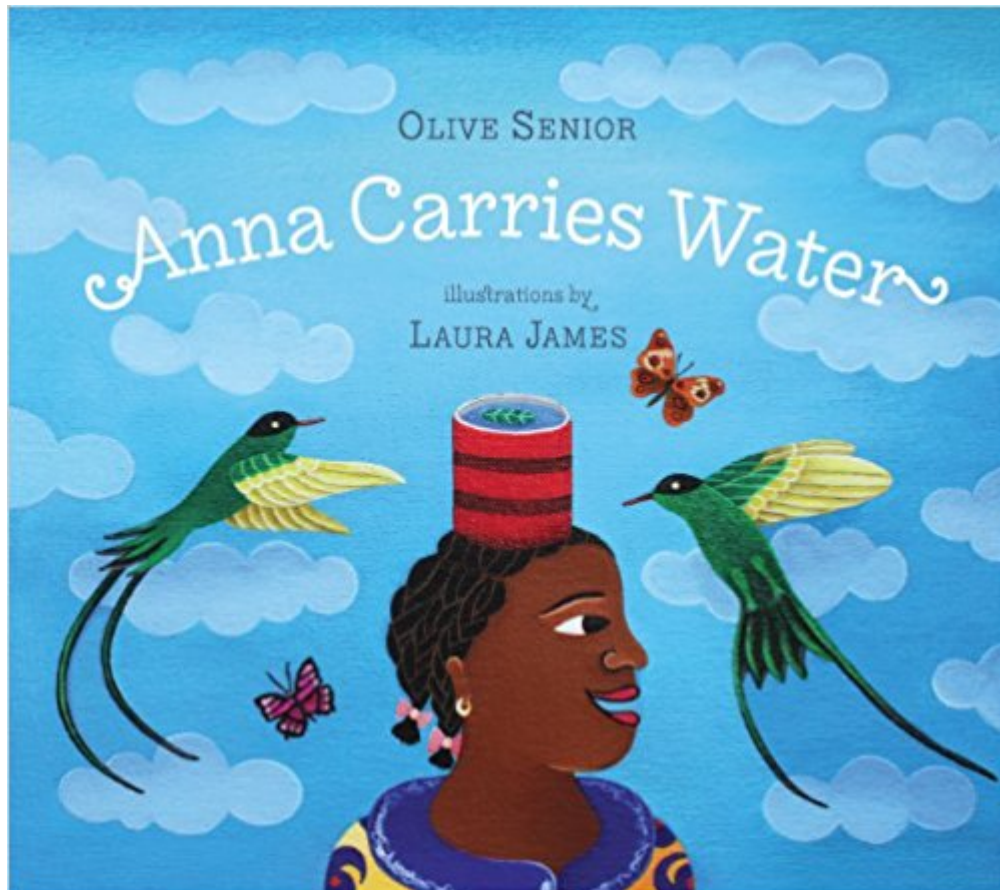




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# Anna Carries Water



## Synopsis

Anna fetches water from the spring every day, but she can't carry it on her head like her older brothers and sisters can. In this charming and poetic family story set in Jamaica, Commonwealth Prize-winning author Olive Senior shows young readers the power of determination, as Anna achieves her goal and overcomes her fear.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 40 pages

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Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #807,045 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #246 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Central & South America #528 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Health > Personal Hygiene #15048 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

## Customer Reviews

PreS-Gr 1 • Anna, the youngest sibling in a large Jamaican family, desperately wants to keep up with her older siblings as they make the daily trek to carry water back from the spring to their home. Her brothers and sisters are all capable of carrying large containers of water on their heads, while she has only an empty coffee can and cannot balance it on her head. Senior quietly weaves her tale, showing the Jamaica countryside, the flag, and dasheen leaves without being intrusive. In fact, no mention of Jamaica or the Caribbean is made in the lyrical text. Staccato sentences punctuate the verse, highlighting the importance of water to everyday life: "Water for cooking and drinking./Water for washing dishes./Washing faces./Cleaning teeth." As Anna struggles to overcome her jealousy and unsubstantiated fear of the cows in the field, she is finally able to develop the inner strength needed. James's vibrant paintings will capture readers' eyes as they pore over minutiae, such as a fly on the kitchen table or brilliantly colored butterflies and birds in the

fields. Little details – some of the children being barefoot, dirty dishes in the sink – will enable children to realize those in other parts of the world aren't as dissimilar as they might believe. – Michele Shaw, Quail Run Elementary School, San Ramon, CA

