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It Wasn't Me

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

Editors Choice

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The Hueys (**The New Jumper**) are given another brilliant airing by Oliver Jeffers. Here, five of the six egg shaped friends or siblings are arguing and late-comer Gillespie tries to find out what it's about, only to be caught up in that familiar shift the blame game of who started it. His resolution uses that old parental tactic of distraction: 'Want to see a dead fly?' And 'Of course, why didn't you say earlier? How long has it been dead?' is the heartening response. This is an exercise in the sophistication of simplicity. The ovate Hueys are attractive little characters with their stick arms and legs, occasional flesh colouring for faces and hands, two dots for eyes and a blob for a mouth, and what Jeffers can do by way of characterisation and interaction with such small resources is astonishing. The narrative and its mood are conveyed as much by his use of colour, space and texture as by a minimal text and some speech bubbles. The nature of the argument is never specified but its nature is conveyed not only by the Huey's expressions but by giant speech bubbles like threatening clouds containing random images of hostility and anger, mainly thick crayoned squiggles but also a skull and cross bones, a hammer affixed to the bubble by a nail and a three dimensional box. Somehow Jeffers conveys both the dispute's antagonism and the way it imprisons its participants. This is a book that can be enjoyed by children and carers as a simple tale told with panache and humour. It can be pored over for each small change of Huey expression. And, it can, and I imagine will be, studied as a perfect example of the art of picture book creation. **CB**

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