Uri Shulevitz won a Caldecott Medal for his illustrated edition of Arthur Ransome's The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship, and has won numerous other awards for illustrating his own books. Not surprising, then, that he'd create such a lovely book as Snow, a touching story about childish hope, grumpy pessimistic grownups, and the wonder of snowfall. Will the snow come? (Oh, please?) In the first scene there is none, but the second has—if you can find it—a single flake. Then there are more—but they melt. And then, finally... joy! These are unusually subtle illustrations for a children's book: so many illustrators try to out-do each other with lurid effects and excessive brightness, but many of Shulevitz's exquisite panels are close to monotone. He paints whole cityscapes in a dozen shades of gray, with small human figures who you notice (at second glance) have coats of gray-green, gray-blue, or gray-brown. The adults have tiny Edwardian parasols or handle-bar moustaches. The abstract, atmospheric, folktale effect is heightened by a pared-to-the-bone text, just a few words per page. It's nothing, said man with hat. Then three snowflakes. It's snowing, said boy with dog. Snow perfectly captures the transformative nature of snow and the result is magical. Click to see a sample spread. Illustrations and text ©Uri Shulevitz, reprinted with permission from Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Ages 3 to 6) --Richard Farr

My Personal Review:
By and large, the general rule guiding picture books and the Caldecott awards they garner is that no children's author/illustrator ever wins the Caldecott Award for their best work. This rule generally applies to all awards, I suppose in some way. Oscar winning actors, actresses, and directors never seem to win for their best films either. But the case seems to be even more extreme when it comes to picture books. Let's take author/illustrator extraordinaire Uri Shulevitz as our example. Now review your Caldecott knowledge and tell me what book earned Shulevitz a Caldecott. If you said, The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship, you are correct. Now, tell me which book Shulevitz both wrote and illustrated which DESERVED the Caldecott Award (not Honor). If you said, Snow
then you are once more right right right. I recently discovered this charming and thoroughly pleasing little book all on my own and I can tell you here and now that aside from the great Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats, there is no other book that so skillfully pinpoints the elation a child feels at the first real snowfall of the year.

Were in a village. A village where the clouds hang heavy overhead and the only words on the first page are, The skies are gray. The rooftops are gray. The whole city is gray. The next two-page spread gives a perfect sense of anticipation. Underneath this mono-colored set of stores and houses are the words, Then......one snowflake. And if you look very very carefully, there is a single spot of white against the gray swelling watercolor that is the sky. A boy in an orange hat points out the flake with delight, his dog by his side. His grandfather, however, doesn't think snow is possible. Then there are two snowflakes (with a man in a hat pishing the possibility). Then there are three snowflakes and a lady with an umbrella proclaims that they'll simply melt. And they do, it's true. But as soon as one snowflake melts another takes its place. And in spite of the adults and in spite of the radio and in spite of the television, it begins to snow. The boy frolics with his dog and some imaginary friends. And by the time the snow is done the whole city is white but the sky is a brilliant bright sunny blue hue.

This is a book about hope. How childish belief can overcome adult naysayers and jaded remarks. Never mind that after a few months the kid will want to see anything BUT snow. At this point in time, he's trumped the grown-ups of the world. I especially enjoyed the parts of the book that declared that snowflakes don't listen to radio, snowflakes don't watch television. What snowflakes do is fall. Shulevitz spares his words for the moments when they are most needed. When they do come, they are brisk and to the point. His boy and dog, on the other hand, are playful and exuberant. This book in some ways resembles nothing so much as a Maurice Sendak story. The frolicking child character is especially Sendakian, it now occurs to me. Still, these illustrations are far more subtle and restrained than most other picture books. The snowflakes, when they appear, are so tiny and insignificant that it takes a quick eye to spot them. The watercolors are lovely muted tones and the characters (at least the adults) are people with exaggerated gravity, quickly becoming ridiculous when they find themselves caught out in an unexpected snowfall.

You can tell readily if some books will be lovely deeply and dearly by children for years to come. This is one such of a kind. Its bound to be beloved by millions for decades and decades. A wonderful discovery.

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Snow (Caldecott Honor Book) by Uri Shulevitz - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!