



The Extraordinary Gardener

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Diana Barnes](#) [3]

Not on Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Joe was a boy with a wild imagination. It took him far away to a world less ordinary, to a place very different from the world outside?. The book starts with Joe in a grey world, living in a grey block of flats occupied by grey tenants going about their normal lives. Then over the page, Joe's world is revealed in glorious colour, with plants as tall as skyscrapers, and animals unlike any other?. Joe longs for his world to come to life, and one night, when he was reading his favourite book (title not shown, but encouraging!) an idea began to grow.? His book shows the growth of a seed, and the illustrations are as a child might draw them with a radiant sun, a fierce rain cloud, a small shoot, and finally a colourful tree, with birds singing and flowers around it. He eventually finds an apple seed, plants it, nurtures it and watches it, and then gets bored and forgets about it. However, the seed in its pot is outside, and it does grow into a little tree. Inspired, Joe plants more seeds, and produces a garden, which is admired by his neighbours, so he shares his garden with people throughout the city, finding suitable plants (e.g. a spiky cactus for the young man with spiky hair) and finally, with a flap opening out to make a triple page, we see the block of flats transformed with a garden on every balcony, so plants really do grow as high as skyscraper?

The illustrations cleverly seem childlike, with Joe's stick-like limbs and bright blue glasses simply drawn, but it is clear e.g. from the way Joe's stance is varied that this is deceptive - Sam is an accomplished artist, and her work earns an appreciation on the cover from Anthony Browne. She has recently graduated with an MA in Children's Book Illustration from the **Cambridge School of Art**, but has already produced this and **Hello Dinosaurs**, with **Hello Bear** and **Hello Whale** to be published soon. Look out for the child, boy or girl, in a stripy T-shirt, which seems to be a favourite outfit! Sam Boughton is certainly an author/illustrator on her way up.

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