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What George Forgot by Kathy Wolff (review)

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WOLFF, KATHY *What George Forgot*; illus. by Richard Byrne. Bloomsbury, 2017 [26p]
 ISBN 978-1-61963-871-6 \$16.99
 Reviewed from galleys R 4-7 yrs

George has his morning routine perfectly memorized but just as he is about to step outside, he gets the nagging feeling that he has forgotten something important. But what? (Storytime spectators may note George's exposed polka-dot briefs and be tempted to shout out what George forgot.) To be sure he's prepared for the school day, he mentally runs through all the things he has done; that laundry list of tasks is so daunting that it's a wonder he can make time to sufficiently tease his sister. Even though his playful antics distract him from his routine enough to cause a temporary memory lapse, Sis comes through for him in the end with his missing pants. The cover art (dominated by an overstuffed dresser) and endpapers (filled with everything he needs to get ready) show evidence of just how much is involved in this kid's morning routine. Pencil drawings are digitally colored with soft pastels that create a palette filled with both joyfulness and innocence, a tone well-suited to George's angelic gaze that could get him out of nearly any jam. There is something admirable about the sincere youthful attempt at being organized, and getting lost in George's messiness is part of the fun as George visualizes everything he did and allows viewers to get sidetracked along with him. QB

WOOD, SUSAN *American Gothic: The Life of Grant Wood*; illus. by Ross MacDonald. Abrams, 2017 40p
 Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-4197-2533-3 \$18.95
 E-book ed. ISBN 978-1-68335-097-9 \$15.54 R Gr. 3-5

Here middle-grade readers meet a twentieth-century Iowan, Grant Wood, who knows he wants to paint, knows what he wants to paint (other Iowans), knows where to learn to paint (Paris, obviously), but just can't reconcile the painterly styles then in vogue—Impressionism, Cubism, Abstract Art—with his subject matter. Hazy views of French cathedrals, faces parsed into multiple planes, colored geometric forms had little to do with the bib overalls, rolling farmland, and framed houses that consumed his interest, and even less to do with the economic challenges of the Great Depression holding sway over America's economy. A gothic arched window in an Iowa farmhouse, however, caught Wood's attention, connecting his European experience with American reality, and inspired what would become not only his signature painting but also a seminal work of the American Regionalist school, *American Gothic*. Susan Wood addresses head-on some of the debates and myths surrounding the cryptic figures of the iconic pitchfork and its dour owners, and she selects several other paintings for viewing and discussion which explore Wood's participation in the homegrown art movement he helped to found. MacDonald is an ideal choice for illustrator, with his signature retro style and saturated colors that recall early Disney animation and Little Golden Books, which intersected the Regionalist era. An author's note, timeline, list of sources, reproductions of several Wood's paintings, and a large photograph of Wood posing in his studio are also included. EB