

Nurse Florence, Why Do We Have a Belly Button?

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(59pp)

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Nurse Florence, Why Do We Have a Belly Button? explains one of the strangest parts of the human body in a manner that's accessible to children.

Three friends make fascinating discoveries about anatomy in Michael Dow's book *Nurse Florence, Why Do We Have a Belly Button?*

After school, Sonia and her friends stumble upon an important question that they never considered before: "Why do we even have a belly button?" Puzzled, they reach out to their school nurse, Florence, in search of answers. Florence is happy to enlighten the girls, teaching them about how babies grow thanks to the nutrients and other substances provided to them through the belly button via the umbilical cord. Her lesson instills in the girls a greater admiration for the human body and its many capabilities.

Indeed, Sonia and her friends learn new words and concepts pertaining to their bodies and to scientific theories, such as the role played by proteins and hormones in human development. They also learn about Nurse Florence's heritage: prompted by a question from one of the girls, she explains in brief what her facial tattoo means and how proud she is to be Native American. In this way, the story models respect for both the human body in general and for the different kinds of people those bodies belong to.

The large-print, limited text doles out information in small, consumable portions, keeping it from becoming overwhelming. In service of these educational aims, the characterizations are light: the children have few distinguishing traits and are present most to ask questions and prompt Nurse Florence's lessons. Florence is better fleshed out as a gentle, patient instructor who uses all of the tools in her arsenal—from medical knowledge to images on an iPhone—to satisfy the students' curiosity. She answers the story's central question in a thorough, thoughtful manner; the exchange is informative, challenging, and age appropriate.

The soft color drawings on each page move between depicting the children and nurse and expanding on Nurse Florence's explanations of how the umbilical cord works. They are helpful visuals, illuminating the complex ideas that Nurse Florence covers. However, the conversations between the nurse and the children appear in distracting single paragraphs, without breaks for different speakers. Further, a sentence regarding the history of the Acjachemen Nation contains reproduced, uncredited language from the Nation's official website.

Nurse Florence, Why Do We Have a Belly Button? is an educational picture book that explains one of the strangest parts of the human body in an accessible manner.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (June 14, 2023)

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