



The Rainbow Fish

Marcus Pfister, J. Alison James (Translation)

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The Rainbow Fish is an international bestseller and a modern classic. Eye-catching foilstamping, glittering on every page, offers instant child-appeal, but it is the universal message at the heart of this simple story about a beautiful fish, who learns to make friends by sharing his most prized possessions, that gives the book its lasting value.

The Rainbow Fish Details

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From Reader Review The Rainbow Fish for online ebook

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Or: How to Buy Friends Who Were Jealous of You

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for teaching kids to share and to not act like little snots. But there's something disturbing in the idea that Rainbow Fish has to give away all but one of his beautiful sparkly scales (toys, possessions) to the other jealous fishies so they'll be his friends.

Clouds says

My wife and I had previously discussed the way this kids book makes us feel uncomfortable. The moral of the story seems to be that if you do not give away whatever makes you special, you will never have any friends.

So imagine the big goofy grin on my face when I check it out on GoodReads and see several of my GR friends indulging in scandalized rants about the socialist propaganda hidden within these seductive cardboard pages...!

I'm not going to go that far. It's really a very sweet little story, with lush painted images skilfully enhanced with shimmery foil - my little boy is now 3 and he's loved this one for the last year or so he's had it.

But still... something just feels off. Sharing is all well and good, and we encourage our kids to share and play nicely - but that's not what happens here. The little blue fish asks for one of the rainbow fishes shiny scales, and when he refuses to give away his beloved scales, all the other fish ostracise him... and that's OK? If the story was about a rainbow fish who voluntarily decided to donate his scales to enrich the lives of his friends, I'd be well on-board with that. But he only does it to make the other fish like him... and that's not what we want to teach our kids.

So, a 1-star from me dragged up to a 2-star by the boy's enthusiasm for all things rainbow-fishy...

Yusra ? says

all I remember is reading this over, and over, and over, and *over* as a child. don't remember what it's about, but I loved it.

Skylar Burris says

My daughter has already asked me to read this several times since checking it out from the library. I like that the vocabulary is not as dumbed down as in most modern children's books.

I can see and somewhat appreciate some people's problem with the book as being a sort of socialist piece of propaganda that uniqueness is unacceptable and everyone must be brought down to the same level.

On the other hand...it could instead be a Christian message.

I have no idea whether or not the author is Christian, but the message could be that, as Jesus taught, you have to lose yourself to find yourself, a little more complex than your typical "be nice and share" book. It is similar to the story of the rich man in the Gospels, who asks Jesus what he must do to be saved. Jesus tells him to go and sell everything he owns, and give to the poor, but the rich man goes away sad, because he cannot part with his idol of wealth. For Rainbow Fish, his idol is his shiny fins, which make him haughty. When the Octopus tells him he must give them away, Rainbow Fish, like the rich man, balks and says, "I can't..." But eventually he learns that his worth is not in outward adornments, but in inner virtues: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Plus it's shiny...

Janni says

A chilling tale about a young fish who learns that no one will ever like him--until he gives up the thing that makes him unique and becomes just like everyone else.

Of a genre with *The Giving Tree* and the stalker classic *Love You Forever*.

Vivian says

This is another one of the books that horrified me when I read it to a younger family member without pre-reading. Another, you are a bad adult moment. I still can't believe how popular this book is with the self-crippling message it espouses.

Everyone says, this is all about sharing and isn't that wonderful. We all want children to learn the value of community and sharing. These are basic tenets of being a social animal and being in a group. Admirable goal without a doubt.

That's not this book's message.

THIS isn't sharing. This is: give up everything about you, dissect yourself into pieces, and give them away--because others are jealous. It is one of the most horrifying conformist and self-sacrificing books I've read and it is geared to children!

Teaches children to be ashamed of themselves and change who they are to make other people happy. It's a pretty book that hides an ugly message.

♥????????? says

2 Rainbow Fish ★'s

A BEAUTIFUL book that has an UGLY message!

I absolutely loved this book when I was in elementary school. But looking back now, I don't think I completely got the "message" that I do now. Back then I was just so enthralled by the illustrations because well let's face it the artwork is gorgeous and sparkly. I thought it was a book that teaches kids the fundamentals in sharing and making friends and giving of oneself. But at last, that is not the case. The little Rainbow Fish basically has to give away **EVERYTHING** that makes him uniquely special so that all the other fish will be his friend. Therefore the fish give's away all of his pretty scales to all the jealous fish. **This. Is. Not. Sharing.** This is giving up everything that makes you-you, to cut yourself into pieces, and then give them away--because other fish want what you have. Say **WHAT?** How on earth is this fair or giving young kids the right message? It's not, it's teaching children that they have to change who they are just to make others like you and to be happy. I really just didn't like the fact that he gave away his scales. Sure the *Rainbow Fish* needed an attitude adjustment. But what does giving up parts of yourself have to do with your personality? :(

Mandy says

Read this with my daughter. The sparkly fins on the fish were cute and caught her attention and story was a good one about how to share with others and how it will make you happy.

Rebecca says

I also thought the message in this book was not good for children. We have to give things to people so they will like us? What? Sure, this book is trying to teach about friendship and giving of oneself, but where in the book do the other fish stop being selfish and jealous? Those are not qualities that should be rewarded, and the poor rainbow fish has to give away all of his lovely scales to jealous, hateful fish. Just awful. I think it would be a lot different if the other fish were in "need" of something instead of just being jealous.

babyhippoface says

I'm all into sharing and stuff, but this little guy was basically told that he had to give away everything that made him special just so other fish wouldn't be jealous and mean. Is this fair? Heck no!

Reminds me of one of my favorite lines from The Incredibles, when Dash says something along the lines of, "If everybody's special, then NOBODY is."

