



I Am Jim Henson

Brad Meltzer, Christopher Eliopoulos (Illustrations)

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We can all be heroes. That's the inspiring message of this *New York Times* bestselling picture book biography series from historian and author Brad Meltzer. This volume focuses on Jim Henson, the creator of the Muppets and *Sesame Street*.

This friendly, fun biography series focuses on the traits that made our heroes great--the traits that kids can aspire to in order to live heroically themselves. Jim Henson, for example, was always dreaming up something new, and always expressing his belief in the goodness of people. Henson was a born performer with a terrific sense of humor, and he used those talents to help create two of the most beloved programs in television history: *The Muppet Show* and *Sesame Street*. Through his Muppets, Jim showed the world that there's nothing more beautiful than imagination, especially when it's accompanied by laughter and kindness.

Each book in this series tells the story of one inspiring individual through lively text and art that works well for the youngest nonfiction readers. At the back are an excellent timeline and photos.

I Am Jim Henson Details

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From Reader Review I Am Jim Henson for online ebook

Vannessa Anderson says

I Am Jim Henson was an informative read. It was fascinating to learn how Jim Henson was a born performer with a terrific sense of humor and to learn he was born and grew up in Mississippi. Jim Henson's creativity was off the charts! He could take anything and make it into something. His grandmother played a big role in his life encouraging him to pursue art projects with no restraint then have him make-up stories about each project. Author Meltzer did a great job in telling us all about Jim Henson and how he achieved success. Christopher Eliopoulos did a great job in drawing the lifelike people and objects and his color scheme made me feel like one of the characters in the story. Children as well as adults will enjoy **I Am Jim Henson**.

The story is about a little boy who followed his dreams and who never gave up. I especially enjoyed reading how when Jim Henson learned about a job at the local television station and knowing he wasn't qualified, instead of giving up, he utilized the local library to learn his trade then applied for the job and was hired.

P says

We love this new biography series for kids at our house. The illustrator draws Henson the same regardless of his age at that point in the story so it's amusing to see him with a beard and a mustache while still in grade school. The book, with its beautiful color illustrations, highlights the theme of Jim Henson's Muppets--that we all can be different and still get along. I want my children to know there was a man named Jim Henson who worked to make us happy. I miss him and his creative genius.

Reading level is 2nd Grade.

Vickiw says

I just hugged myself. Please read the end pages of the book, they make it SO much more delightful than it already is!

Joshua Jenkins says

My memories of Jim Henson go back to the early 1970s when I watched Sesame Street each morning with my mother. Big Bird was my favorite followed closely by Oscar the Grouch. I read *The Monster at the End of this Book* so many times that the cover fell off. All that was left was the golden spine desperately holding the messy and crinkled pages together. Like much of America, I watched *The Muppet Show* each weekend. The corny camp of muppets juxtaposed to the straight guy celebrity guest of the week was pure television magic.

Brad Meltzer's latest Ordinary People Change the World biography, *I am Jim Henson*, took me straight back to my childhood. Not only did he capture the brilliance of an American cultural icon, he brought to life for children the creative genius behind some of the most popular characters in media today.

The text is written from the first person point of view with Jim telling his story from childhood through his success as an adult. Jim's appearance changes only in size throughout the book; as a kid Jim still has the trademark beard. Readers are able to see in both short paragraphs and comic book style panels the seminal events in Jim's life that lead to his creation of the Muppets. The pictures are beautiful renditions of Jim's characters, providing a pleasing and nostalgic tone to Jim's life. A timeline of Jim's life is placed at the back of the book, letting readers know that Jim passed away in 1990.

Biographies for kids can often be dry retelling of facts with minimal effort at helping children understand the true contribution to the world that the subject of the book made. Meltzer not only wrote a fact-filled biography of an American icon, he also showed the reader the inspiring contributions Jim Henson made to the world of children's television and entertainment. Highest recommendation!

Jocelin says

Very inspirational bio by Brad Meltzer.

Rachel says

Love, love, love Jim Henson and this book. I don't have kids, so I can't speak to how good it is for a particular age group, but it brought tears to my eyes. Sesame Street and The Muppet Show are the first TV shows I ever remember watching and my parents got HBO just so we could watch Fraggle Rock when it came out. I miss Jim Henson. He passed way too soon and I will treasure this little biography.

Meltha says

Absolutely adorable, well written, to the point, and wonderfully hopeful. I got this one for Christmas both because a) I'm working on a seminar on Jim Henson and, b) I'm me. If all of the ones in this series are this good, though, I may well dip into it again. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to attempt identifying all the characters in the group portrait.

Becky says

First sentence: I am Jim Henson. Oh, good. You're here. What's the fun of a story if you don't have anyone to share it with?

Premise/plot: *I am Jim Henson* is a picture book biography of Jim Henson. It begins in his childhood where readers learn that he loves laughing and playing pretend. He also loves "kooky" words. By the time he was a young teenager, Jim knew one thing: he wanted--he needed--to work in television. The rest of the book

follows that dream. The book keeps things big picture, at least in terms of text. The details are found mainly-if not exclusively--in the illustrations.

