



## Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood

*F. Isabel Campoy, Theresa Howell, Rafael López (Illustrations)*

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**Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood** F. Isabel Campoy , Theresa Howell , Rafael López (Illustrations)

What good can a splash of color do in a community of gray? As Mira and her neighbors discover, more than you might ever imagine! Based on the true story of the Urban Art Trail in San Diego, California, *Maybe Something Beautiful* reveals how art can inspire transformation and how even the smallest artists can accomplish something big. Pick up a paintbrush and join the celebration!

## Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood Details

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Author : F. Isabel Campoy , Theresa Howell , Rafael López (Illustrations)

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## **From Reader Review Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood for online ebook**

### **Julie says**

Illustrated by the muralist whose work inspired the book, Maybe Something Beautiful is about the Urban Art Trail in San Diego and the vision of the community there to transform their drab, grey cityscape into something beautiful and meaningful. From calligraphy poems on the sidewalk to murals that "lit up like sunshine," the project involved everyone - from police officers to schoolteachers to children - and is a testimony to the power of art, imagination, creativity, and what people can do when they work together for a common goal and a common good. I love what the muralist told them when they finished: "You, my friends, are all artists. The world is your canvas." Such a beautiful and inspirational picture book.

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### **Natalie Mayur says**

This realistic fiction children's book is a great option for lower elementary students (kindergarten through second grade). Within the story, you meet Mira, who lives in a gloomy city and enjoys painting colorful pictures for her neighbors. One day, a muralist invites her to paint on the walls of the neighborhood to help "brighten things up". Pretty soon, various neighbors of different backgrounds and ages are all chipping in and having a blast while making their community beautiful by painting, singing, dancing, planting plants, but most importantly they are working together in unison towards a common goal: to make their community a beautiful place.

I think one of the reasons this is a WOW book for me is because there are so many different things you could do with this book in your classroom. When I read this book aloud to my kindergarten class, every single student was captivated by the engaging illustrations; they absolutely loved this book! I chose to read this book without asking any questions or other interruptions so that my students could fully enjoy and comprehend the story for themselves. The next day we reread the story, and we discussed vocabulary found within the text such as "transformed", "muralist", and "pizzazz". I also shared with my students that this was a realistic fiction book, meaning this type of activity truly took place in a neighborhood. I also showed students various murals in Raleigh and Durham to familiarize themselves with murals in their own community. We had been studying communities and community helpers, and so this was a great connection to our unit.

Maybe Something Beautiful is also a great story to introduce a fun art project or to discuss culture and what this complex idea means. Conversations could also easily form from reading the pictures alone, so taking a picture walk before reading the text would also be a neat idea when reading this to young students.

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### **Tasha says**

Based on the true story of the colorful transformation of the East Village neighborhood in San Diego, California, this picture book shows how art can impact quality of life. Mira is a little girl who loves to create art. She lives in a gray city where she tries to share her art and change things, but her art is too little to make

big changes. Then she meets a man who is creating huge murals and who allows Mira to help him. Soon other neighbors are helping and colors begin to fill the streets, creating a close-knit neighborhood.

There is a sense of joy and hope throughout this picture book, led by little Mira, a girl with the heart of an artist from the very start of the book. Just sharing her art with her neighbors is an act of artistic courage that sets the tone for the rest of the story. The text is accented by “Bams!” and “Pows” that add to the dynamic tone. Everything here is filled with creative energy and a cheery tone.

López’s art shows the gray concrete city and then imposes Mira and her own colorful attitude against it. The paint splashes on the page and also creates vibrant rainbows of swirling colors that dance on the page. The diverse neighborhood is captured with a richness that is captivating. As color fills the page, it fills the neighborhood too.

A brilliant testament to the power of art and the way it can transform a life and a neighborhood. Appropriate for ages 4-7.

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### **Margie says**

With each season of the year, even in those months when the outside world is sleeping, nature sends us color. It may only be a flash of rich red from a swooping cardinal or vivid blue from a chattering jay, but its vibrancy is a message. It's a reminder of associating color with the excitement of being fully alive.

Not only does Mother Nature send us little pieces of color when there is nearly none but the burst of hues from one season to the next or from a dry spell ended with a rain storm seems to happen in hours rather than days. Sometimes people take their lessons from the natural world. They make loveliness bloom where there was none. *Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed A Neighborhood* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, April 12, 2016) written by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell with illustrations by Rafael Lopez is inspired by a true story of people who did that very thing.

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My full recommendation: <http://librariansquest.blogspot.com/2016/04/maybe-something-beautiful.html>

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### **Beth Parmer says**

The endpapers and title page art grabbed me immediately, but the beautiful words and illustrations continued to pull me in. I love that Mira views herself as an artist. I love that at one point in the story, music begins playing in my head, and with a single page turn, it abruptly stops. I love that back matter is included to explain the story behind the book. I love that by reading this book I want to hop on a plane to admire the The Urban Art Trail. This will definitely be a book that encourages re-reading and nonfiction exploration.

