
This is a simple rhyming book for early elementary-aged children, with full-page illustrations in a myriad of greens with dashes of accompanying colors. It is all about the many things that leaves are, and imaginatively CAN be. At the end of the book, there is more information for the adult readers of the book, about the many roles leaves play in our world. This is the kind of book that can be read repeatedly, with a teacher or parent developing a host of "leaf" activities to do with a child, as inspired by the book. It is a delightful way to help children begin paying attention to the natural world.


Any description of this book sounds weird. It is a delightful book about creativity and friendship, that is quite difficult to describe. The book features two lizard friends, Art and Max, who venture into the world of painting...not house painting, but painting works of art on canvas! The illustrations are colorful, the words are simple, and the story is both fanciful and very "real." Art and Max have an adventure in painting, in which painting moves from their canvases to the actual painting of them as characters in the book. Yes, it is hard to describe, but it is a wonderful, fun, and funny venture into creativity for elementary school children. Any child who loves to paint will "get it"!


This book, set in a city at some time in the past (early-mid 20th century), tells the story of a little girl, an organ grinder, and the organ grinder's monkey, at Christmas. As the little girl prepares to take part in her church's Christmas pageant, she is worried about the well being of the organ grinder and his monkey, out in the cold on the street. The heart of the story is how the meaning of "tidings of great joy" comes to life for the girl, the organ grinder and the monkey. The full-page illustrations in acrylic gouache are beautiful!


This is a book for middle school kids or older elementary readers. It is the story of Sugar Mae Cole and her beloved dog, Shush, who are put in foster care when Sugar Mae's
mother has a breakdown. How the two stay together, and how Sugar Mae's gifts are
nurtured by her teacher, Mr. Bennett, forms the heart of this story of becoming a strong
person amid extremely difficult circumstances.

Ulrich Hub, *Meet at the Ark at Eight*, illustrated by Jorg Muhle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Books
for Young Readers), 2012. ISBN 9780802854100

Originally published in German, the English translation of this marvelous imaginative
midrash was just released this year. The imaginative play on the Old Testament story of
the flood, and the ark that carried pairs of creatures, focuses on penguins who wrestle
with how to respond to the flood, the ark, and God. It is NOT a book for young children,
but could invite middle schoolers who think they have "heard it all before" to dive
interpretively into the familiar story of the flood, seeing new interpretive angles.


This is a chapter book for older elementary children or middle school youth. It is set at
Christmas time in 1937, in the Great Depression. Lucy Turnbull longs for a pony, but
knows her family could never afford one. Her dream, and the dreams of other members
of her family, come true in unexpected ways as the story unfolds. This story could be
used as an extended midrash, playing with what can happen when we treat strangers as
"angels unaware."

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This fanciful book features Lilly, a girl (well a mouse girl) who thinks she will simply LOVE
having a baby brother, until that baby brother actually arrives and changes everything in
Lilly's world. The book uses the fictional mouse family to help children talk about how a
new baby in the family affects them and their family dynamics. It is a great book to help
children with a new sibling talk about the realities of having a new brother or sister!

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, *The Shema in the Mezuzah: Listening to Each Other*, illustrated by Joani

Rabbi Sasso is well known for her children's books that deal with intercultural
relationships, like *God's Paintbrush* and *God in Between*. In this new book for early
elementary children, the story of Annie, a little girl today, is juxtaposed with the story
of the mezuzah. This would be a marvelous gift for a Jewish child who feels "different"
at Christmas time in the United States, but it would also be a great book for a Christian
child, or for use at Christmas in a congregation. The illustrations are brilliant, deep
colors, and the simple story tells of a girl named Annie, whose Jewish family has just moved and must put up the mezuzah, with the shema. As with most of Rabbi Sasso's books, this is ultimately a story of intercultural relationships.


This is an "accordion book" that unfolds to form a twelve-foot long mural and story, with beautiful color illustrations by a host of top children's book illustrators. It tells of "the greatest table," God's Kingdom banquet table, at which all races, ages, nationalities, and religions are gathered. The unfolding parade of tables, depicted by so many top illustrators, ends with "The next time you sit down to eat, the greatest table's set, connecting you with each of us who hasn't eaten yet. So if you're hungry, join us here, pull up another chair. We'll all scoot over, make more room: there's always some to spare." This is a beautiful, unique book, that is difficult to describe!!


In this Bible storybook, Archbishop Tutu does two-page retelling of a series of Bible stories, for children. Each two-page Bible story is accompanied by a color illustration from a different illustrator, and a brief sentence-prayer from Archbishop Tutu. The stories are brief, and told in language for children, but reference to the actual Biblical text is given, so parents or teachers can find the story in the Bible. The illustrations by a variety of children's illustrators are quite varied. Each Biblical story is concluded with a simple one sentence prayer, as well. This is NOT a complete Bible, but rather a series of selected Biblical stories chosen by Archbishop Tutu, to illustrate his theological understanding that "we are all God's children."