

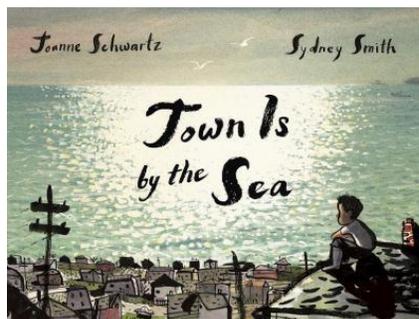
Spotlight

July 22, 2017

There is something about being near water that calms the heart and invites reflection. Salty oceans and running rivers bring us back to ourselves and display the passage of time in a way that is perfectly clear and yet always just out of reach- the tide goes out, the river rolls past. This week's spotlight features two picture books that paint beautiful pictures of life's joys and disappointments, expectations and realities.

In Joanne Schwartz's *Town is by the Sea* we follow a young boy on a quiet day as he takes note of his surroundings. As he looks out to sea, finds comfort in his home, and explores his town his father toils away beneath the ocean in a coal mine. The danger and uncertainty of the father's job combined with the whimsical attentions of the son creates a heartbreakingly beautiful story of a childhood amidst the tougher realities of adulthood. The tension between the open airy illustrations of the boy's day against the dark suffocating images of the father toiling creates a portrait of life as both beautiful and dangerous, like the sea.

Softer, but no less poignant, is the picture book *A River* by Marc Martin. In this story a young girl rides a river throughout the world. She passes high rises, traffic jams, industrial wastelands, bucolic farm country, hills and valleys, jungles and mangroves. In the end the river empties into the ocean and from the rich and nearly overwhelming illustrations of human life and effort we enter pure blue. But only for a moment, because incredible schools of fish and terrifying ocean storms are still to come. Finally, in the end the river returns her home. This book shows the great diversity of the natural world and human creation celebrating the beautiful but not shying away from the terrible. These books have a quiet wisdom about them and will surely make for memorable reading for both child and adult.



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