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### **Kirsten says**

This story stars young Mira, a girl who can't stop seeing beauty even though her neighborhood is grey. She draws and paints constantly and shares her art with others. When she meets up with a muralist, the two of

them bring something beautiful to the neighborhood and chase away the grey. The book includes a section in the back that tells the true story of Rafael and Candice Lopez, who used murals to transform the East Village neighborhood of San Francisco into something bright and engaging.

My daughter, who is two, ADORED this book. It's a good thing I have already covered the hallway wall with butcher paper, or I'd be dealing with quite the mural, I'm sure...

Notes on representation: Mira appears to be Latinx, and the neighborhood is made up of people of all skin colors.

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### **Kendra says**

A beautiful, colourful book about the importance of art, and music, and community, and dancing, and kindness.

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### **Rebekah Craven says**

#### Informational Text

This is a children's book and illustrated version of a true story about two artists in the city of San Diego, California. The story is about a young girl who is inspired to turn her gray, drab community into a personal and unique work of art. She uses her talents to inspire many others, from all different backgrounds and lifestyles in her community, to join her in turning the area into a beautiful canvas through art. This book could be used in a k-6th grade classroom to inform students about the Urban Art Trail, an area in San Diego that is completely revived and designed with art from members of its community. I plan to use this book with my students to inspire them all to be creative in all areas of their life, and not just limit their creativity to the work they do in the classroom. I also think it would be cool to use this book for an activity to give students the chance to all come together to create their own "classroom mural," a mural they can take ownership of and believe truly describes who they are as a community of friends. This book is a WOW book in my opinion because I learned about the Urban Art Trail, a real story that I had never heard before. The illustrations in the book are beautiful and I love the way the authors brought it to life through the eyes of a child. Children are known to have very creative minds, and I believe it can inspire students to be artists in their own communities.

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### **Nicola says**

A wonderful picture book about how art, colour, and imagination can revitalise a neighbourhood and bring a community together. Miss 3 and I have read a few picture books with that kind of theme; what sets this one apart is that it is based on a true story. I appreciated the text of the Afterword and Miss 3 liked the photos.

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## **Jacqui says**

"You, my friends, are all artists, he told them. "The world is your canvas."

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## **Jill says**

This book tells the story of Mira, a little girl who lived "in the heart of a gray city," but who loved to draw and fill her room with color. She decided to pass her pictures around to share the joy she got from brightly colored art.

One day she encountered an artist and he helped her paint bright colors on a wall, making it light up like sunshine. Other people soon joined in, drawing pictures on the bricks, adding "color, punch, and pizzazz!" As more and more people participated, "Color spread throughout the streets. So did joy."

Mira and the artist went all around the city, painting bright colors, decorating "with poetry and shine." The artist told the people, "You my friends, are all artists. The world is your canvas."

As we learn in the Authors' Note at the end of the book, a true story inspired this book. In fact, it is the story of the award-winning illustrator, Rafael López. He and his wife Candice helped form the "Urban Art Trail," seeking volunteers of all ages, races, and walks of life to revive their community through art. The group transformed their neighborhood in San Diego's East Village into a place of beauty. The movement spread as far away as Canada and Australia.

The joyous and colorful acrylic illustrations in this book by Rafael López himself have an emphasis on primary shapes and colors. The pictures often take up the whole double-page spread, using fluid shapes and movements to cross the seam between pages.

At a website based on the book, you can learn more about the Urban Art Trail and about murals used for beautification around the world. The site even includes a montage of pictures showing murals in many cities, including San Diego.

**Evaluation:** I found the "real" story more interesting than the fictional one. I also thought it was not made clear that random painting on walls is not always legal. But the illustrations are vibrant and interesting, and perhaps will inspire readers to learn more about how they, too, can make a difference in their communities.

**Rating:** 3.5/5

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## **Susan says**

A touching and hopeful story about how small actions can make a big difference and how about the ways a community can come together through art. The fact that the book is based on true story made it that much better.

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## **Christiane says**

Based on a true story of the transformation of the East Village near downtown San Diego. Illustrator Rafael López created the original murals, along with members of the community. The book's illustrations are vibrant and beautiful, filled with possibility and hope. The text is simple enough this book could be shared for preschool story time, or in a K – 1st grade class. Maybe it will inspire kids to try this in their own neighborhoods!

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## **David Schaafsma says**

Each year I and my family read and rate all the Goodreads picture book nominees. This one is nominated for 2016. I make a few comments and then add their separate ratings and a comment from each of them. There's 20 (15 first round and 5 new ones for the semi-final round) and this is the seventeenth being rated. My rating might be somewhat influenced by the family, naturally.

Dave: 4 stars. Inspirational story based in part on the actual transformation of an East Village neighborhood in San Diego, with a muralist who also does the illustration for this book. It tells the story of Mira, who thinks her neighborhood is gray and dark, and she adds color to it, with this muralist and others.

Tara (my wife): 5 stars. Loved it! Inspiring.

Harry (11): 4 stars. I liked when the policeman stopped and said "excuse me?" and just when you thought he was going to ask them to stop doing it, he joined in.

Hank (10): 4 stars. I liked how they used their imaginations.

Lyra (9): 4 1/2 stars. Beautiful colors when and after they painted.

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## **Joyce Yattoni says**

#bookaday So many possibilities with this book. A great stepping off point for a community service project.

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