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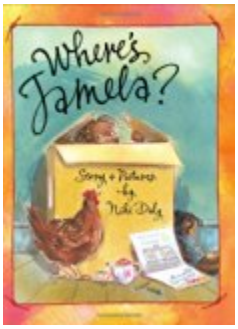
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Niki Daly. *Where's Jamela?* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004. ii + 28 pp. $16.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-374-38324-4.



Reviewed by Elwyn Jenkins (University of South Africa, Pretoria)
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Where's Jamela?

Niki Daly has produced his third picture book about the lively little girl Jamela, which should appeal to children up to eight years old. It follows *Jamela's Dress* (an ALA Notable Book) and *What's Cooking, Jamela?* .

Jamela's mother has a new job and they will be moving to a new house, but Jamela likes her house, the squeaking gate, and the star that looks down on her when she lies in bed, and she does not want to go. Even the fact that the new house is bigger, and her grandmother will be able to live with them and bring her piano, is no comfort. After several mishaps, they arrive, and it is up to Jamela to make everyone feel at home by serving them make-believe tea in her little tea service. The new gate squeaks as well, and the same star shines through the window.

Nicky Daly's pictures are packed with details that offer continuity and clues to what is to come, as well as information that is not to be found in the text. Early on, Jamela is seen seated at one end of the kitchen table with her tea set and crayons, while at her mother's end of the table is her smart blue teapot. In helping with the packing, Jamela breaks that pot, triggering a sequence of events that leads to her coming to the rescue with her own when they arrive. The crayons and her drawings are another leitmotif: they appear on the cover and in other pictures, and the end papers consist of Jamela's drawings (of the removal truck and the new house) and her signature.

The pictures and text also provide continuity with the previous two books in the series, including various friends, such as the fierce Mrs. Zibi, who sells (and slaughters) chickens, but who now appears to have a softer side, and Jamela's pet chicken, Christmas, which she would not allow the family to eat for Christmas, and which comes with them in a special cage.

Child readers of the previous books would be assured by these stories of a little girl who gets into unintentional scrapes but is forgiven. *Where's Jamela?* provides assurance not only of this sort but also on a larger scale to children who experience the upheaval of moving house.

While the book has universal appeal, for those familiar with South Africa it offers subtle messages about South African society and the changes it has undergone since the advent of democracy in 1994. Jamela's purse is decorated with the new national flag, which has become a popular patriotic design motif. Her mother is obviously improving her social position: the code word "suburbs" and the appearance of the new house indicate that she is moving from a working-class residential area that was previously reserved for black people to a more affluent neighborhood. The bright colors of the pictures and the people's clothing, together with the general atmosphere of exuberance and goodwill, reflect the mood of the nation.

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