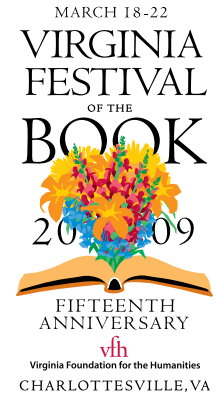


Things Will Never Be the Same by Tomie dePaola recommended by Stacy Hawkins Adams

A program of the Center for the Book at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the “VABooks!” column suggests books for Virginians to read in common. This month, Stacy Hawkins Adams—Richmond resident and novels including *Watercolored Pearls* and *Nothing But the Right Thing*—recommends *Things Will Never Be the Same* by Tomie dePaola. We hope that individuals, book groups, families, and neighbors will read and discuss VABooks! selections.



Every few months, my fifth-grade daughter completes a novel and makes the same grand announcement: She has read the best book of all time and has a new favorite author.

Last summer, the writer who resonated with her most was Tomie dePaola, an award-winning author and illustrator whose dozens of books for children often take readers back in time, to the days of his 1940s childhood.

My daughter cajoled me into visits to our local library and nearby bookstores so she could consume as much of his work as possible. Soon, her conversations were sprinkled with references to incidents that happened long before she—or I—was born. What happened at Pearl Harbor was sad. How could people who lived “back then” get as much enjoyment from listening to a show on radio as she did from watching the images on screen?

Those comments led me to the bookshelf, where I pointed to several dePaola titles and asked her which she recommended. She rattled off summaries of each and told me I couldn’t make a bad choice.

The first dePaola book she read, *26 Fairmount Avenue*, was a Newberry Honor Book and American Library Association Notable Book. The titles that followed – including *Here We All Are and On My Way*—received solid recognition from professional literary critics and from the one under my roof.

After her coaching, I settled on *Things Will Never Be the Same*, in part, because we live in a world where in an instant, life can shift in a manner that causes that phrase to resonate

globally, nationally, locally or in our personal lives.

The book opens in January 1941, with first grader Tomie writing in the diary he received for Christmas. Each chapter starts with a private entry and leads readers into scenes from Tomie’s daily life - sledding on a snowy day, participating in dance recitals, connecting with an art teacher who nurtures his dreams, and listening to stories about his parents that help him know them outside of their roles as mom and dad.

In this way dePaola deftly reveals slices of American history through the eyes of a child: the celebration of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s birthday, the establishment of the March of Dimes charity to combat polio in Roosevelt’s honor, and the realization on Sunday, December 7, 1941 that his carefree life may not be so carefree anymore.

“A lot happened today,” dePaola’s character writes in the diary. “I’m not sure I understand it, but I will never forget it.”

This youthful memoir unfolds against the backdrop of an American family’s love for each other and for their country, as the realities of war and loss loom—much like the world in which we live today.

Change a few historical facts and extra-curricular activities, and *Things Will Never Be the Same* could have been penned about a time not so long ago. It offers readers a thoughtful glimpse of a different era and an opportunity to understand that while many things change forever, some inevitably remain the same.