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Mockingbird

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off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Hush little baby, don't say a word, Mama's gonna buy you a Mockingbird. In a paraphrased version of the old song, Ahlberg's and Howard's baby is king in a family which keeps him entertained by buying him gifts of increasing extravagance: a mockingbird, a garden swing, a pedal truck, a dog named Rover. All of these come to grief of one kind or another, and it is Papa's homebaked birthday cake which eventually brings baby to a sleepy state of contentment. Many of the conventions of good picture book making are in evidence here, for example, balance on the pages between words and illustration, and pictures contained in a frame while others bleed to the edge, encouraging the reader to experience an involvement with baby's comfortably well off family at the turn-of-the-century. It is perhaps because of this rather studied effect that the parts do not add up to the whole which might be anticipated from the pairing of the seemingly dream-team of Ahlberg and Howard. **Mockingbird** will undoubtedly appeal to a market for nostalgia with its almost familiar words and the careful details of Howard's pictures, evoking a nursery era when all was, at least superficially, right with the world. But it is the real bird pictured outside the window on the title page and on the closing page which hint that baby, and possibly young readers too, will venture beyond the confines of such a cosy world.

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