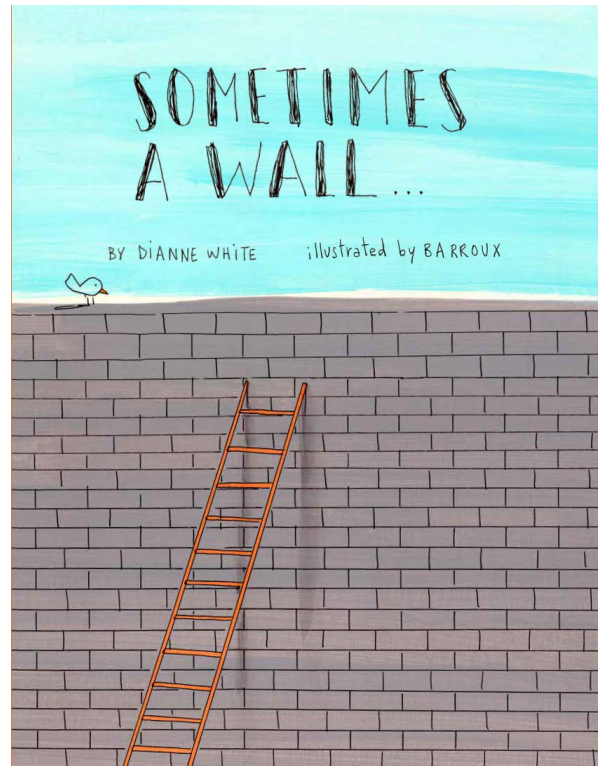


Dear Parents and Educators,

When I speak with kids about writing, I tell them that ideas for stories live in the middle of our everyday lives. For me, these ideas generally begin small - a spark of inspiration as I go about the day, a few words rolling around in my head, a vague sense of a subject I'd like to explore.

The idea for *SOMETIMES A WALL...* began exactly this way – a conversation with a friend about walls. Specifically, the short wall that framed the steps leading up to her local library and the way that a child she saw there couldn't help but hop onto the wall, find his balance, and walk all the way to the top, where he proudly jumped off and entered the library, grinning with the feeling of accomplishment.

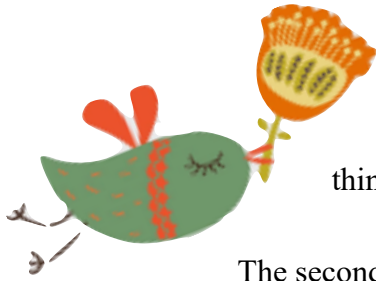


Do you remember being a child and feeling that same urge to conquer a wall? That's where the idea for *SOMETIMES A WALL* began. But it didn't stay there. Very quickly I began thinking about all sorts of walls.

Some are fun! A chalk wall. A rock wall. The wall of water created by a fountain. The walls we build when playing with blocks. The walls that rise when we make a fort with blankets and pillows.

Other times, the fort-building that started out as a fun activity turns a corner, and someone gets excluded.

Leaving someone "out" and others "in" can look a million different ways. It doesn't matter how young or old you are, we can all come up with examples of what this looks like. It's both a timely and a timeless topic.



I wanted to write a picture book that explored the leap from fun and togetherness to separation and exclusion. Of course, I didn't want to leave it there, because figuring out how to make amends once things have gone awry is part of growing up and learning to get along.

The second piece of my “walls” idea was that I wanted to keep the text very short. I'd long admired Laura Vaccaro Seeger's picture book, *GREEN* and wondered if there was a way to write a story using a similar pattern of two words. The first word would change and the second would remain the same. Almost like bricks or blocks, stacked one atop another.

It took months of brainstorming and playing with words before I settled on a structure and version that captured the story I wanted to tell. Once the manuscript sold, the illustrator, Barroux, picked up where the words left off. It was a great pleasure to watch him bring his own creative vision to the story telling.

One of the wonderful things about books is the way they can encourage empathy, opening all of our eyes to ideas and experiences we may not have been aware of or given our attention to.

It's my hope that this nearly wordless text serves as a springboard to conversations about empathy and discussions about what it means to put ourselves in another person's shoes. What are some of the walls – both physical and metaphorical – that kids encounter? And what will they do, as the story proposes, with the “many ways a wall can be,” and the many ways a child can choose to respond to the “different sides and points of view” they will encounter at school, home, and the world beyond?

I believe *SOMETIMES A WALL* can be part of that journey of discovery.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dianne White'.

Dianne White



SOMETIMES A WALL...

by Dianne White, illustrated by Barroux

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