



## 13 Words

*Lemony Snicket , Maira Kalman (Illustrator)*

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From bestselling author Lemony Snicket and celebrated illustrator Maira Kalman comes an uproarious, whimsical word book like no other.

Together, Snicket and Kalman present a strikingly beautiful journey woven from a practical introduction to thirteen wonderful words, featuring such marvels as Bird, Dog, Panache, and Haberdashery. Snicket, the notoriously clever and elusive *New York Times* bestselling author, pushes the boundaries of storytelling in the most fanciful of ways. Maira Kalman, renowned for her art and design, carries this madcap adventure to wondrous heights with her vision of a world populated with hats, song, and cake. This rollicking, surprising book is a true celebration of words.

### 13 Words Details

Date : Published November 15th 2011 by HarperCollins (first published October 5th 2010)

ISBN : 9780062183682

Author : Lemony Snicket , Maira Kalman (Illustrator)

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Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Fiction

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## From Reader Review 13 Words for online ebook

### Lisa Vegan says

Oh, I loved this admittedly weird book. The last page is priceless, as is much of the book. I turned the book at times to see everything and 2 of the titles/text of the books shown are very cute.

The story is a silly cumulative tale that can work as a counting book, a vocabulary building book, a sort of philosophy book, and mostly just a for a good laugh book. It has both silliness and seriousness. I laughed (or at least grinned) a couple of times, but there was much sadness in it too.

And I don't want to sound as though this is a deep story because it really isn't, but it can be read at different levels, at least if the reader strains to do so.

Mostly, it's just a fun book.

the pictures are very cute and quirky. I can't say I was overly fond of some of them (the goat, etc.) but some were just adorable, including the text of the books, the hats, and especially all those cakes that would have had me yearning for cake if I hadn't just eaten before I read this book.

I thought that this book was creative, inventive, educational for kids, and enjoyable. I was in just the proper mood for it, hence the 5 stars; at another time I might have given it only 4 stars.

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### Eva Leger says

I feel bad giving this one star so I'm giving it two. That's my reason. Because this is not a three star, four star, or five star book. The book makes no sense and it's not even good.

Listen, use uncommon words or common words. Don't try to mix them and have it seem 'extraordinary'. It's not working.

Some words, (as if I need to put it out there):

'busy'

'dog'

'bird'

Okay, all good.

'haberdashery'. Right. Because kids use that word all the time. And quite frankly, I don't *want* my kid to walk around saying 'haberdashery'. She'll get beat up. And then I'; be facing charges because I'll have to kick the little kid and his or her mother's ass.

This is along the lines of some other popular authors works who just needed something to fill time and space (and maybe a few pockets). Nothing more.

(I \*almost\* feel okay giving it one star. Almost.)

Update (not 60 seconds after the review) - Changing to one star. It sucks that bad. I can't lie.

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### Vicky N. says

Lemony Snicket brings out the extravagant side of writing into picture books. 13 words opens a world of

new words for kids with a "despondent" bird, a dog and a goat.

13 words is not the usual picture-book, but definitely reflects how they should be. A challenging read for kids, but definitely a fun ride and a great learning device as well.

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## Jennifer says

Let's be clear right now, because I don't want you confused by the charming blue bird on the cover into thinking that this is a beginning vocabulary book. No, this is a Lemony Snicket book. That means that after "teaching" us the word *bird*, we are confronted with the second word: *Despondent*. *The bird is despondent*. Too much, too soon? Okay, Snicket backs off and gives us *cake* and *dog*. However, the reader would be wise to listen to the little voice telling them that words like *haberdashery* and *panache* are lurking around the corner.

Maria Kalman's brightly surreal art is a perfect match for Snicket's prose. There is something in-jokey about the illustrations and I found myself searching in vain for figures from American Gothic or the Boy in Blue. The bizarre characters leaving you feeling like anything is possible in this world, and isn't that great?

Would the art be quite so appealing to a young reader? That is my fear with primitive styles where perspective and proportion are shifted in a way that appears to be an imitations of a child's painting. It is the right choice for this world where a bird must paint eleven ladders ten colors, but it leaves me wondering if this is one of those books that adults will appreciate more than children do. Snicket's writing always has humor designed to particularly appeal to adult readers, but I simply don't know if this one has the kid-appeal to match.

