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# See the Rabbit; Doll and Teddy; Baby Sleeps; Blue Pram

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These four board books use that unfortunate publisher's trick of pulling images from a well-established book and reworking them into a new format, presumably to increase sales by creating a new audience. **The Baby's Catalogue** has been given this treatment here. For those familiar with Janet Ahlberg's original pictures, it is initially a delight to see them blown up, losing none of their freshness since first appearing in 1982. For those anticipating a good Allan Ahlberg text to go with them - witty, well-constructed and apt - prepare for a disappointment.

The books each consist of pictures, selected without reference to the theme of the original volume, and given a one-word or short phrase caption. **See the Rabbit** repeats the irritating 'See the ...' phrase on each page (remember it from reading books of old?) while **Baby Sleeps**, the most successful of the four, has a rhyming text loosely following a toddler's day. **Doll and Teddy** shows a pair of objects or people on each page with no obvious rationale for their selection; **Blue Pram** purports to be a 'colour' book but as the original drawings were not made with this purpose in mind, a young reader might find focusing on the required part of the picture quite difficult.

I am surprised at Allan Ahlberg's compliance with this project - it seems an unnecessary abuse of the original concept of **The Baby's Catalogue**, and rather than leading new readers to that classic volume it might well induce a 'done that' reaction. This could have been avoided by a more carefully thought-out selection of images/story-line, and texts which through rhythm and cadence help toddler sharers to get a feel for language and the shape of even a simple narrative.

At £3.99 each these titles compare very poorly with the full **Catalogue** at £4.99 in paperback or \$10.99 in hardback - I

know which I would buy.

Running Order:

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