Yokai
Author:
Manuel Marsol y Carmen Chica

READER'S NAME:Erin Elizabeth Gastón-Owen

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ON A SCALE FROM 1 - 10 (10 being the highest score) how would you rate this book?7

Yõkai is not your average children's book, so despite its limited word count (72 words in 23 pages), this reader found it difficult to assess its marketability one way or another, even after consulting with friends, colleagues and 3 bilingual children (ages 10, 11 and 12) who have grown up in the United States, speaking and reading in Spanish and English from a very young age.

The book's colorful, textured illustrations are certainly unique and could lend themselves to classroom discussions on a slew of contrasts: the city and the countryside; small and large living beings; pursuing or being pursued; and feelings of fear or curiosity. Parents and teachers of young children could also leverage the colorful artwork to have children "seek and find" objects, animals or insects that sometimes "hide" in plain view on the page. The distinctive style of the illustrations is eye-catching and, not surprisingly, earned it the International Award for Illustration at the 2017 Bologna Children's Bookfair.

Yõkai's simple, limited text, however, seems to lend itself to the deeper questions more often posed by adult readers: what does it really mean to be alone and is it just a matter of perspective; what transformations do we undergo – even unwittingly - during parenthetical, sometimes haphazard jaunts into nature; and finally, to what extent does a person have to "get lost" in something to truly come to appreciate it.

Given that Yõkai paints a broad swath (leading adult readers to muse philosophical while children would most likely engage in the colorful concrete and magical), the question for this reader is how well the book would do in a market traditionally characterized by more concrete lines drawn between children's and adult fiction. That is a gap worthy of being bridged: the question is whether the U.S. market is ready for it – hence the 7/10.