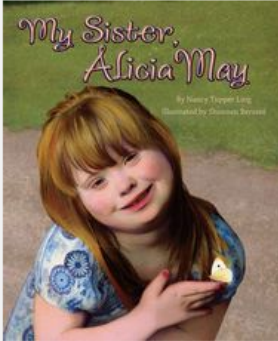


Bookworm Sez: Living with a special-needs sibling is focus of this book

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By **Terri Schlichenmeyer**
 May 10, 2009

“**My Sister, Alicia May**” by Nancy Tupper Ling, illustrated by Shennen Bersani (Pleasant St. Press, 32 pages, \$16.95)

Sometimes, your brother or sister makes you crazy. If he’s not getting into your stuff, he’s copying you. If she’s not making up big stories, she’s telling on you about something you did (or didn’t) do. It makes you just want to scream.

But most of the time - can you admit it? - you love your brother or sister and you’re pretty glad to have him or her around. In the new book “My Sister, Alicia May” by Nancy Tupper Ling, illustrated by Shennen Bersani, a young girl talks about her special little sister.

Every morning, bright and early, Rachel’s sister, Alicia May, bangs into Rachel’s bedroom and wakes her up. “Rise and shine!” she yells, but Rachel doesn’t mind.

Rachel knows her sister is special because she remembers when Alicia May was born. Doctors had to fix her heart, and she was so brave. But now Alicia May is like most 6-year-old girls.

She loves to paint her toenails and she loves bugs. She also likes polka dots and watching trains go round and round. And Alicia May loves animals, particularly dogs and horses and animals at the zoo.

Rachel is proud of her little sister because she has a really good memory and she makes friends easily. Lots of people like Alicia May, too, and they like when she waves hello to them as she walks with Mom to get the mail. Alicia May has lots of friends!

Even though Rachel loves her sister, she doesn’t always play with her. Rachel has her own friends and they ride bikes together, until they hear Alicia May calling them. Rachel is glad when her sister welcomes her home.

But sometimes, Alicia May makes Rachel crazy because she can be embarrassing and other kids are often mean to her. They tease Alicia May.

Rachel hates that.

Maybe people are mean because they don’t know how special her sister really is. Maybe everybody needs an Alicia May in their family.

Based on a true story about two real-life girls, “My Sister, Alicia May” is an absolute delight.

Author Nancy Tupper Ling gives voice to the love, patience and frustration that an older kid experiences when growing up with a special-needs sibling. I loved that Rachel seems so observant and grown-up but is still a little girl in the end. And I loved that the author allows this story to show a sometimes-not-so-fun side of having a differently-abled brother or sister.

On her dedication page, illustrator Shennen Bersani says that she was stunned when her agent asked her to do the artwork for this book: Bersani grew up with a younger sister who has Down syndrome. Her memories, in conjunction with what turned out to be a true-to-life story, give her illustrations a joyous flavor.

If you have a special-needs child in the family, “My Sister, Alicia May” is a must-have for siblings, parents and friends to read.