

Book Review:

Eagle Eyes: A Child's Guide to Paying Attention

Emily Torres
Eastern Michigan University Graduate Student

Gehret, Jeanne. (1991). *Eagle Eyes: A Child's Guide to Paying Attention*.
Fairport, NY: Verbal Images Press.

Summary

While on a hiking trip with his family, Ben notices every little detail of the trail: from the eagle flying over head to the deer tracks in the snow. However, Ben always seems to be moving a little too fast and can sometimes miss the big picture, or wreak havoc on his family's life. Ben often asks himself the question, "Why didn't I think of that?" after he has made a mistake from not thinking before he acts. He spills his sister's birdseed and none of the birds will eat from her hand. She ran to tell her parents what a pain Ben was and how he ruins everything. Ben spent the rest of the hike lagging behind his family, examining every inch of the trail, because he didn't want to be a "pain" again.

When they arrived at home, Ben's mother told the children they had to do their homework. Ben hated doing homework so he told his mom he didn't have any, but she found his folder that had many days of missing assignments in it. He spent the rest of the evening doing homework. When he got to school the next day and his teacher asked the class to turn in their homework, Ben was excited to actually have it to turn in for a change. But when he opened his folder, it wasn't there! Ben's teacher told his parents that he should go see a special doctor. The doctor told Ben that he has ADD, and that his body does not have enough of the chemicals that help him to control how he moves and thinks. All this time he thought he was nothing but a clumsy, bad kid.

Ben's dad told him he has Eagle Eyes. He is able to see things that others cannot, but instead of zooming in on his "prey," something else catches his attention and he misses his catch. Ben's dad worked with him to come up with some tricks to help stay focused during certain times of the day. They even made up a song that Ben sings as he is getting ready in the morning, so he does not forget anything. Ben also learned to play the "Feelings Game" with his family so he could learn to understand the expressions on faces, and to know when people were happy or upset with him.

At the end of the story, Ben's dad takes him and his sister for another hike. During the hike, Ben's dad trips and twists his knee. One of the kids had to go for help. Ben's dad was going to send his sister, because she was oldest, but she didn't know the way. But Ben's eagle eyes knew exactly where to go! He ran the whole way to the ranger station and got help for his dad. "It's good to be

me!" said Ben, when he finally realized that he did have talents and could be helpful, even if he does have ADD.

Critique

This was a very nice story about a boy who learns he has ADD. The author does a nice job of portraying Ben's feelings of being "bad" or "clumsy" throughout the story. The reader could connect with the way Ben felt. It is important that the author shows Ben's talents at the beginning of the story, even if Ben can't see it himself. Many children could relate to the feelings of having an older sibling being upset with them for ruining something. However, if the part about Ben spilling the birdseed had never happened, then Ben wouldn't have spent the time inspecting the trail and he would not have been able to help his dad at the end. I think parents will like this story also, because it doesn't immediately advocate putting your child on medication to "fix" the problem. It explains how they came up with tricks and songs to help Ben focus and calm down, which for a child is more beneficial in the long run to learn these lifelong skills, rather than depending on a medication.

At the end of the book there is a Parent Resource Guide. It explains such things as the symptoms of ADD and the effects it has throughout a person's life. There are also many ideas about how to help your child cope with ADD and how to learn strategies to stay focused like we read about with our character Ben. It also has a list of other resources to use to learn about ADD, a list for kids and a list for adults. This book not only has a great story but it is also there to really help a whole family that is learning to live with this disorder. As we know, ADD not only affects the one who has it, but everyone around them too. This book is reassuring for parents and kids. It shows that they are not alone and they can find ways to get through it.

