

Reviews – One Child

Adults sometimes do not recognise the environmental awareness and concerns of many children today. Often, for these sensitive young people, there is an accompanying feeling of despair; the world they will soon inherit is filled with so many major problems, and they are so small, so young, so powerless. What can they do? Chris Cheng, with the experience of many years of working with young people in schools and at Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo, knows this, and has a better answer than opting out with drugs or any of the other easy alternatives. 'One child wrote for the sea and sang for the sky and marched for the animals and spoke for the world, just imagine if the children of the world did all that they could. Just imagine.' Steven Woolman has chosen the image of a stained-glass window as a focus for the changes a child could make. This is a thinking, caring message in picture-book format that I hope will win next year's CBC Picture Book Award.

Margaret Dunkle, Children's Bookseller & Publisher, October 1997

A simple but profound message is the heart of this picture book - that the actions and outlook of an individual matter. A young girl is distressed by the evidence of environmental damage and asks herself, "What can I do?". She begins with small acts - walking to school, planting one tree - she does "all that she could" and then imagines the gains if other children joined her. The rhythm of the text reminds us of a piece of music where different instruments build towards a crescendo.

The illustrator brings additional images with his detailed and cleverly constructed illustrations. The back cover biography says the "illustrations draw on the imagery of a polluted, old stained-glass window being cleaned to reveal the beauty underneath" but the web-like constructions can be read in many ways provoking numerous images (a window on the world? fragility of the natural world? interconnections, many parts making a beautiful whole? sanctity of all creation?).

The book's theme is not in the least subtle, this is a "call to arms"! A book for every pre-school, primary library and for home.

Bookphile, Issue 6, November 1997, Kerry White

Beautiful and distinctive stained glass/mosaic style illustrations by Steven Woolman, and succinct powerful text, combine to make this a superb book. *One Child* graphically presents a girl's eye-view of how mankind is destroying the environment and her struggle to realise that one person can make a difference. The message is overt and

blunt in its push and presents a one-sided argument, so teachers will need to consciously balance this with other points of view. This book has applications across several curriculum areas and can be used for modelling student's own writing, art styles and student-initiated projects in the classroom, school and neighbourhood. Interesting aspects that arise from the book are the judicious use of sombre colours to indicate negative attitudes and behaviour, changing to brightly coloured images as the mood wings to positive suggestions. Teachers will also need to point out that the stuffed animals surrounding the little girl are in fact all endangered species. Highly recommended.

Primary Focus Non Fiction, Perth, Australia 1998

While this picture book has a didactic purpose, its execution is powerfully subtle. It achieves success through an excellent blend of text and image, its purpose being to show the power of the individual in solving the problems of world pollution. It is a book to be pored over, carefully examined, talked about and re-read. It will be a strong stimulus for discussion with children in classrooms and in families.

This is Christopher Cheng's first picture book, and the minimal text is simple and poetic. It is enhanced superbly by Woolman's ink and coloured-pencil illustrations which draw on the imagery of a polluted, old, stained-glass window being cleaned to reveal the beauty underneath. The stained-glass effect enables Woolman to represent a myriad of images, not only of the monochromatic polluted world, but also of the rich, vibrant colourful world of nature. Illustrations are finely detailed, which necessitates the book being read by the individual for best effect.

Highly recommended for school libraries, and for the family collection as it will appeal to readers of all ages.

Reading Time, Wagga Wagga, Australia Vol 42 No 1

One child sees the world becoming more and more polluted, sees forests cleared, wildlife destroyed...and decides to take action. She plants a tree, walks to school and cleans up rubbish; she writes letters, joins protest marches and speaks for the world. Steven Woolman's illustrations move from dirty grey with an occasional glimpse of colour to richly coloured pictures like fragments of brilliant stained-glass windows. Christopher Cheng's very brief text is a bald uncompromising message: Get out there and do something! Don't become one of the silent majority!

Didacticism has long been a dirty word in children's literature and understandably so. If an author really sets out to instruct, he doesn't want to confuse things by presenting an alternative point of view. I might even be a smidge reluctant to read *One Child* with its dark pictures of mutilated forests, to the parents' association of a Gippsland logging town at present! And yet we need authors like Cheng who are passionate and wall-eyed about issues, who are certain of their moral position. Without a few certainties, children can become ethically paralysed, unable to move in any direction because of the clutter of objections and exceptions. It happens to all of us; every question today becomes so complex that it's too difficult to answer, so we do nothing. We are all better for an occasional strong dose of didacticism, for a simple straightforward command to plant a tree.

Magpies, Brisbane, Australia Vol 13 No 1 March 1998

One Child by Christopher Cheng and Steven Woolman, is a wonderfully inspirational book showing what one child can do to help the environment. Vivid illustrations depict the damaged earth being transformed by caring people into the beautiful world our planet can once again become.

Wilderness News, Hobart, Australia Issue No 151 June 1998, S. Van Essen

ONE CHILD is the best book ever written for young readers on the subject of the environment and what he or she can do, one child at a time. **ONE CHILD is the acquisition recommendation of the year for every school and public library**, and an ideal gift from every parent or grandparent to a child who is concerned with the state of wildlife and our environment.

The Children's Bookwatch

As a parent, I often feel helpless to dispel the sadness and sense of powerlessness my own children often express when they hear and see others destroying the environment. **This little book validates the power of each person's effort**, of hope and the vision of possibility....**I am sure it will appeal to parents, teachers and librarians.**

Ann Mulloy Ashmore, Collections specialist de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, The University of Southern Mississippi

Save the earth is a very important theme of today's generation. Everyone, including children, is needed in the fight against pollution. This is a great story of few words brining the message to children that they are also able to help clean up the environment. The illustrator chooses to use drab blues, grays, and greens when talking about how earth is being destroyed and then emphasizes all the good deeds that can be done with vibrant and lively colors. As the story progresses, the illustrator paints the beauty of the earth in a style as though the world is seen

through the reflection of a broken mirror. This book will become a part of every classroom's fight to save the earth.

Iowa Reading journal, November 2001

A girl determines to do all she can to reverse the process in Cheng's optimistic invitation to personal action...frame by frame, a glistening world emerges. [Woolman's] depiction of the brilliance achieved aids the simple, restrained text enormously, as he adds layers needed for making the text specific.

Kirkus Reviews

A natural for Earth Day.

NAPRA ReView