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Brownless's "The autism detective: Investigating what autism means to you" (book review)

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Book Review



Brownless, E. (2021). *The autism detective: Investigating what autism means to you*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 48 pp. \$16.94. ISBN 9781787753044

Elaine Brownless is a specialist autism liaison teacher and parent of a child with autism. Her experience with autism allows her to explain autism to a wide audience from children to adults. Brownless takes time to show that there are differences between people with and without autism but also so many similarities. Her book helps readers see that children with autism do not look different on the outside, their brains just work differently. At the end of the book, readers will find a set of questions and answers and further readings related to autism as well as a few puzzles as additional ways for learning about autism.

In *The Autism Detective*, readers meet two sibling detectives, Kit and Scully. Their mission is to learn about autism and determine which of the six volunteer test subjects have autism. Kit and Scully do some research about autism in general before asking each of the test subjects several questions. The readers can join Kit and Scully with reading clues to figure out which children/test subjects are autistic. At the end, Kit and Scully summarize what they have learned about autism before celebrating another mission complete with chocolate.

Mai-Ann Burns illustrates *The Autism Detective* as a graphic novel which enhances the detective story Brownless writes. Burns uses bright colors that appeal to a younger audience. Clue pages are done include a cork-like background to match what a real detective may use to organize and understand their clues. Readers will read Kit and Scully's conversations and the test subject clues to gather as much information as possible to solve the mystery. Brownless recommends stopping to discuss the evidence after each set of clues as if the readers were detectives like Kit and Scully. In addition, at the beginning of the book Brownless gives parents suggestions for how to read the book with children as either a detective activity or instructional activity.

This book is recommended for an elementary school or public library, especially one with autistic children. Teachers may also want to include this book in their classroom library or curriculum to teach their classes about autism. Children will enjoy the creative way Brownless wrote this book to teach about autism.

Reviewer

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