[Starred review] "James, of Antiguan background, allows her bold acrylic paintings in tropical colors to sprawl across wide double-page spreads of lush Caribbean landscapes. The hummingbirds and butterflies add a bit of whimsy to Anna's cover portrait...When water easily comes out of a faucet, young readers rarely think about the difficult chore of carrying water, but they will empathize with Anna's desire to reach an important milestone." (Kirkus Reviews 2014-01-01)"A gentle story about growing up. Anna's goal is simple, but the text doesn't trivialize her frustration at not being able to carry water the 'grown-up' way...James's stunning illustrations...capture the beauty and colour of the Jamaican landscape, as well as the warmth of Anna's family...Anna's triumph will delight young readers." (Quill & Quire 2013-12-01)"The rhythmic and lyrical text and the brightly coloured and interesting illustrations will make this picture book a good choice for a read aloud." (Resource Links 2014-02-01)"Beautifully illustrated, printed, and written, author Olive Senior and illustrator Laura James together have tapped into a story instantly understandable to a child from any culture in this wide world in which we live. Sibling jealousy, the desire to be more grown-up than you are, and a good old-fashioned ridiculous fear combine to make this one of the more charming books I've seen this year." (School Library Journal blog 2014-02-24)"James's vibrant paintings will capture readers' eyes as they pore over minutiae, such as a fly on the kitchen table or brilliantly colored butterflies and birds in the fields. Little details...will enable children to realize those in other parts of the world aren't as dissimilar as they might believe." (School Library Journal 2014-05-01)"Simple, yet heartwarming...A good book to introduce how children live across the world. It is also a great book to start the conversation about how children have overcome their own limitations successfully." (Reading Today Online 2014-06-30)"Brilliantly illustrated." (Southern Maine Library District 2015-06-18)

Laura, what fabulous art work!!! So enjoyed the book. The story is timeless ...the younger sibling's desire to be like "the big kids". My kids request it for their bed time story. I hope to see more of your art work in other children's books!

I was recently engaged in a high-energy search at my library to locate as swiftly and surely as possible a listing of any and all children's books set in the Caribbean. We were

eventually able to locate 21 picture books in my system, but when you consider how many picture books are published in a given year it was hardly an overwhelming number of titles. This happened about a month ago, so maybe that was what first drew my attention to the book *Anna Carries Water*. Or maybe it was the starred review in Kirkus that was the first draw. Or maybe it was the book itself when I saw it firsthand and actually gave it a read. Beautifully illustrated, printed, and written, author Olive Senior and illustrator Laura James together have tapped into a story instantly understandable to a child from any culture in this wide world in which we live. Sibling jealousy, the desire to be more grown-up than you are, and a good old-fashioned ridiculous fear combine to make this one of the more charming books I've seen this year. Poor Anna. The youngest of six siblings she always joins her brothers and sisters after school to walk to the spring for water for their Jamaican home. And every day her older brothers and sisters get their water and place it on their heads, never once having to hold their buckets or cans or empty cheese tins to keep them in place. As for Anna, all she has is a dinky coffee can, and even THAT ends up soaking her clothes when she tries to emulate her siblings' style. Though she asks her eldest sibling Doris when she'll be old enough to carry water hands free like the rest of them, all Doris can tell her is that "It just happens . . . so don't worry." Little does Anna realize that her phobia of cows, never an asset before, will offer the key to her little problem. There is a certain kind of well-meaning picture book that seeks to inform first, and tell a story second. These are books with the best of all possible intentions. You can recognize them instantly. They're often rather lovely, but eminently purposeful. Books like Chandra's *Magic Light* about Solar Tuki lamps in Nepal or Beatrice's *Goat* about the Heifer Project International in Uganda. When I saw that *Anna Carries Water* was to be about a girl carrying water on her head (or at least wanting to) I just mentally filed it away as a book that would ultimately be about well drilling in one country or another. And there is nothing wrong with that kind of book, I just want to say. But what I like about *Anna Carries Water* and what sets it apart from those other books is that the characters in this story aren't going out of their way to introduce you to their world. These are kids who are going about their lives and the problem at the heart of the book is therefore instantly relatable. What kid isn't going to instantly understand what it would be like to be the youngest child in a family and the one person who can't do something (but almost can) that her older siblings accomplish with ease? Anna's desire is palpable and understandable. You could talk to me all day about "this is how we do things in Jamaica" but it is a LOT more interesting if you show, don't tell. Just skip all the hoo-hah, plunge us in, and give us a universal

