the things that happen while a baby takes his first step. Some nice things to notice, others more ordinary, but it could help children wonder about what is going on in the world around them.

Laura says

As Jonathan takes his first step on an ordinary morning, people all around the city are living their lives as well. A young soldier says goodbye to his mother, a woman pushes all of her belongings in a shopping cart, a jogger runs by with her child in a stroller. A thoughtful and sweet book, I believe that the book is a bit abstract for young readers.

Silly Sobriquet says

The Silver Button is underwhelming. Ultimately, this reads more as a picture book for adults than for children. There is beauty in the framing of the illustrations; the reader gets to see multiple viewpoints which really do enhance the page. However, the media itself isn't exceptionally utilized. There isn't a narrative plot so much as the book is a collection of one minute snippets in the lives of many, many individuals. While this can be poignant for adults, especially parents, I worry the "story" will be lost on children.

Lynn says

Overall, this book would be good to show perspective of how our 'world' is part of something bigger. To a toddler, the playroom is his world, but there is much going on outside their window. The reader is subtly drawn to the outside from the sunbeam streaming in the window.

A few odd items included: the mother's calendar seems out of place, the time is 9:59, but there is 'an early-morning jogger', the geese flying south indicate fall, but no otherwise it looks like summer, and if the ambulance shrieked past, the reader may be confused why it is still there a few pages later.

The full-page, often two-page spread illustrations are soft, yet include many details of daily life. They invite the reader to look for the previously-mentioned events while the perspective pulls back to include the entire city. The reader feels as if they've taken a long trip, but then realize that it all happens within a minute, the time it takes the toddler's sister to go from drawing two silver buttons to three.

I think this book would need support for a younger reader.

Amie Williams says

Illustrator: Bob Graham

Copyright Date: 2013

Number of Pages: 32

Book Format: Hardcover

Grade or Reading Level: Preschool - 1st grade

Genre: Fiction

Lit Requirement: Picture Storybook

Topic Tags: time, neighborhood, family

Summary & Review/Response:

Even in the time span of a minute, a lot can happen. As Jodie puts the finishing touches on her drawing, her brother begins to take his first steps. Meanwhile, at various places around town people are doing completely different things in the same moment. The reader finds out that lot can happen in such a short time.

I liked the idea behind the story, but I was not a huge fan of the book. I do not think it was very engaging. I wish there would have been some kind of plot to keep me wanting to read. The text was fairly simple and would be suitable for young readers. Overall, I thought the book okay, but I thought it could have been a little bit more exciting to keep children interested.

Mary says

Wow! I love the way this book captures a moment and we see how important Jodie and Jonathan are in their own little world. What a great way to introduce kids to the idea that they are important, but that there is so much going on in the world around them that matters as well. The wonderful illustrations take the story forward, providing more focus on individuals in some pictures, but then opening up in others to the world around us, enlarging our world and giving us lots to see.

First Line: "At 9:59 on Thursday morning, Jodie drew a duck."

Robin says

Graham's illustrations of a little boy taking his first steps are just perfect -- he captures the unsteadiness, the tilt, the wobbling -- the wonder and amazement of it. While outside . . . next door, we see everyday moments of life happening. Little moments ARE the big moments. Graham's details are so specific (mom has changed the calendar page in 3 years because she likes the picture so much) and somehow so universal. We see multigenerational relationships -- the grandfather and Sophie building a house of leaves; poignant moments, like a soldier hugging his mother good-bye; everyday moments like a bird catching a worm; sad realities, like the old lady pushing everything she owns in her cart; a glimpse of the neighborhood, city, and hint of the larger world as a tanker heads toward China. All of life is present here, captured in a single moment, as baby Jonathan takes his first steps.

Reminds me a little of *Because Amelia Smiled*, with one thing connected to another, all coming together (or full circle) in the end. Bob Graham does it again.

Barbara says

A whole world of events unfolds as Jodie's baby brother takes his very first step. I love how the book begins with Jodie working on an illustration of a duck and ends with her putting finishing touches on her picture while all around her, big and little events occur. It's neat to observe how Jodie's mother is so thrilled with this monumental moment in the life of her family while a pigeon nestles in her nest, a jogger passes by the house, ducks held south for the winter, a baby is born, and a tanker sets off for its destination in China. Everything happens during one minute, one tick of the clock's minute hands, which is rather amazing but true. The ink and watercolor illustrations are filled with expressive details such as the expression on the face of the family dog who is not sure how safe he is from the baby's feet and the bookshelves lined with books and stuffed animals in the room where the siblings are spending time.

Becky says

Some people really LOVE Bob Graham. I am not one who "loves, loves, loves" his books. *The Silver Button* is an interesting look at one minute of time in the city. In that one minute, many things happen. Some, like the baby's very first steps, seem momentous. Others are very ordinary. For example, in that minute a soldier says goodbye to his mother (definitely emotional) and a little boy stops and has his shoes tied for the second time that morning (definitely not emotional). The book is seeking to capture life: a blend of simple and complex. One review calls it existential. I think this is a hit or miss book. You'll either really like it and think its brilliant or you won't. It has received plenty of starred reviews: Kirkus, School Library Journal, and Publishers Weekly.
