

THIS IS NOT A CHILDREN'S BOOK

By Joshua Warren

[For all of these stanzas imagine two drawings for the two voices in the dialogue between cartoon characters and imagine drawings of objects as appropriate to the page content – try to imagine the pictures that are being referred to. Then realize that the story is even more relevant to the pictures constructing in the reader's head, than it would be to any pictures that could be actually drawn]

A is for Apple and this is an Apple.

No. That is a picture of an apple and A is the first letter of the word apple. You cannot eat that picture. A is not for apples it's for lots of words.

But B is for Banjo and this is a banjo.

No. That is not a banjo. That is the image of a banjo. B is the first letter of the word banjo. But this is not a banjo, it is a drawing, and unlike a banjo, this drawing cannot be used to play music.

C is for California and this is California.

No. That is a picture of California. Like a map that picture is not the same as the actual territory of the State of California. C is the first letter of California but that drawing is not California.

Drats, well surely D is for dog and this is a dog.

No. That is a cartoon of a dog. Real dogs are living animals. Once again, that is a picture. It is not an animal and so therefore it is not a dog. D is the first letter of dog but D is not for dogs and frankly that picture look as much like a dragon as it does a dog.

-but dragons don't really exist

-that's true but inside the universe of this book who knows what exists, perhaps dragons come from dragon eggs.

Eggs? Well certainly E is for eggs and those are eggs.

No. E is no more for eggs than it is for experiment and if you conduct an experiment you will find that those eggs will never hatch because they are not eggs – they are drawings.

E is not for eggs, it is the first letter of the word egg, just as it is the first letter of experiment and existence.

Frankly, this is quite bizarre. F is for family, will you tell me that my family is just a drawing too?

Where is your family?

They are home.

So you are saying they never appear in this book?

Right.

Well, so how do I know they exist?

Fine, here is a picture of them.

Well actually that is a picture of a picture of characters that could be a family. It is not a family. It is a picture.

Of course it's a picture. But it's still my family.

It is not your family – it is a picture!!!

Golly, you are picky. Well G is for gallop and this horse is galloping.

No. Galloping means jumping. That image is not moving. Moreover it is not a horse but merely the picture of what appears to possibly be a horse. But even then perhaps it is not jumping but rather flying.

-Horses don't fly.

-Who knows what horses can do in this book.

H is for Horse so certainly this is at least a horse.

No. As before this is merely the picture of a horse. It is not a horse. Horses are animals. And while H is the first letter in Horse, H is not for horse. It's for lots of words. Like happy and house and holy. But none of those pictures are those words. They are merely pictorial representations. They are simulations at best.

Well I am confused. I is for me. And certainly I am me.

Well no. You are a drawing. This whole universe is a construction. You and I are both drawings. I is not the first letter of the word Me, but this time you may be right when you said, "I is for me."

J is for joker and I think you are joking with me.

No, this is not a joke. J is the first letter in joke, joker and joking. But this is all quite serious.

K. But I am still confused. All of this sounds the same to me. But K is not for confused even though it sounds the same. K is for kiss, but will you say I am not kissing you?

A kiss can be drawn no different than any other picture but what makes it a kiss? We are just drawings? Can fictional representations kiss each other? We are drawings, not lovers. Besides, K is not for kiss, it is just the first letter of the word.

But, L is for Love and I love you, Is not the word enough?

L is just the first letter of the word love. And as you are a drawing, can you be sure it's really love or just some representation of its likeness? We are the creations of an author, can the relationship between us possibly be called true love?

Madness. This is madness. If symbols aren't *for* specific concepts than how can anything mean anything at all.

I assure you this is not madness. Though M is the first letter of Madness it is also the first letter of Meaning and M is as much *for* meaning as it is *for* madness. That symbols

are not always what they first seem may seem mad. But I assure you things are very often not what they appear to be.

Nonsense. How can a thing not be what it appears to be? I am nauseated. Letters must be *for* something. The something must be what it is. N must be *for* normal.

