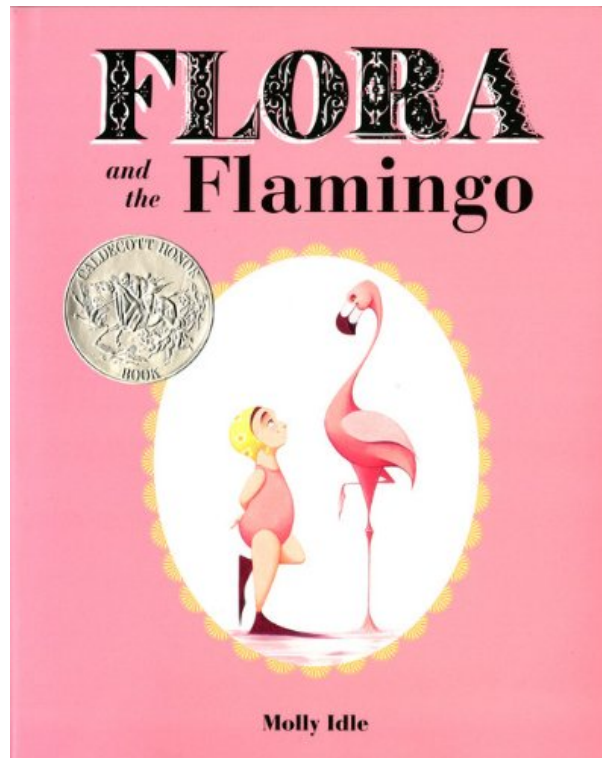


# FLORA AND THE FLAMINGO BY MOLLY IDLE



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# FLORA

and the **Flamingo**



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<http://www.reading.org/general/Publications/blog/BlogSinglePost/reading-today-online/2013/12/11/diverse-and-impressive-picture-books-of-2013#.UrM99uL2JTa>

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A 2014 Caldecott Honor Book

In this innovative wordless picture book with interactive flaps, Flora and her graceful flamingo friend explore the trials and joys of friendship through an elaborate synchronized dance. With a twist, a turn, and even a flop, these unlikely friends learn at last how to dance together in perfect harmony. Full of humor and heart, this stunning performance (and splashy ending!) will have readers clapping for more!

And coming soon! Dance, leap, and soar with Flora and the Peacocks.

- Sales Rank: #8435 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Chronicle Books
- Published on: 2013-02-05
- Released on: 2013-02-05
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.25" h x .33" w x 8.25" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 44 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

Amazon.com Review

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27 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Think pink

By E. R. Bird

Did you know that flamingos are pink because of their diet of plankton? Did you know that the flamingo is the national bird of the Bahamas? And did you know that when it comes to a pas de chat or a particularly fine jetée, no bird exceeds the flamingo in terms of balletic prowess? No? Then you're clearly not reading the right literature these days. Now, before you get to thinking too hard about it, let me assure you that when I discuss a book like *Flora and the Flamingo* I should right off the bat say that this is NOT a book about a bird that wants to be a ballerina and must overcome obstacles to achieve that goal. That is, without a doubt, the most common storyline in ballet picture books today. I would not review such a book as that. No, *Flora and the Flamingo* is notable because it is a perfect amalgamation of wordless storytelling, likable (or at least understandable) characters, and an artistic sensibility that will make you forget its unique formatting and remind you only of the classic picture book days of yore. So forget what flamingos eat. Are you getting enough flamingo picture books in YOUR diet? If not, time to start.

A single flamingo lands and perches on one leg beneath the falling pink blossoms. It does not notice the single flipped foot that appears behind it nor, at first, the bathing suited little girl that mimics his stance. But when he starts to stretch (or is he dancing?) he can't help but see how she tries to imitate him, wing for wing. In a moment of cussidness he bleats at her, causing her to tumble head over heel into the water. Chastened, the flamingo offers a wing and the two embark on a fantastic dance, culminating in a joyous leap into the water and an elegant bow and curtsy.

Idle has the mark of the animator all over her. It's a style of drawing you'll find in the works of folks like Tony Fucile or Carter Goodrich. You can recognize an animator pretty easily right from the start. They tend to have very expressive protagonists. Take *Flora*, for example. Though at first she attempts to keep her face relatively placid, as the book goes on, a variety of emotions flit across her punim. From a miserable (mouthless) hurt glare to a skeptical raised eyebrow, to gentle trust, and, finally, pure pleasure. The white background sort of clinches it. Kirkus, in their review, said that there is a "courageous use of white space" in this book, and I have to agree. Yet for all that she has an animator's heart, Idle avoids the pitfalls that have felled many from her field that have come before her. I'm talking about storyboarding. The laziest kind of picture book is the kind that feels like it began life as a series of quick sketches tacked up on a wall somewhere. Storyboarding has its place in the world, but it is not an effective way to map out a picture book. There has to be a flow and a relationship between the pages. You have to know that by turning one you're advancing the story right there. Idle achieves that feeling, and the reward is a tale that is as emotional as it is visual.

