AN EXERCISE IN EDITING A REVIEW

STEPPING STONES: A Refugee Family’s Journey
Margaret Ruurs, artwork by Nizar Ali Badr,
University of Queensland Press, 978 0 7022 5973 9 Hb

REVIEW

No everyday story is Stepping Stones although it’s story is too commonplace in reality for too many people. The illustrations, too, are extraordinary, depicting as they do, scenes of refugees made up of stones carefully placed to create images of people, place and activity.

The text is lyrical, placed on what appears to be scalloped-edged cloth. It appears in English with an Arabic translation beneath (correctly reading from right to left).

A three page foreword sets the scene by telling the story of the conception of the book, unusually, a result of the author seeing and being fascinated by a photograph of artwork composed from river stones. The tale of the writer and the illustrator coming together is in itself fascinating, involving, as it does, a third person in Syria ‘who’ unlike the illustrator, ‘speaks English’.

Thus, a Dutch English-speaking woman in Holland works through an intermediary in Canada with a Syrian artist whose work could be described as transitory: the artist painstakingly placing each rock for each image to be photographed and then broken up so that the pebbles could be reused.

It is a story in itself.

It is somewhat amazing that such hard, inanimate objects are able to be arranged in such a way as to evince such emotion.

And emotion there is aplenty.

Uplifting on many levels.

EDITING SUGGESTIONS

Would it sound/read better as Stepping Stones is not an everyday book although it depicts events that appear daily in newspapers or on television?

Note also: too many ‘too’s’?

Is lyrical the right word? Check dictionary!

Do we need on what appears to be Scalloped-edged? Too fanciful?

Lose one ‘appears’

insert by

replace with ‘working’

Note: Need to make note of the design layout
Following could be inserted after ‘could be reused’:
The text is contained in panels on either side of the central panel that is split in two over the opening the left hand illustration depicting the present exodus, the right hand harking back to the time of peace before the two merge into a depiction of their new place of safety.

Need to return to the story rather than keep withering on about the illustrations, interesting though they are. Suggest The leaving of friends and family; of the land that has sustained them, possibly for generations; a voyage that could end in disaster.

A young reviewer’s first review

The Cherry Pie Princess (2017)
Vivian French,
il. Marta Kissi, 176pp.
978 1 40636 897 0 $14.95 Pb

Right from the start The Cherry Pie Princess is building towards a big ending. Princess Peony who, unlike the rest of the princesses in her family, wants to widen her mind and explore the world outside the palace. She is clever enough to ask for help when solving a problem but to others she is seen as the naughty youngest princess who is a nuisance.

As the story goes on we learn more about her father, King Thoroughgood, and his very short temper. We learn about her mother, Queen Dyls, who is delighted after seven daughters to finally have a son, but is also very tired from having to look after them all. We learn about Princess Peony’s cranky governess, Miss Beef, and her strict ways.

This is an enjoyable light-hearted fairytales that includes a talking cat, a fairy godmother, a wicked witch and a jester. Best of all is the old librarian who encourages Peony to read!

Josie Taylor (age 13)