Susan Laughs by Tony Ross

Susan laughs, she sings. she rides, she swings.

She gets angry, she gets sad, she is good, she is bad...

Told in rhyme, this story follows Susan through a series of familiar activities. She swims with her father, works hard in school, plays with her friends -- and even rides a horse. Lively, thoughtfully drawn illustrations reveal a portrait of a busy, happy little girl with whom younger readers will identify. Not until the end of the story is it revealed that Susan uses a wheelchair.

Told with insight, and without sentimentality, here is an inspiring look at one spunky little girl whose physical disability is never seen as a handicap.

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My Personal Review:
The perfect marriage of art and words, Susan Laughs blends pastel crayon illustrations and two-words-a-page text into a delightful read. With such meager text, the book relies on the illustrations. Somehow the pictures seem European, and when one discovers that the author and illustrator are both from England, it confirms the impression. Susans piquant face and the idyllic landscapes remind me of the Madeline series, with softer colors.

The plotless `story follows Susan through school days, home days, park visits and pony rides: Susan trots, Susan rows, Susan paints, Susan throws. Only on the last page do we discover why this is a special needs book - Susan uses a wheelchair. The message is brought home, That is Susan through and through - just like me, just like you. I was compelled to backtrack through the book looking for pictures of Susan doing all these
things. In none of them is she standing unassisted, but the reader doesn't notice any of this until its brought into focus in the final panel. Does ones opinion of Susans abilities change after learning this? Not really, and thats why the book succeeds.

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