

How to Solve a Problem

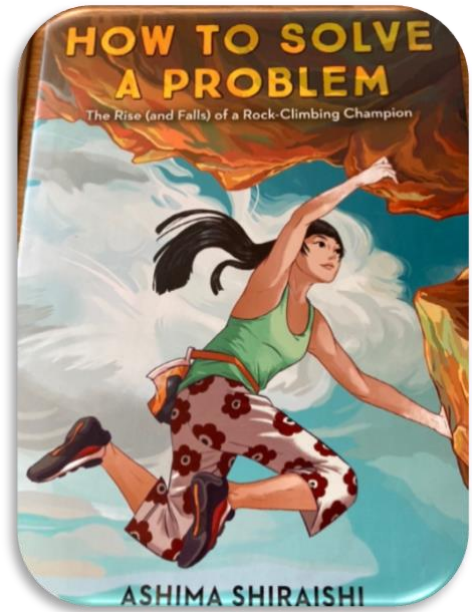
The Rise (and Falls) of a Rock-Climbing Champion

Author: Ashima Shiraishi

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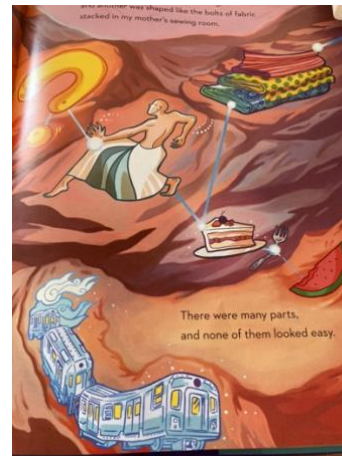
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I've stretched the definition of engineering with this choice but what I like about this book is that it puts problem solving into a very child friendly format. Not only that but Ashima is not just some cartoon character, engineered as an attraction for children, but a real-life athlete still competing in her field.

Ashima is a rock climber and one of the best in the world. She cut her rock-climbing teeth as a child whilst playing in Central Park, New York. When she sees a mountain, she comes up with all sorts of engineering solutions, relating the challenges to everyday life.

Some problems are neatly engineered triangular pieces of cake, some require bridges, some are angles to be defied, some are skyscrapers but all are challenges she eagerly accepts.



She maps and charts her ascent, digs in and sees each fall as a 'message'. This book openly references mistakes, falls and failures. It could easily go by the title 'Pick Yourself Up and Start All Over Again...and Again...and Again'. This is such an important message for children – mistakes, failures, falls are part of the learning process whether it's maths, engineering, making friends or climbing.

The illustrations are rich and colourful referencing lots of engineering ideas – bridges, trains, cogs, wheels and those skyscrapers. The text is sparse enough but contains a rich vocabulary and lots of ideas to spark the imagination:

'Once I had a problem and it stretched into the sky. It was tremendously endless.'

This book is for sharing. Parents and children together can discuss problems they have overcome, ambitions they have and the sheer ingenuity of mankind when faced with a challenge. Older children might be inspired to take on rock climbing (our Sports Department usually enters interested students into an inter-school climbing competition each year) or to do a project on Ashima.