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## Marika says

On the inside flap of the dust jacket 13 words are listed. There are words you might expect in a picturebook, like bird, dog, hat, and baby, and some absolutely splendid words like despondent, haberdashery, panache, and mezzo-soprano. And here's the thing, children love large interesting words, especially when they sound a little funny. Snicket's humor is, as always, spot on. As I read this at my desk I was giggling so much a coworker decided to come investigate. I ended up reading the book aloud, the two of us laughing with each turn of the page. Customers came over and we ended up with a small, impromptu storytime. What better recommendation is there?

Maira Kalman, who you may recognize from her work for New Yorker magazine, creates vibrant, quirky illustrations. Her gouache paintings are luscious with bright, sunny colors. Her work, with its references to art history and whatever happens to catch her fancy, is a perfect match for Snicket's writing; I'd love to see more from this bizarrely fabulous pairing.

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## Hannah Garden says

Dear Mr. Snicket,

Well. It would appear that during the time elapsed between my having finished *The Dark* and my having

finished 13 Words--a generous, languorous period of at least 15 minutes--you did not have time to email me with an offer of employment. I find this galling in especial due to the fact that I would have \*particularly\* well enjoyed sitting in your studio eating a jam biscuit while you read this story to Maira Kalman, a genius.

The only thing a sane person could deduce from this oversight is the fact that you must be too busy listening to your stories and eating jam biscuits yourself, which makes it only all the more sensible that you hire me immediately.

May I reassert my promise to pay gobs of attention to your pets, at this point, as well.

Hoping this finds you at your very best,  
I remain,  
Yours--  
HKM

P.S. If you have no pets for me to pay attention to I can provide my own.

P.P.S. This book is wonderful, and I adore it.

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### **Jay says**

To me this book is a hilarious parody of a standard "vocabulary building" picture book: 13 words for you to know. But then the list of words includes bird, despondent, goat, convertible... I mean, what reader is the target audience? Which is part of what makes it so funny to me.

After I read it aloud (it's a great book for reading aloud if you use that slightly sugared up "let's all learn together" tone), I realized it could, actually, but used as a book to read with a reluctant reader, or one who has low reading confidence. If you can read 90% of a book that includes words like aria and mezzo-soprano, you can read anything, can't you?

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### **Laura says**

Lemony Snicket's 13 Words is a fun, quirky, strange little read. Bright colors, unusual characters, and words that just bounce around your mouth! I have a thing for words though. The way some words sound or get stuck on my tongue make me smile and mutter to myself all the time. Haha...

For some reason, I did not connect with Mr. Snicket here though. The tone came off a bit snotty for my taste. Still had fun with the words, but something prevented me from going all in. Loved the ending though! The man has a way with endings that sticks with me.

What this story did provide me was inspiration. Writing inspiration aplenty! It is a tradition and game in my house to pick random words out of the air to create a quick tale on the spot for entertainment and teasing. My fire eating, blue leprechaun with mad skating skills galore tale is still legendary! Haha...Of course, my niece always has a niggler or two--Can leprechauns be blue?

Well that was my rambling, reviewing way of saying—I had fun here, but more for what the story inspired in me than the story itself. If that makes sense.

13 Words may just inspire thirteen words of your own.

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### **Jennifer says**

I love Lemony Snicket so much!

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### **Jennifer Lavonier says**

Maira Kalman has an illustration style unlike any other. Her art is immediately recognizable. She has illustrated several books, for adults as well as children, and has been featured on the cover of The New Yorker multiple times. She paints odd-looking people and animals that look somewhat human which, in 13 Words, are set against surreal landscapes. Her palette is best described as edible (with the hues of ribbon candy) and her art is playful.

Lemony Snicket, author of the highly popular A Series of Unfortunate Events, has a flair for words. Though the majority of his books are for older readers, his voice is perfect for the picture book audience. This story is based around thirteen words—some familiar, others unusual. The diverse list is displayed inside the front cover where the books description would normally be. Surely there are some words children will not know. Word number 1 is bird. Word number 2 is despondent.

Bird is despondent, dog(4) would like to cheer her up. While bird is busy(5) sulking and painting ladders, dog visits a haberdashery(9) owned by a baby(11).

These words, and seven more, are joined in a lovely story about how dog worked to cheer up his friend bird.

Parents take note: there's a song to sing in this book. I've found when singing made up songs to little ones, the worse it sounds, the funnier it is. So belt it out!

