



Little Stella, Whose Baby Are You?

Jacqueline Brooks

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Young Authors Publishing

(21pp)

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Little Stella, Whose Baby Are You? is a bubbly picture book in which a beloved baby's mother encourages her to be adventurous.

In Jacqueline Brooks's picture book *Little Stella, Whose Baby Are You?*, a mother shows her infant daughter that she is full of potential, connecting her with her culture and encouraging her to explore her abilities.

Stella's mother narrates, speaking to baby Stella with affection. She points out Stella's sparkling eyes, reaching fingers, and wiggling toes, saying they will take her places in her future. Stella could grow up to travel the country, host art shows, dance the night away, and cook meals that celebrate her ancestry. For now, her mother says, she is right where she belongs: safe at home with her family who loves her.

Catchy rhythms buoy the narrative along. Effervescent word choices (Stella feels "the warmth of summer suns in faraway faces") bolster the dreamy, singsong mood, though the book's clarity of purpose is at times sacrificed for this beautiful language. Stella is seen "grabbing," "crawling," "exploring, creating, and taking up space"—an independent, confident baby heroine who navigates her world well, knowing that her mother's welcoming arms are there for her when she needs them. When Stella's mother answers the repeated titular question at the book's conclusion, she reinforces Stella's sense of safety and security.

The adorable illustrations feature bold colors that bring vibrancy to Stella's home, which is stocked with toys, crayons and paper, steaming fresh food, and loving family members whose hands reach down to embrace Stella. Stella's bright, two-toothed smile expresses her joy and curiosity. Her views of Brooklyn's brownstones and the Golden Gate Bridge through car and airplane windows offer an intimate perspective, while images of luscious soul food and Stella dancing to music by Black artists connect her sense of belonging not only to her family but to her culture.

Little Stella, Whose Baby Are You? is a bubbly picture book in which a baby is encouraged to be adventurous while maintaining roots in family love and security.

AIMEE JODOIN (September 15, 2023)

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