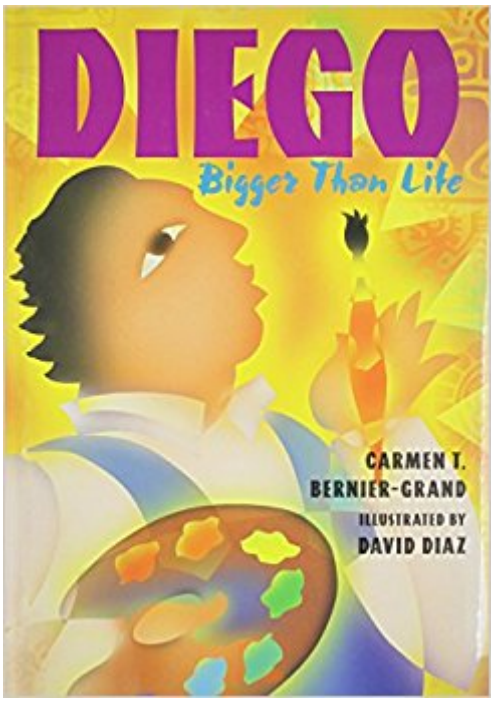
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Diego: Bigger Than Life



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Synopsis

Carmen T. Bernier-GrandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s inspiring free verse and David DiazÃ¢â ¬â„¢s vivid paintings capture the defining moments and emotions of RiveraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s tumultuous life, including his stormy relationship with artist Frida Kahlo and his passion for his art. RiveraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s energy, physique, love for women, and work were all "bigger than life." A biography, chronology, glossary, sources, notes, and famous quotations are included.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review In this well-written and beautifully illustrated volume, the life of Mexican artist Diego Rivera, best known for murals depicting working people, is introduced in free verse. Similar in format to Bernier-GrandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s CÃƒÂ©sar: SÃƒÂ- , se puede! = Yes, We Can! (2004) and Frida: Viva la vida! Long Live Life! (2007), the book offers a chronological sequence of poems, each appearing either on a single page accompanied by a small illustration or on a left-hand page with a full-page picture on the right.Ã Â Almost all writtenÃ Â in first person from the artistÃ¢â ¬â„¢s point of view, the poems convey information succinctly within a context of colorful narrative and clearly expressed emotion. Each poem stands alone, yet some words, ideas, and images recur, creating an interconnected sequence. A three-page appended biography clarifies and amplifies the information in the verse. Also appended are a glossary, a chronology, a source bibliography, notes, and quotes from the artist. Apart from four reproductions of RiveraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s paintings and oneÃ Â photo of the artist, the illustrations are mixed-media pictures by Diaz. Depicting Rivera and

his world, these iconic imagesÃ Â glow with warmth,Ã Â light, and color. In the backgrounds, some scenes incorporate imagery from Aztec art, which Rivera collected.Ã Â A livelyÃ Â verse portrait illuminated withÃ Â incandescentÃ Â illustrations. Grades 7-10. --Carolyn Phelan

Carmen T. Bernier-Grand grew up in Puerto Rico. She is the author of several childrenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s books, including Shake It, Morena and Juan Bobo: Four Folktales from Puerto Rico. She lives in Portland, Oregon David DÃƒÂ- az won the Caldecott Medal for his illustrations in Smoky Night by Eve Bunting. His artwork has appeared in a number of other distinguished titles, including The Pot that Juan Built and Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the WorldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Fastest Woman. His work has also been featured in national publications such as The Atlantic Monthly and The Washington Post. He lives in Carlsbad, California.

This book is written poetry and that scared me off a little bit. I am not the biggest poetry reader but this book was very easy to read and was a pleasure. The poetry is written in free verse and is not a difficult read. The story and the writing is interesting and many students will enjoy it too. I liked the book very much.

I loved this book because he described himself in his poetry and then at the end, there was biographical data to back up the poetry. He told his beliefs in politics and made a difference in the world around him with his art. I never realized the impact that art could have on society.

great for young children

The writing was very informative and the art work was beautiful. I think it does a great job exposing the reader to Diego.

My son likes it.

we gave it to a friend named diego. the poems are lovely and the illustrations are vibrant.

