

Will My Haircut Hurt?

Martha Goldner

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(36pp)

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A frightened child is validated through a conversation with their mother in the comforting picture book Will My Haircut Hurt?

A child confronts their anxieties about getting their first haircut in Martha Goldner's engaging picture book *Will My Haircut Hurt?*

A ginger-haired child expresses fear after their mother suggests that they get their first haircut. Through humorous exaggerations—such as wondering if a haircut might require Band-Aids, stitches, or calamine lotion—the narrative captures the worries that spiral through the child's mind. A conversation with the child's mother, however, leads them to the high chairs of a barbershop for a haircut.

Through rhythmic and repetitive patterns, the story validates the child's fears and gives space for their voice. For example, "I don't want my hair cut" is repeated after each anecdote and question the child poses. Near the story's end, the child's mother counters their fears with thoughtful questions and statements rather than imposing a choice. And the bold line drawings feature whimsical depictions of colorful Band-Aids, buzzing clippers, and funky hairstyles to enhance the narrative's charm. These elements add levity to the child's curiosities and are a playful visual counterpart to their anxieties.

While the book addresses haircut anxiety, its focus on fears is excessive, with the child's shadowed stream of consciousness lasting for most of the story. The mother's role in easing the child's fears through questioning and reasoning is also underdeveloped. Their conversation is brief, and the narrative leaps from the conversation to the child sitting in the barbershop chair. It is unclear how the child's fears were transformed into trust and confidence. The resolution, while sweet, is rushed in comparison to the detailed buildup to it.

A comedic, empathetic picture book, *Will My Haircut Hurt?* turns a child's fear into an important step toward courage and self-care.

BROOKE SHANNON (January 27, 2025)

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