

At the shopping mall today I saw a boy with blue hair, a girl with five rings in her nose, and another with hair standing straight up. I think they call it "spiked." Some might call it weird. It does look a bit strange, but I think it's creative. It's a statement. It says, "Look at me! I am unique!"

I encourage my first graders to think for themselves. "Use your own 'noodle'," I say. So, when I discovered UNIQUE MONIQUE written by Maria Rousaki and illustrated by Polina Papanikolaou, I was delighted. What a great book to emphasize my point. Be yourself! Think for yourself! Make a statement! Maria and Polina did, when they teamed up to produce this "unique" book.

Monique is a great example of a youngster who is not afraid to let the world, and her teachers, know exactly who she is! I particularly loved Monique's giant red hat. . the one that looked like a tomato. Anyone who knows me, knows I love hats, too. But, I've never dared to wear a tomato hat. Maybe I will . . . some day.

I also loved when Monique strolled across the schoolyard, totally confident in herself, with every eye glued to her. She was proud of that new hat. I admired her doggedness and her determination to find something . . . anything that would set her apart from the rest of her uniform-clad classmates. I applaud Monique's courage . . . the courage to be different. What guts!

And I applaud Maria Rousaki and Polina Papanikolaou for a work well done . . . or should I say a "unique" work . . . well done.

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