

# The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld

reviewed by Kaitlin Beck

## THE RABBIT LISTENED

CORI DOERRFELD



### Summary

I found this sweet little book last year at Urban Abbey in downtown Omaha and fell in love with it instantly. Little did I know that the lessons it had to share would provide the perfect jumping off point for class discussions on emotions and personal wellbeing following the March flood that devastated the community where I teach.

When the book opens, a small boy named Taylor is building something new, something special, something amazing with his toy block set. But suddenly, a flock of crows swoops in, knocking Taylor's building to the ground. What follows is Taylor experiencing the many layers of grief, personified by animals that visit him; each tries their best to soothe, but nothing seems to help. Finally, the rabbit arrives and sits with Taylor quietly, holding space. When Taylor feels ready, he tells the rabbit about every emotion he's experienced and the rabbit listens. In the end, Taylor describes his plans to build again, something even more amazing than before.

### Classroom Applications

While reading the book, I played a recording of Miles Davis' *Blue in Green*. After, I spoke with my students about ways to ask for support when dealing with something hard and how we can be a companion that listens when others are in need. To check in with each of my students in a low stakes way, I gave them a sheet of paper with a heart on it and asked them to color the heart based on the emotions they felt. Bigger feelings would take up more space within the heart and smaller feelings less. When finished coloring, the students wrote a key so what colors represented which emotions. A few students asked if they could write a paragraph to explain the way they colored their heart which helped me to further understand their experience. After looking at the hearts, I was then able to have one-on-one conversations with students that really seemed to be struggling and also refer them to the school psychologist, if needed. Overall, I think this book is a great way to incorporate social emotional learning and promote emotional wellbeing in the music classroom, as well as empowering students to think about their feelings and provide support for others.

Although I first utilized this book in a different way, I envision it being used in a variety of ways as a creation-based lesson that could be adapted for any grade level. Students in K-1<sup>st</sup> grade could select words from the movement wall that illustrate different emotions from the book and experiment with them individually or with a partner while the teacher accompanies on xylophone or recorder. For students in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, you could have them write body percussion ostinato patterns with text connected to certain emotion, culminating in a class composition of layered ostinato. Students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade could be split into small groups and assigned a specific emotion to portray through improvisation in different pentatons or modes on xylophone or recorder and then performed as a big rondo while rereading the book. Other ideas that come to mind include creating small group movement sentences for emotions, selecting gems from the volumes to accompany each part of the story, or even creating a program based on the book. Truly, there are so many possibilities with this book; I hope that you enjoy it as much as I have!