

We Are the Wackadoodles: Welcome to Our Blended Family

T. A. Duggan

Quantum Discovery

(30pp)

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Working to demonstrate the dynamics within nontraditional families, We Are the Wackadoodles: Welcome to Our Blended Family is an ambitious, series-opening picture book.

The first book in a series, T. A. Duggan's picture book *We Are the Wackadoodles: Welcome to Our Blended Family* is about nontraditional families and connection through household responsibilities.

In this series opener, each member of the blended family is introduced in an analogous manner, with biographies detailing their ages, ethnic origins, and personal characteristics and hobbies. These introductions are accompanied by images and maps intended to emphasize their diverse cultures and personalities. The latter portion follows a day-in-the-life format, with the narrators describing their household's routine, ranging from breakfast arrangements to evening chores.

Narrated by the family's parents, C. C. and J. J. Wackadoodle, the book centers the adults' voices. Their descriptions of their children are too mechanical, though—void of the children's personal interpretations of their own selfhood. And questions concentrating on key concepts are placed throughout the book (e.g., “Do you know why part of the Ireland map is red?”, “Why is it important to get a good night's rest?”)—an addition that creates space for interaction, though the questions go unresolved, as the following text either shifts to different subjects or delivers unclear answers. This leaves awkward transitions in the story's progression.

Many of the book's pages have blurry images, some containing illegible text and unpredictable illustration styles. Though the images add necessary visual elements, they're often ineffective; some images aren't an appropriate pair to the description of the child. Similar inconsistencies occur when images of the family show only white characters, contrary to the expansive ethnic identities detailed in each child's introduction. This discrepancy is off-putting, suggesting a Eurocentric perspective rather than removing it.

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BROOKE SHANNON (October 13, 2023)

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