story that is easy to relate to. Bravall! I hadn't encountered artist Laura James before, but there was something about her thick set paints that immediately drew my attention. At first I had a hard time pinning down what it was that appealed to me so. Certainly the colors are nice. Each page is painted on canvas and is a vibrant collage of green, brown, red, yellow, you name it. The setting was also this lovely lush and green location, challenging those assumptions some adult readers of the book might have about areas of the world where people have to walk long distances to water. Ditto the modern appliances and recognizable contemporary clothing. Then I realized it was the people I gravitated to the most. James has a tendency to create kids and adults that you like upon contact. It's something about the size of the eyes or the way their weight falls on one hip or another when they stand. After a while I also realized that James makes people with eyes that look a lot like those of fellow illustrator Meghan McCarthy (and she's one of my favorites out there). Mystery solved. On top of that, Ms. James works in these natural little details that never appear in the text but give the whole enterprise a ring of authenticity. In one of the early spreads Anna is watching her siblings as they lounge and work in front of their house. One of her brothers (Rohan, I believe) chomps down on a stick of sugarcane. Robbie, meanwhile, is sitting talking to Trevor, a small band-aid evident on one of his knees. There's something so amazingly realistic about these slight, small details. It isn't enough that James understands this country or its people. She understands how important it is to include realistic unspoken details in a picture book. Would that other illustrators did the same! And yes, it has a couple problems here and there. I had a devil of a time understanding how Anna could be staring frightened at an impossibly long-tongued cow in one picture and then have the time (or wherewithal for that matter) to put her little cup of water on her head as she ran home in fear in another. It would have made a bit more sense of Anna had been trying to balance the water on her head yet again when the cow made its presence known. Another friend of mine read the book and liked it fine but wasn't taken with the way in which Ms. James illustrates teeth. That didn't bother me in the slightest, for the record. I like the teeth here. They actually remind me of when I was a kid and the ways in which I drew teeth on the people in my own drawings. We (and by "we" I mean "people who work with children's books in some capacity") talk a lot these days about the need for more multicultural literature for kids on our bookstore and library shelves. The trick, it seems to me, is to look beyond the big six American publishers that make a hat tip to a different worldview every once in a while, but generally produce the same old, same old. Tradewind Books, a Canadian publisher, is the perfect example of a little publisher willing to try something fresh and new

and good. Anna Carries Water stands on its own two feet and just happens to be better than 75% of the pablum I sift through on a daily basis. Funny and well told, great for storytimes (you can see these images a mile away) with a message IÃfÂçÃ â ÑÃ â„çm rather partial to, consider this a little gem that could easily get lost in the hubbub of your average publishing year. Worth discovering. Worth holding onto. For ages 3-7.

Anna Carries Water is an attractive picture book for adults to read aloud to under fives anywhere, especially those who are ready to dip into the wider, multi-cultural world. Some Caribbean readers (the illustrations place Anna in rural Jamaica) may find the text more stilted than rhythmic and the illustrative style too naive, but I think both text and illustration go together well enough to capture the West Indian innocence of our rural village life, that many parents and grandparents across the diaspora, may find pleasingly nostalgic. Anna Carries Water may prove difficult for inexperienced readers to enjoy independently at first, but children who spend little time outside the home, pre-school or Kindergarten may become inspired by Anna's daily walk to collect water, and be willing to line up and mimic her journey. What kids wouldn't want to have a go at balancing buckets of water on their heads? Regardless of culture, the challenge of accomplishing difficult skills and overcoming our illogical fears are universal concerns for kids and their interested grown ups everywhere.

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