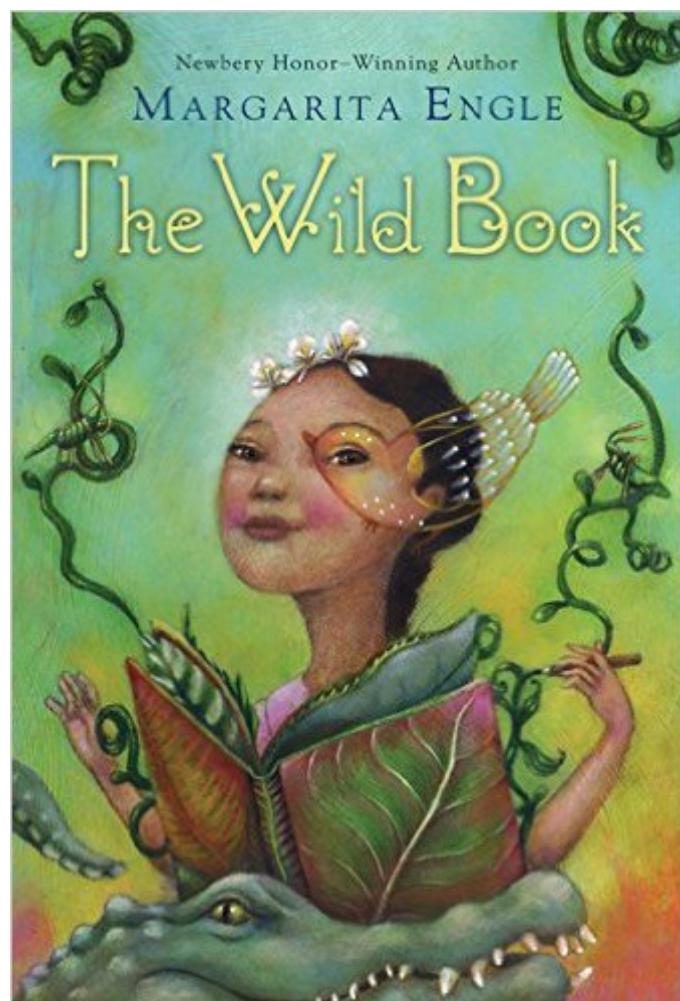


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# The Wild Book



## **Synopsis**

Fefa struggles with words. She has word blindness, or dyslexia, and the doctor says she will never read or write. Every time she tries, the letters jumble and spill off the page, leaping away like bullfrogs. How will she ever understand them? But her mother has an idea. She gives Fefa a blank book filled with clean white pages. "Think of it as a garden," she says. Soon Fefa starts to sprinkle words across the pages of her wild book. She lets her words sprout like seedlings, shaky at first, then growing stronger and surer with each new day. And when her family is threatened, it is what Fefa has learned from her wild book that saves them.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 1050 (What's this?)

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (January 7, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544022750

ISBN-13: 978-0544022751

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 5.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (32 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #272,584 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #19 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Central & South America #79 inÂ  Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Children's Health > Learning Disorders #91 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Central & South America

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

Summary: This is based on the stories that Margarita Engle's grandmother told of her childhood. It is written in free verse form. Fefa struggles in school because of reading and writing. The words do not seem to make sense to her. She says that they slip and jump away like frogs. The doctor says that she has word-blindness and will never be able to read or write. Fefa's mother disagrees and gives Fefa a blank book to fill with her own words. Fefa begins writing in it nearly everyday. Through this, she begins to feel more confidence in her reading and writing. Outside of her reading and writing, there are other dangers about Fefa. Cuba is a lawless place where bandits are stealing children for

ransom. Everyone is scared of the possible danger. When the family is threatened, they do not have enough money to pay for all of the ransoms, but Fefa's book helps her solve the family's troubles. She becomes the heroine, even with her struggles in reading and writing. My thoughts: This is a very touching novel. I happen to love novels written in verse, so I came into it biased. The voice of the young girl comes through perfectly. I can hear the struggles of developing words, sounding out syllables, and then the growing boldness of her choices. I root for her when she has to read things out loud, and feel bad when she describes frustrations and loneliness. This was a fairly predictable book, but it does not detract from the language and flow. It's also such a quick read that I don't know why someone would put it down or not pick it up to begin with. I've given it 5 stars because I really can't think of a reason to not recommend this to my students. I think the advanced readers will enjoy it just as much as the struggling ones. Bravo Margarita Engle!