NO! N is not *for* normal any more than for nonsense. N is the first letter of lots of words. And if you look closely enough at any thing you will realize it is not entirely normal. In fact, normal doesn't exist. Normal is a code word, and it usually has more to do with power structures than any sense of true meaning in a given symbol representation.

O is for Obvious and obviously the normal allows for comparison and stability. By establishing a Normal we can keep as close to it as possible. What has worked in the past should be followed.

Oh naivete, what has worked in the past may not work in the future and more importantly what worked in the past may not have worked for everyone. Though O is the first letter of obvious it is also the first letter of Option and Other. Explore as many other options as possible.

You are saying P has infinite Possibilities?

No, I am saying P is the first letter of possibility and also Peace and Prosperity.

-Please, is it not possible for a thing to be itself?

-Perhaps, let me try: This is a Quiz: What is the first letter of Quiz? Can you think of another word that starts with Q? (hint: try a dictionary)

That quiz was hard but was it Real?

The Real is very hard to know. Perhaps we should just continue?

Sure. S is for Shout and I am shouting.

No. No. I told you, you are a picture. You cannot shout.

Time is short. Please explain this to me. Is T not for time? Isn't this time?!

No. That is a picture of a clock. Time is a construct of human civilization that allows multiple people to synchronize their activities.

Ugh. You are making me upset. If I say that U is for Uganda will you tell me that Uganda is not a country in Africa?

Of course it is a country in Africa. But there are lots of countries in Africa just as there are lots of words you can spell with U.

With me?

Not with U. The letter U is not the same as You. Nor is the letter I the same as Me. The letters are symbols, and if you put the symbols in the right order you make more symbols. But the symbols are not the same as the phenomena. The pictures are not the same as the Real.

Very interesting. So, V is only the first letter of Vast. But will you tell me Africa is not vast?

Size is a relative term. Africa is vast compared to Delaware but it is an insignificant part of an insignificant rock as compared to the size of the galaxy.

V is also the first letter of Valence. Valence electrons are the outer electrons orbiting an atom and are used to predict chemical reactivity. Some people say atoms are very small, those same people might say the amount of information we don't know about them is vast. But most importantly, they don't exist, they are mere symbols, representations, human constructions; models of the real world.

Wait. This book is not supposed to be that advanced.

But with the passage of time, it will seem this book was too simple. Time can dramatically effect things. Just pay close attention and Wait patiently and guaranteed you'll see things change.

I think I get it now.

-you can't think, you are a drawing. At best, you can present information that makes it appear that you have thought and get it now.

Well, X can be used to cross things out or mark a spot or spell the word 'xylophone' but X is not *for* any of those things – it is *for* ALL of them.

-And if you keep waiting and watching you'll see X is for new things all the time. But unfortunately, you really can't do either of those things, because you are a drawing.

Hmm. Perhaps I am a drawing, but I seem to speak so I will presume to think.

--As I am also a drawing, I cannot really challenge that. So I will leave that for others to decide. Let's go on.

Well so whY are the letters for so many things?

Because there are a lot of things and not very many letters.

whY?

So that we can all remember the letters and learn to use them to describe our worlds to each other.

whY?

So that we can share information.

whY?

Communication is very important. We need words and we need letters to make those words. But we always need to remember that the words are not the same as the real experience. The real apple is not the same as the word apple or even the picture that looks like an apple. We must not confuse representations with the reality they are trying to represent. Because we live in a world controlled by words, it can be easy to forget that there is error in the model. This must be remembered so that symbol systems are never fully trusted.

whY?

Because they are different from the underlying phenomena. Words can sometimes be good models but often not.

Is it really that important that we distinguish the word from the phenomena? The representations from the reality?

To complete our book let me simply say that Z is the first letter of Zoo. And in a zoo, they tell you that the animals you see are wild animals but in reality they are caged animals living in a zoo.

Words are not what they say they are.

Words are symbols. Images of a thing are not the same as the thing itself. Signifier are not the same as what is signified. Representations cannot be trusted but they are everywhere. Beware the verb 'to be' and all its progeny. The iz will not be categorized. It will always be not that. And that will be all that it is.