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### **Jean says**

Here's a droll picture book for parents who yearn for less accessible, less banal story time fare. Why bore your children (and yourselves) with simple words when you can instead introduce zesty vocabulary like "panache," and take a drive through a landscape of culture, art and ideas? In this picture book, the main character, Bird, isn't challenged to clean her room, or mind mama, or go to school--she is not even a child. She is a working artist, and in a funk.

Illustrator Maira Kalman's signature free-wheeling metropolitan folk-fauve style is a perfect pairing with Snicket's silly/sophisticated, absurd/ordinary text. I'll especially recommend this book for families with a marked artistic sensibility--and good humor!--who think that children are NEVER too young to appreciate,

on some scale, artistic expressions of the human condition.

P.S. See how many artistic references you can find! I suspect I've even detected an homage to one of my favorite books: P.D. Eastman's "Go, Dog, Go!"

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### **Amy Forrester says**

The ever clever Lemony Snicket, author of The Series of Unfortunate Events, has created a surreal and humorous story out of 13 seemingly unrelated words. The story begins with a bird (word #1) who is despondent (word #2) so he eats some cake (word #3) with his friend, a dog (word #4). The dog decides to cheer the bird up by getting him a hat (word #8) from the haberdashery (word #9). The bird likes her hat very much and then a mezzo-soprano (word #13) walks in with more cake and sings about the events of the day. Everyone eats cake, but the bird is still just a little bit despondent.

Snicket, the pen name for author Daniel Handler, doesn't just connect the dots in this story, he adds his unique blend of ironic and black humor to create a surreal story that is oddly captivating. You really don't know what the next word will be. What new event will be revealed? Who will walk through the door next? The vocabulary is impressive and sophisticated, but Snicket manages to define words within in the story in a witty way. There are details that seem to be included in the story, just because they tickled Snicket's funny bone, such as the goat in the spiffy jacket that drives the convertible. You may ask "why?", but I think Snicket might answer, "why not?"

The painterly illustrations create a surreal visual world to go along with the text. Realism has no place here. Perspective and relative size are disregarded. For instance, as the dog and the goat drive to town, the road winds through a landscape of multicolored hills, giant animals, twisted trees, and even an angel with a tambourine. The colors are bright and the brush strokes are proudly displayed.

Full Review at Picture-Book-a-Day: <http://picturebookaday.blogspot.com/2...>

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### **Destiny Dawn Long says**

I borrowed this book mostly because I love Lemony Snicket, and sometimes get a little tired of all the accessible literature that I read to my toddler. I didn't expect that she would like it, because she's not even two and the story is a bit surreal.

Imagine my surprise when she started talking about it all day and insisting that we read it over and over again. She loves to say "panache" and "haberdashery" and "mezzo-soprano"... and why wouldn't she? They're fun words with fun sounds and different from the mundane day-to-day language that we usually experience.

The illustrations are also fun... there are lots of little details to keep adults entertained, while the primary images are easy enough for children to decode. My daughter especially loves the pictures of the different kinds of cakes and the baby who owns the haberdashery.

I would recommend this book to parents who aren't scared of the absurd and who have children who are hungry for language.

## **Britteny Gilge says**

I was not a fan of this book at first and then I started seeing all the connections through the pictures and the words. There were thirteen words that were focused on in this story and as each word was presented it was tied back to the previous words that had been talked about. This would be a great story to teach vocabulary. The book does a great job showing and telling what each words means. The pages were vibrant and active and depicted the essences of the word being talked about. If the author wouldn't have done such a good job at defining the words then some words in this book would have been too advanced for the age group it was targeted it towards. Such as, haberdashery, a child is most likely not going to know what this word means, but the author does a good job at continuing the story while still defining the word in terms that a child will understand, "a haberdashery is a store where you might find a good hat". The child now knows that a haberdashery is a hat store!

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## **Rebecca says**

Contains exactly the strangeness, sadness, and delight you'd expect from the combination of Lemony Snicket and Maira Kalman (her book *The principles of uncertainty* is one of my all-time favorites). I especially liked the inclusion of "panache" (defined by Snicket as "not just feathers...a sense of style and excitement, a kind of verve or swagger"). I've remembered this word since seeing a movie adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* in French class...Cyrano's last words: "... yet there is something still that will always be mine, and when I go to God's presence, there I'll doff it and sweep the heavenly pavement with a gesture — something I'll take unstained out of this world ... my panache."

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