Ponder: Is it possible to use the written word to convey the inability to read written words? This sensitive book accepts the challenge in a series of short entries in blank verse. While it's clear that the first-person narrator, a young girl named Fefa, is thinking but not actually writing in her empty diary, the artful simplicity of the language is believable. Free from the constraints of rhyme or meter, the lines echo the natural rhythms of a child's speech. Learning to read and write is not the book's only focus; Fefa also tells about her daily life, her family, her childlike perceptions of a difficult period in Cuba's history. Her inner and outer journeys come together in a dramatic climax, where her patient, persistent practice with her blank book becomes crucial to her entire family. A child's listening comprehension is much higher than a child's reading comprehension, and the early poems in this series set the stage by sharing Fefa's unwritten thoughts. As the book progresses, the language of the poems simplifies, showing Fefa's struggle to write something on those intimidating white pages every day. I am hope - less - ly fur - i - ous - ly wea - ry. Slowly, slowly Fefa conquers her challenge. My drifts of verse are free words, wild and flowing. The world is filled with things that flow, like water, feelings, daydreams, wind . . . This small treasure of a book is beautiful not only in its exquisite use of language but also in design: the clear font, flowing headlines, white space, even the apt ornament highlighting each folio. I'm reviewing from uncorrected galleys; I can't wait to see the finished hardbound copy.

Cute and empowering story for young readers. I like how it is narrated through the main characters poetry. It's a great book for children who not only love to read, but have learning disabilities or are very creative.

In her newest book, award-winning author Margarita Engle turns to her own family history for inspiration. Set in 1912, this novel in verse brings to life the story of Engle's grandmother, Fefa, who grew up in Cuba afflicted by "word-blindness," the term used at that time for dyslexia. She struggles every time she is handed a book to read: I know that the words want to trick me. The letters will jumble and spill off the page, leaping and hopping, jumping far away, like slimy bullfrogs. Her mother refuses to accept "the hissing doctor's verdict," and gives her daughter a book--a blank diary, or is it "an ordinary schoolbook/filled with frog-slippery/tricky letters/that know how to leap/and escape?" She tries to patiently write in her blank book each night, her "wild diary," and wonders how reading can look so easy, yet be so impossible? Will her wild book "ever seem tame?" She struggles on with her reading, reading slowly to sound out the words. What good can come of this word blindness? In a surprising twist, Fefa's careful powers of observation with the written word will end up helping to save her family from danger. Engle's spare verse captures so eloquently 11 year old Fefa's frustration and yet fascination with words, reading, and writing, as well as the Cuba of yesteryear, a time when bandits roam the land, kidnapping children and holding them for ransom. The pages of the book are nearly as blank as the pages in Fefa's wild book, with the narrative told with few words but memorable poetic images. Fefa lives in the countryside on a farm, where her many sisters and brothers tease her and on her Sunday outings to town she strolls around the plaza with her cousin, while "girls just daydream/and smile." With a mama who loves poetry, words are a part of their every day family life, with her mother reading poetry out loud, and fairy tales filling Fefa's head. The poems are full of tiny details of the family's life in Cuba, such as making jewelry out of reeds from the river, and roasting a whole pig in a pit for a feast. While this story deals with a serious learning disability, there is hope in the end for Fefa. This would be an excellent choice to read out loud with a child, which would allow the reader to hear the beauty of the verses.

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