

Blue Bubble Gum

Martha Goldner

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(26pp)

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Concerned with the proper disposal of used chewing gum, Blue Bubble Gum is an edifying picture book.

Martha Goldner's illustrative picture book *Blue Bubble Gum* warns that leaving bubble gum unattended can be dangerous.

When people are careless about disposing of their gum, the book notes, it can end up getting stuck in unsavory places: in a person's hair, on a shoe, to a chair, or in a pool. It can be eaten by wild animals or flattened on roads or by trains. Indeed, in example after example, unattended bubble gum is treated as a potential disaster. Then the book proposes a method to avoid such issues: put your gum in the trash in its original wrapper once you're finished chewing it.

The initial drawings of blue bubble gum as it is unwrapped and chewed are minimalist, and the person chewing the gum is depicted in an abstract way. The cyan blue of the bubble gum is juxtaposed to the bright crimson lips of the person chewing it. The coloration is deep and saturated, with a raw pencil drawing texture and clean black outlines. However, the blank white backgrounds become monotonous as the story progresses. Even when cars, a classroom, sidewalks, and train tracks are depicted, the coloring remains the same. Further, both animals and humans are drawn with distracting beady eyes.

Rhymes are introduced at random moments throughout the text to disruptive effect, as with "If it sticks to the track, / will the train come back? / Whoo! Whoo!" More evocative is the use of tactile terms like "globule" and "ooey-gooey, sticky-tacky, wicky-wacky." There's not much progression in the tale, though, and the book's tone is too inconsistent to be generally appealing: when the gum gets stuck on clothes and in hair, its prolific spread is depicted in nightmarish terms, clashing with the lighter scenarios of the book in general.

In the didactic picture book *Blue Bubble Gum*, advice is delivered for making sure that one's chewing gum doesn't get stuck in the wrong places.

ALEENA ORTIZ (August 19, 2024)

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