Kat Kennedy says

I'm always on the look-out for new, well-written children's books for my son. We had been reading him: Help! Mom! There Are Liberals Under My Bed! and Why Mommy is a Democrat.

He loved the story and drawings!

However, he didn't seem to take to them as much as I thought he would...so I decided to find something else as informative, well-balanced and fun to read with my child.

Then I came across The Rainbow Fish by Macrus Pfister.

The Rainbow Fish is a story about a spectacular fish with amazing scales. Soon, other - boring fish - come and request a scale from the fish who turns them all down. The boring fish leave, causing the Rainbow Fish to be lonely. The Rainbow fish goes on a journey to discover why the other fish don't like him.

The Rainbow Fish is soon told by the octopus that it is because he won't share his amazing scales. The Rainbow Fish then goes to the other fish and gives them his scales. Eventually all the fish have a shiny scale and the Rainbow Fish now has only one shiny scale left as well. The fish all play together happily. The end.

Fantastic! A book about learning. Isn't that brilliant?

I suggest that you go buy this book for your children. It's important that your children realize that it is NEVER okay to be different from other children. After all, we as people are not allowed to be stronger/weaker, smarter/less intellectual, creative/logical, physically, spiritually or emotionally better than others. In fact, we should ALL be the same.

And it's also important that you teach your children that, in life, they are entitled. If someone has something more - then it is okay to expect that they give it to you. In fact, you should shun them if they don't. If you work hard and have much - please remember you must share it all. Even if you don't want to. Don't expect to be liked just for your personality. You must give everything you have to ensure that you are liked.

Nothing is worse than being unliked. Don't let your children think differently or it could go very badly for them. Your individuality is not precious and there is no degree to which it can't be compromised in order to make people like you. Remember. WHO you are - your morals, intellect, personality and charm aren't nearly as important to you as they are to other people. Never be afraid to give away any part of yourself in order to be liked. Just like:

See! Even culture can be bastardized to fit in!

Maybe I am being the grinch. Maybe I am bespoiling a perfectly good children's book.

Or maybe I'm just wondering what the world would be like if all the Rainbow Fish gave away their pretty

scales until there weren't any Rainbow Fish anymore...

Just think... we could all look like this! Who wants to share an earring?

Laila says

Ahem. Nice little book that teaches sharing, or subtle liberal socialist propaganda which teaches to give away all and anything special about yourself or what you have for the betterment of the whole?

You might think I'm being ridiculous, but I was a bit alarmed at this children's book when a professor in a teaching class read it to us aloud. Basically, Rainbow Fish is special because, unlike the other fish, he is special and has many colors of the rainbow on his fins. The other fish grow jealous and hostile and demand that Rainbow Fish give away his beautiful scales to the others so they can have part of his beautiful colors. He refuses at first, but then yields, giving away the colored fins to all the other fishes so they each have one or two colored scales, thus equalizing the entire school. Rainbow fish is no longer special, but is happier having given this unique characteristic away because the other fish are now happy and accepting of him.

Are you kidding me? This is basically telling kids that if they have something special, they should share it so that everyone is equal. But then, no one is special. It's very much like the socialist belief that if you have a skill or make more money, that money should not belong to you, the one who has it or has earned it; you should not be able to do with this as you please--which very well may be to help others. No. You are to give this away for the betterment of the group because they demand that you do so. Nobody should have any kind of special thing or advantage. Nobody should make more money than someone else or have nicer things, because it upsets people and they won't like you then. Well, too bad! Uniqueness, individuality, and independence or the very qualities that spur new ideas and new inventions which affect the greater whole for the better without the weight of dictatorship and being told to do something.

A child should want to share because it is the innately right thing to do. They should want to do so out of kindness, not out of fear of reproach.

For a children's book that appears to at first be about sharing, this book is good at conveying the lesson that people will always look down on others and want what they have for their own. I disagree with this moral and will not read it to my children to teach sharing, but to teach the points above--when they are old enough to understand the difference between sharing and ceding.

Leigh says

I'm fairly hard pressed to truly dislike a children's book, but the message of this story is awful. This beautiful and unique fish meets some horribly jealous fish who won't befriend him. In order to be accepted, the rainbow fish must give up all of his scales to bribe the other fish to be his friends. What kind of message does this send to a child? I could see a child, having experienced unkind treatment, deciding to give away all

her favorite toys trying to become popular on the playground based on the "lesson" in this story. This story is not about sharing. It is about buying the love of others, conformity, and making poor choices in friends. (It also hasn't escaped me that perhaps it is intended to a communist allegory. Anyone?)

Toph says

I just reread this with my sister in Barnes and Noble today! I remember loving this story as a kid, probably because of the sparkles. Now, even though I appreciate the book's message that being beautiful doesn't excuse rudeness, I have a problem with how the Rainbow Fish *has* to give away his scales to be redeemed. The lesson shouldn't necessarily be to give away something you have that makes you special (not really possible to give away beauty in real life, anyways); rather, it should be to respect other people who may not have the same qualities as you and are special in other ways. Still giving this book a 4 because nostalgia ;)

Petra Eggs says

I've just read a one-star review of this book that was, to me, highly amusing. It has been one-starred because the reviewer thinks it is nothing but socialist propaganda, in other words it's going to lead toddlers and little children straight down the Red Road to Communism.

I'm pretty sure the reviewer is American since no one in Europe would actually care whether it was socialist propaganda or not, socialism being a perfectly acceptable political philosophy there. Indeed many governments have been socialist, and why not? It's only another variant of capitalism as practised.

Anyway, it was an enjoyable review so if you'd like to read it for yourself it's here Leila's review