Although this is a pretty book, featuring art work in warm, vibrant colors normally associated with Mexico, the message is objectionable. The free form verse is based on statements made by the artist Diego Rivera which they concede may or may not be true. The author advances Rivera's

embrace of communism and violence as the only alternatives to vicious and tyrannical leadership. The tacit approval of terrorism is genuinely offensive, especially in light of the brutality experienced at the Boston Marathon. The verse brags on page 20 that he "blew up trains" and bemoans his failed assassination attempt on the then Mexican president. Moreover his treatment of women leaves much to be desired. Apparently it is fine to lie and cheat and have multiple affairs while married. Rivera certainly was not designed for fatherhood, telling his partner at one point he will throw the child out the window if it disturbs him.It is a pity that this book is not focused on what made him famous, his art. It is unfortunate that the author did not use his life as an opportunity to discuss the more challenging elements including politics, poverty and morality. Instead there is just blanket approval. The verses focus on many ugly things, the deaths of babies, throwing the baby artist in a dung bucket. Instead of focusing on matters relevant to children today such as the importance of following dreams, making a difference, being kind, not judging on appearances, the author opts for pro left propaganda. This is not a book I would give to children.

I have learned enough about the life of Diego Rivera to have been surprised to see a children's picture book published about him given his unconventional personal life. Picture books are usually marketed to children aged 4-8 but this book has been flagged by the publisher as appropriate for ages 9 and up. (This does not mean it will be filed correctly in the public library or that parents or teachers will not mistakenly read this to kids under 9.) Some high schoolers do not understand enough about communism or know anything about the Mexican communist movement, or about Russia's Leo Trotsky to put Rivera's art and politics in his art into context, and children aged down to nine will have an even harder time.As a homeschooling mother and a person who loves art and enjoys learning about art I have exposed my children to (age appropriate) art history and look forward to more art history books being published for children.Some people criticize children's history books for sugar coating or glossing by reality in order to "whitewash" the biography to be age appropriate or to remove controversy and to praise the person. This is usually done lately in America about US History's "dead white men" and even to complain about accomplished men who deserve praise about some thing(s) they did while also doing things that today we disapprove of. Well in this case the story of Diego Rivera has been whitewashed to be positive and to try to make it age appropriate for children, specifically his relationships, bearing a child out of wedlock, et cetera. The book is of course praising Rivera and readers may carry that positive tone through to receive a positive message about his communist beliefs. Do you want your children to receive a positive message about communism (when they probably don't even know what it is)?Now that I've brought

up those issues I'll put them to the side to get on with the review.The book opens stating that Diego Rivera was a storyteller about his own life, and the story told is a blend of Rivera's stories and facts. The style is told in free verse poems with a page per poem. In this way the book is able to move through his entire lifespan in a short book length. I enjoyed these poems and think that children will enjoy them as well.In the main portion of the book the details of the relationships such as living together and bearing a child out of wedlock are glossed over. I noticed them since I already knew about these things and was looking to see how they'd be written about. Marriage is not mentioned so kids may assume they were married when they were not. Young kids may not pick up on the detail. I know some parents may have different values than Rivera did and may not like these things, but then again the book is not advised for children under age 9 (but since usually picture books are for 4-8 people may pick it up for kids those age).Diego Rivera was a political person, a communist, and his art and choices as to which art he would make and why were entangled with politics. As I said above these issues may confuse kids or perhaps they will gloss over it and not care that they don't understand it, I don't know. In any event some parents who disagree with communism may not like the communist views discussed without any judgment, in a book with a positive tone, the child may assume that communism is therefore something praiseworthy. I doubt that kids aged 9-13 exposed to this book in school would also receive instruction in communism, Mexican and Russian communism, in order to put this information into context. Certainly if a parent reads this book to their child, they could choose to discuss it in more detail, framing it with their family's values. As to what would happen in a school classroom, I will not speculate.At the back of the book is a section written in more adult language that tells "the facts" of Diego Rivera's life. Here some details are shared that make the relationship and political details clear. There is a glossary of terms. There is a timeline of his life also. I was disappointed that the murals discussed in the book were not shown; it would have made a bigger impact.The artwork is done with airbrush painting. At first I thought it odd that a relatively new painting technique would be used but then it dawned on me that Rivera's most famous work was done in murals on streets, art seen by the masses as they pass by on the street. Today there are few murals in the United States yet we have plenty of graffiti on our city walls and bridges. Therefore the choice to use airbrush painting references street art: today's street art. Bravo David Diaz! I loved the paintings, although they were positive, light and uplifting even when the content on the page was serious or contained bad news (such as a child dying).I am torn about how to rate this book. My personal anti-communist views and my fear that the book could be used as pro-communist propaganda taints the praise for other parts of the book. Further making the decision difficult is the fact that so few books exist for children about the life of

Diego Rivera. If there were other better books it would be easier to discount this one.I rate this book 3 stars = It’s Okay due to the content and lack of showing more of Diego Rivera’s artwork.

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