Idle does something particularly striking with the book that many an early 21st century reader might notice. *Flora* is certainly an everygirl, and in no way is that more evident than her weight. I am sorry to report that in the children's book world, if a character is plus sized or larger than average, that will usually be the sole focus of their tale. The everyday adventures of kids that don't look like walking popsicle sticks are nigh unto impossible to find sometimes. The nice thing about this book is that unless you want to interpret it as an exercise book (don't) it isn't about *Flora's* pear-shaped body. Now if one were feeling somewhat cynical they might suspect that Idle is using her heroine's weight to make her comical. I don't think that's really the case. Certainly the contrast between her and the flamingo is set off by their different appearances (more on that soon), but you could also argue that by giving her heroine a little more meat on her bones, Idle makes *Flora* easier to identify with. There are lots of overweight kids in America right now. Seems to me it shouldn't be too hard to give them a happy dancing kid hero. Remember the "No Rain" by Blind Melon music video? It's like that.

The unspoken (ha ha - there are no words in this book) irony here is the fact that flamingos are not usually considered unusually graceful birds. There's a skinny gawkiness about them, and Idle makes use of that

gawkiness to contrast her feathered hero with the very different awkwardness of the girl. Where he is all knobby knees and thin curled neck, she is circles and smiles. His elegant pink feet bear nothing in common with her ginormous brown flippers. This dichotomy is the striking difference that gives the book its visual kick in the pants. The white background and pink apple blossom-like flowers that frame the edges of the pages are perfectly suited to focus your attention on the bird and the girl. The flaps are just the icing on the cake.

I probably should have mentioned it before, but *Flora and the Flamingo* is actually a lift-the-flap picture book. If you want a fun exercise in clever book design, read just the pages with the flaps. You'll see that at first Flora's flap and the flamingo's are on opposite pages with the flamingo directly in the center of his page and Flora's flap slightly closer to the flamingo's page. Skip ahead and you'll see that Flora has traversed the gutter (the area found between pages) and suddenly her flap is touching the flamingo's (no wonder he gets tetchy!). After he hurts her feelings the flaps are as far from one another as they can be. The flamingo makes good and for the first time the two characters share a single, large flap. They dance and it all builds up to a gatefold in the book that can be opened to reveal the two cannonballing happily into the water. Beautifully done.

I could get a lot of good out of this book with kids, I can see it now. First up, it would pair amusingly with another make-a-flamingo-your-buddy book, *You WILL Be My Friend!* by Peter Brown. As a ballet book, this title is also rather excellent. You can actually name the steps from time to time. I suppose if you absolutely had to you could even argue for this as an exercise book, but that's pushing it. At its heart, *Flora and the Flamingo* is just an unassuming little story about making a friend. There's nothing very complicated about that idea. It's just all in how you present it, baby. Consider this one book that's not afraid to let clever (yet essentially simple) design and good art do the heavy lifting.

For ages 3-7.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Wordless, but full of wonder

By Aaron Wyckoff

This delightful book comes without any words, but contains plenty of story just waiting for a child to discover it. Flora does her best to imitate a flamingo, both in her attire and her actions. The flamingo, noticing her and apparently disapproving, contorts into increasingly difficult poses until Flora topples. Then, noting her distress and feeling apologetic, the flamingo enters into a duet with Flora to finish out the book.

The illustrations are simple but elegantly crafted. Ample white space, framed by trees and blossoms, focus attention on the characters and remove any background distractions. It is easy to follow the emotions on the faces and in the body language of both characters. Perhaps the nicest touch is the yellow of Flora's bathing cap, which keeps the book from being too pink.

This book will appeal to a wide range of readers from preschool and adult. It is particularly suited to young children who do not want to be confined to a story with words, but would rather use their imaginations to tell their own story.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Delightful and Different

By Kate

This is such a lovely, creative book! My son and daughter (3 1/2 year old twins) both love this book. It's an active book for them as they keep jumping off my lap to copy Flora's moves in their own little dance. Though a book without words was something new for them at first, they see something new in the pages

every time we read it.

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