

Book Review

The sound of silence

Goldsaito, K. (2016). Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

The words and illustrations in this story come together beautifully to tell the story of little Yoshio who lives in Tokyo, Japan.

He's curious about his world, particularly sounds. He meets an elderly woman playing the koto, a traditional stringed instrument, who tells him that the most beautiful sound is in fact "ma" (silence). As he moves through the hustle and bustle of the day, Yoshio eventually becomes aware that silence is always there too, if only you learn how to notice it.

When I first spotted a promotional blurb for this recently published book for the 5–9 age range, I thought it might tick a lot of the Five Ways to Wellbeing boxes and it did not disappoint. The story encourages children to be curious, to contemplate, to get out and explore, connect with others, and to be respectful of the passing of knowledge between generations.

Book encourages questions

My seven-year-old son got fully involved in the story trying out the ever-changing sounds with Yoshio and asking questions about Japanese culture and customs.

Important values are portrayed through the story – respect for elders, rituals, music, the environment and studying. One thing that left me wondering was that even though Japan is a leader in mobile phone technology and use, in the beautifully detailed and busy illustrations of people, there is not a device in sight.

The background information contained within the afterword added depth to the story and connection to the author and illustrator's lives.

Children get to experience this story through multiple senses, and they come away perhaps a little curious to reflect on their own lives to see if they can find pockets of silence among all the noise.

Reviewed by Kim Higginson, Information Resources Specialist at the Mental Health Foundation.

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