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I Am Marc Chagall (Eerdmans Books For Young Readers)



Synopsis

I painted my world, my life, all the things I loved, all the things I dreamed of, all the things I could not say in words. I painted my beloved Russia, my hometown Vitebsk, the Jewish neighborhood where I grew up, the way I saw everything as a child. During prayers he would daydream; in school he was distracted; and at home he worried about what profession he should choose. But when the young Marc Chagall realized he had artistic talent, he translated his unusual way of looking at the world into color and shape. Chagall grew up, became a painter, and traveled the world, but he never forgot about his hometown of Vitebsk, Belarus, the place that shaped his character and inspired his art. This book, loosely based on Chagall's autobiography, gives readers a glimpse into the early life of one of the twentieth century's most significant painters. Landmann's charming three-dimensional mixed-media illustrations celebrate the colorful, the whimsical, and the extraordinary aspects of Chagall's life and work.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Grade 4-6-In this novel, Chagall tells his own story. The painterly, poetic, first-person narrative is based loosely on his autobiography, *My Life*. It highlights the key influences on his life and art. My entire family, the whole of Vitebsk, lived inside my paintings. Reflecting his style, the three-dimensional illustrations are constructed from an eclectic assortment of materials-cardboard,

fabric, sequins, weeds, and more-and set against vivid colors to create set designs, vignettes of the artist's life. Readers will be fascinated by these unusual pictures and the beautifully told story. However, to fully appreciate this book, they need an acquaintance with Chagall's work and some knowledge of 20th-century world history. Although the narrative is fact based, the line between fact and fiction is unclear. No documentation confirms quotations, thoughts, or feelings. Dated highlights of Chagall's life help to clarify some of this confusion, but children should (and will) enjoy this title as a work of fiction.-Carolyn Janssen, Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, OH Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 2-4. Having illustrated Paolo Guarnieri's *A Boy Named Giotto* (1999) and Guido Visconti's *The Genius of Leonardo* (2000), Italian artist Landmann contributes text as well as pictures to a portrait of another influential painter. In a first-person narrative "loosely inspired by" Chagall's autobiography and typeset in dynamic curves, Landmann charts her subject's life from his childhood in the shtetl through his 1941 emigration to the U.S.; though poignant details lend immediacy to the story, the author never addresses whether the occasional quotation marks ("Painting . . . is my window so I can fly to another world") signify Chagall's own words or authorial interpretations. Landmann's remarkable shadowbox constructions underscore her subject's view of the fluid boundaries between the mystical and the mundane, representing literal biographical scenes interspersed with the artist's signature soaring farm animals or spiritual symbols. This will speak most powerfully to readers who have previously encountered Chagall's work--perhaps in *Marc Chagall* (2001), by Elisabeth Lemke and Thomas David. A time line and photo of the artist anchor the book's more interpretive aspects. Jennifer Mattson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This slim volume literally took my breath away. The illustrations are as magical as Chagall's own work. They are photographed tableaux that incorporate images of Chagall's art, paper cut outs, sticks that have been transformed into trees or a little ladder. The book is utterly enchanting. Though I bought this as a gift for my granddaughter, it is truly a gift for both of us. I find the art exquisite and hope to create some 3d tableaux inspired by this lovely book. The text is also nice...rhythmic and informational, appropriately narrating *I Am Marc Chagall*.

A nice addition to my art books for children. The children love to pour over the pages to find images from Chagall's paintings, as well as to identify the materials with which the artist created the collages. Fun on a number of levels.

My great niece loves the book.

Great book with wonderful illustrations. A great way to notice young children to art and artists.

Highly recommend to kids 4-9

Typically one would think of a picture book being for young children. We think, usually, ages Pk-8 year olds. In the case of the I Am Marc Chagall by Bimba Landmann it is easily a book that can be of interest and educationally effective through older students. Adults can even find it interesting and attractive. Capturing the essence of Marc Chagall as he grew up Jewish in Russia and his deep seated insights visually and emotionally into what is going on in his world and that of his village, the foundation is laid for the later years of Marc Chagall the Artist. His style was Expressionism and Cubism - both of which are very abstract. I found this children's picture book biography very interesting to read and can readily recommend it to home schoolers, classroom libraries (especially art collections), school libraries, and public libraries. It is good to learn about artists and how they grew up and what shaped them for their later works. The author and illustrator, Bimba Landmann, utilizes a mixed collage of materials to illustrate the book rendering a three dimensional effect to the illustrations. They are not Marc Chagall's work, though they essentially capture a Chagall atmosphere. There is a nice "The Life of Marc Chagall" section at the back of the book listing by year events in his life and his involvement. **DISCLOSURE:** I received a complimentary copy from Eerdmans Books for Young Readers an imprint of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. to facilitate this review. Opinions are my own. I was not compensated for this review.