In my life, I loved to create. But the secret behind my best creations wasn't a strong hand, or a catchy song, or even a funny voice. It was a simple idea: There's good in all of us. Sure, we're all different. Some of us have beards, or no hair, or blue fur, or green flippers. But goodness lives within each of us. That's an idea that should never get old. Believe in the good of the world. Create something new. Share what you love. And find others who believe in those favorite things you dream about.

My thoughts: It had me at hello. It opens with Statler and Waldorf talking.

"I like the book fine so far." "It hasn't started yet." "That's what I like about it."

I also loved it start to finish. It ends with Animal being Animal!

BOOK OVER! GO HOME! GO HOME! BYE-BYE

I like that the book provides some context for understanding his life. Jim spent his childhood listening to the radio, going to movies, acting out and pretending with his friends. He was a teenager before he saw a television. Every day was full of opportunities to create, to imagine, to pretend, to invite others into your world. There's a definite sense of WONDER. How different from the modern screen-filled world that children are born into now. A world where you don't seek to create necessarily but to be entertained. A world that you don't find wondrous and magical--at least not as is.

But what I really loved are the layers of embedded memory. Here's where adult readers are likely to differ greatly from young children. The illustrator is inviting you, the adult reader, to walk down memory lane and soak up all the happiness.

Four pages are dedicated to Sesame Street. (Five if you count the page showing the conversation about a new concept for a children's show.) The illustrations don't cover any particular year or even decade. (Though young readers may ask where Elmo is. My favorite response, "he wasn't born yet.")

I love that this first spread includes MR. HOOPER, Big Bird, Prairie Dawn, Bob, Maria and Luis, the Count, Susan, Gordon, Barkley, Kermit, Grover, Bert and Ernie, Harry Monster, Cookie Monster, etc. The human characters don't particularly resemble those they're supposed to resemble. I used a best-guess approach. I will say this, the text gets a bit wrong. "Then we added a grouchy green monster named Osc--" He was NOT green to begin with!!!

The second spread uses smaller panels of illustration to give adult readers plenty to think about. Cookie singing C is for Cookie. The count singing about numbers. Ernie and his rubber duckie. The yip-yip martians, Bert's pigeons, Oscar in his trashcan. And best of all Kermit singing IT'S NOT EASY BEIN' GREEN.

There are also two spreads dedicated to The Muppet Show and/or The Muppet Movie. The second spread has the muppets singing some of the lyrics to the Finale/Magic Store.

Life's like a movie
Write your own ending
Keep believing
Keep pretending
We done just what we set out to do

And if that was all, it might just be enough. But the fun doesn't end there. There are several more pages wrapping up his oh-so-magical career. One seems to be set in a museum, and I find this page magical. There's an Emmet Otter poster. There are exhibits for the Mahna Mahna skit, Bert and Ernie, Kermit, and some of the Fraggle Rock gang.

One of the last pages shows Jim Henson SURROUNDED on all sides by his creations. I still don't know if I love it because of all the memories it brings back to me. OR if the text itself is lovable.

Text: 4 out of 5

Illustrations: 5 out of 5

Total: 9 out of 10

Adam Sockel says

Brad has an incredible way of taking wonderful historical characters and bringing them to life for young readers. Given my obsession with Henson, I've read through his biographies Brad doesn't a beautiful job of telling his story. If you have children spend some time with them in your lap reading this book. If you don't have children, spend some time reading yourself. It's beautiful.

Amanda says

This is a wonderful read for anyone who grew up watching Jim Henson's muppets. Its a wonderful and insightful read to a wonderful and funny guy. Very much recommended.

orangerful says

Sweet and simple book, this would be great for a read-aloud to older elementary kids. The author does not mention that Jim has passed away, though kids can see it if they look at the timeline included on the last couple pages.

One of my personal heroes and I'm always glad to see his story being told and shared.

Tally Fischer says

Just AMAZING!!

Laela says

I am on a hunt for a good new board books....not this this book is a board book...but the board books brought me to this biography. Which is fantastic.

Finding a biography for younger reader can be challenging. It is either a picture book or a huge chapter book. This book hits right in the middle. It has fun illustrations with the right amount of information to keep a younger audience hooked. I was laughing all the way through it because the illustrator gives Jim Henson a beard as a child. There are lots of hidden little jokes throughout the text. It was all my favorite Muppets from when I was a kid.

I want to put this on display for the all those kids who read the the "Who Was" series. They will love it.

Mischenko says

This is a wonderful book about Jim Henson which starts in his childhood and takes you on his journey and into the Jim Henson we all know. I liked how the Muppets were incorporated into the story, many that I loved in my childhood. The art is beautiful and also includes real photos of the cast members. This isn't just a kids book! Anyone who loves Jim Henson will love this book. 5*****

Andrea Lorenz says

I really enjoy these Ordinary People Change the Word biographies. The illustrations - which are a combination of real world illustrations along with cartoonized versions of the subjects - appeal to me, an avid comics nerd. I like the message of this one, but I could have used even more information about Jim and about his work with movies and his imaginative creature shop. It's a good start on a biography, with real pictures and a bibliography/further reading in the back.
