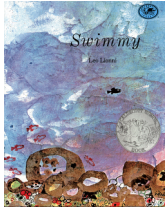


Swimmy

Some Picture Books Are a Little Scary



I was thinking about Swimmy, by Leo Lionni, and how as a child I was both drawn to and scared by the story. If you don't know, this book for preschoolers and primary grade children features a little black fish who must undertake the classic hero's journey after his entire family is eaten by a giant tuna. While I love to share this book, I recommend it carefully. No one deserves to get frightened when they're not looking for a scare. But what about when they are?

In *School Library Journal* John Peters notes that, "do you have any scary stories?" is second only to "where's the bathroom?" in the list of most commonly asked reference questions from very young children. We have a natural instinct to protect children from things that might frighten them, but what are they telling us when they ask for these stories? According to Peters, children who ask for scary stories are "searching for ways to articulate, control, or at least build a little resistance to the fear that comes from feeling surrounded by a world rife with shadows, sudden dangers, and unknown rules."

This very yearning explains the popularity of such revolutionary picture books as Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are, Ed Emberly's Go Away Big Green Monster!, and There's a Nightmare in My Closet by Mercer Mayer.

Take a look at our list of recommended Scary Stories for suggested titles that are appropriate through grade 6. And don't be afraid of a picture book that has a little bite to it. It might become your child's next favorite.

Posted by Josh W. on April 22, 2011

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