In the biography department, this probably won't do the trick unless your child has a *very lenient* teacher. But in the imagination department, this book will blow you away. Bimba Landmann illustrated this book with found-object collages that DO NOT duplicate Chagall's work, but still manage to evoke that Chagall quality. That other-worldliness. That life-is-beautiful-and-surprising character of Chagall's art. Her illustrations are exactly right for this book. The text is good -- especially if you are looking to relate this book to a child who seems to try a lot of things without finding something that "clicks" for them. The book does a great job of describing how Chagall was surprised by his success and popularity. And it also discusses war and the dread and sorrow of it. Lovely.

Picture book biographies encompass a wide range of styles, talents, and age-groups. What a child

gets out of any given biography depends entirely on why they even want a bio in the first place. I'll say right here and now that if you want a picture book biography that is just straight facts about the artist in question, without a drop of whimsy or artistic expression, go nab a copy of Mike Venezia's, "Marc Chagall". He does good report-ready work. If, on the other hand, you'd like something a little more fun and carefree, consider Bimba Landmann's, "I Am Marc Chagall". Artistically faithful to the painter in question, wonderful with its words, and an overall spellbinding introduction to a great man, this is a must-have title. You've never seen anything remotely like it before, and I doubt you'll find anything to compare to it again. He was born in Vitebsk, a small Russian farming town within a Jewish community. A creative inquisitive kid, Marc Chagall professed a love of art very early in his life. When an art teacher proclaimed that he did have talent, Chagall was delighted. He attended art schools, painted like no one else, and always had his lovely Bella at his side. Then it was off to Paris to make a name for himself, and from then on Chagall's life was a blur. He came back to Russia to teach painting to the children and chafed under political scrutiny. Just in time he and his family sailed for America just as the Second World War broke out in Europe. Says the book, "During the journey I wondered if the silent stars above could already see my future: my life in America; my return to France after the war; the museum of my paintings in Nice; my stained glass in Jerusalem, Chicago, New York; my mosaics... Yes, perhaps the stars could already see my entire life traced out on the earth like a picture by Marc Chagall". Until now, Italian author/illustrator Bimba Landmann has been content to limit her art primarily to picture book biographies painted in two-dimensions, as in "The Genius of Leonardo" and "A Boy Named Giotto". Now she's burst out of her painterly shell and embraced fully the wacked-out world of multimedia. If the wonderful use of tiny details doesn't get you, the sheer gutsyness of the colors will. Landmann presents Chagall (shown briefly at the beginning in a 1910 photograph) as a purple-haired suit-clad pioneer. From the Hebrew letters hung on a line like items in a wash to the tiny pillowcases, amber suns, and real lit candles, Landmann evokes shetl life with a hearty love. Then it's off to Paris where the sun and sky are a vibrant red-orange and tiny cardboard boxes become art exhibitions. What impressed me the most about Landmann's art was that she wasn't afraid to reproduce Chagall's artworks into teeny tiny paintings. So many biographies for children (especially the picture books) will talk and talk and talk about an artist and never show you a single painting they actually did. But in this book you might see, "I and the Village" held by a tiny Chagall on the streets of Paris then see "The Green Fiddler" on a cart sometime later. Even the settings and the images in Chagall's day-to-day life remain faithful to the artwork found in his paintings. I don't think any artist would dare invoke Chagall at such length, even if they were doing a biography of his life. So this brazen tribute is stunning precisely because it

praises him so highly and replicates him so accurately. A second reading and you just sit staring at the pictures, lost for words. Now Landmann chose to write this book in the first-person, which makes the book rather troublesome. On the title page we see that the text was, "loosely inspired by 'My Life' by Marc Chagall". That's fine and all, but that means that even if Landmann is quoting him directly throughout the entire book, she doesn't cite those quotations at the back. So if, "I Am Marc Chagall" says he thought this or wondered that, we have no proof. Is this book a biography or a fictional biography, then? In spite of the lackadaisical citing, I vote "biography". After all, Landmann has cited her ultimate source (though the "loosely based" mention makes me feel kind of woozy). And there's a lovely timeline at the back that does wonders to allay a reviewer's fears. I especially liked the multiple Chagalls that appear at the bottom of the page. They grow up and grow old as the timeline progresses, ending with a white (rather than purple) haired Chagall smiling cheekily at the finish. In many ways this book reminded me of two other wacky three-dimensional alternative material-illustrated picture books published in 2006. There was Lauren Child's, "The Princess and the Pea" (done in a shadowbox format, much like those found in "Chagall"), and "City Beats" by S. Kelly Rammell. Bimba Landmann hasn't quite reached household name status yet here in the United States, but books like "I Am Marc Chagall" may certainly start to pave her way. One of the finest publications of 2006 and a truly wonderful book to boot. It makes even the sequins in the sky look like beautiful stars above.

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