



Ms Cliff the Climber

Books Reviewed:

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

Stories about the complications of divorce and stepfamilies can be imaginative, informational, reassuring or painfully honest. The best have some of each quality. **Grace and Family** fulfils all the criteria. A welcome reissue of this book first published in 1995, the story tells of Grace and her grandmother's journey to The Gambia to visit her father whom she has not seen for many years. As Papa now has a new family, Grace must adjust to stepmother, brother and sister - as well as a new culture - all at once. She is at first inclined to see her stepmother as 'wicked'; however, the pretence cannot be kept up, and she is soon enjoying her new family. The richly warm, expressive pictures add greatly to a sensitive and honest story. As Grace learns, 'families are what you make them'.

Two of Everything is a right royal wheeze. Demetrius and Paula, poor little rich kids, have terrible parents who fight all the time. The children feel sad and confused and think perhaps the chaos is all their fault. Being resourceful sorts, they convince the Vicar to un-marry their parents, bulldoze the family pile, and provide two of everything for their childish Mum and Dad. I am not sure I would use this with children in the midst of the trauma of a parental divorce, but it is a wonderful, wacky story with Cole's always fiercely imaginative illustrations.

Ms Cliff the Climber centres on the complications of family relationships. Clara Cliff spends her life climbing and she meets Clifford Clamber at the top of Nelson's column. They marry and produce Clarissa. But soon there is trouble and divorce ensues. Clara becomes a single Mum. Then she meets Claude Clogg, another climber with three children ... Relationships have become a 'tangle', but through it all runs the theme 'life has its ups and downs' - literally as well as figuratively for all these climbers. Wegner's dotty and detailed illustrations match well with the gentle, lyrical quality of Ahlberg's text. A whimsical run-through of the facts of separation and new relationships in many families.

Running Order:

60

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