



Paper Planes

Books Reviewed:

[Paper Planes](#) [1]

Issue:

[236](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Carey Fluker Hunt](#) [3]

Not a choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Mia and Ben are best friends. They do everything together, but what they like most is making paper planes. They race them against birds, hoping one day to build a plane that will fly across the lake.

Then comes the devastating news that Ben is moving to the city. Exchanging model planes, the children vow to remain friends. But winter is hard for both of them, and Mia ends up smashing Ben's gift. That night she dreams the plane is whole again and she's flying it high in the sky among the geese. Ben's there, too, piloting the plane she gave him. Next morning a parcel arrives from Ben. It's a model plane, but it lacks wings and he needs her help to finish it. Using what she learned observing the geese, Mia designs wings for Ben's plane. It soars across the lake - and so their model-making friendship is renewed.

Ben and Mia's story is well-judged, with enough depth and detail to engage its audience. There's a sense of honesty and direct-talking here that children will warm to - difficult emotions are acknowledged and there are no grand promises. Progress is made through imaginative thoughtfulness, commitment and care, and although there's a hint of magic about the dream, it's also a lovely example of the way creative insights come about. Mia's talent for designing and building planes is integral to the plot, but it's refreshingly downplayed. Helmore doesn't labour the 'STEM girl' angle and Mia's character is nicely rounded. Some readers may find the switch from paper planes to actual models a little disorienting but it's a minor point and the title page does feature an image showing both, which sets the scene for those who read the pictures as carefully as they do the text!

And the illustrations really are worth savouring. Softly textured and infused with nostalgia, they take a short-cut to the heart and make us feel we know this place. Saturated greeny-blues and bluey-greys are punctuated by pops of terracotta and deep red, creating a gently-charged emotional landscape in which the story can really stretch its wings.

Paper Planes is by the author-illustrator partnership behind [The Snow Lion](#) [4] and will appeal to thoughtful four-year-olds as well as children in KS1.

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