A voltes la mare té trons al cap
Author:
Beatriz Taboada
Reader:
Suky Taylor

A voltes la mare té trons al cap (Sometimes Mum has Thunder in her Head)

Sometimes Mum has Thunder in her Head is narrated by a daughter and tells the story of her mum's different moods, both positive and negative. To an adult reader, the text behind the child's story clearly portrays that the mother suffers from some form of depression or mental illness, without putting any label on it or any specified degree of severity. The diagnosis is not important – sometimes Mum is happy and fun and relates easily with her daughter, and other times she is unhappy and withdrawn and struggles with the everyday responsibilities of being a mum. The big emphasis for the reader, from the daughter's perspective, is the lack of judgement, or of any indication that she herself suffers from her Mum's actions. Her narrative makes clear the normality and her acceptance of the situation, and in fact the normality of having different moods, just as the daughter herself does too in the last pages of the book. Leaving the conclusion of the story to be whether in fact the (adult) reader's first perception was precipitated, questioning the initial approach to mental illness and judgment of people's moods. These are very complicated and convoluted topics for children, and the author tackles them with subtlety and without fuss. From a child reader's perspective, this very cleverly subverts the tendency to make quick judgments and encourages empathy for other people's feelings and actions, and a curiosity for why people have different moods, or why they can change from one mood to another.

The metaphors of the different weather inside her mum's head make an easy way for children to understand how moods can be unpredictable and uncontrollable, but also something very normal and part of life. With this idea of a natural force, the author presents an idea that isn't at all scary or strange… The illustrations also work well to support the seriousness of the topic without making it scary or overwhelming. The Mum and the daughter are always together even when the weather is bad, and notably the day she has thunder in her head, the picture is of her holding her daughter's hand. A child reader will see that the daughter is not always happy as a result of her mum's moods, but also the contrast when they are both enjoying something together and having lots of fun.

The story would be very suitable for the contemporary market in English-language children's literature, and I think is a particularly good example of the sort of educational and enjoyable book that publishers would be keen to promote in the current climate. I also think that it could be relevant to all families, while addressing something that can amount a very serious issue, or also be something that all children and parents experience sometimes in daily life. There is currently a good demand for books like this one on the English-language market, and already plenty of support for the promotion of resources for children in issues of mental health, and this book seems a particularly effective way to transmit an important message.

From the reader´s report by