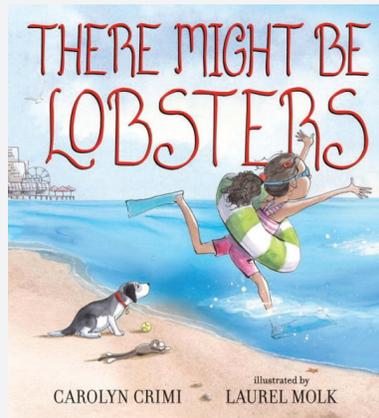


Second Reaction: Big Fears

Crimi, Carolyn. *There Might Be Lobsters*. Illustrated by Laurel Molk.
Candlewick, 2017.

Rachel Ploskonka



There Might be Lobsters by Carolyn Crimi provides several critical lessons to children regarding the notion of fear and the overcoming of one's fears. Specifically, the book normalizes the feeling of fear, addresses critical elements related to overcoming fears, and underscores the notion that growth and fear are inseparable. This book serves as a framework to help children discuss the feeling of fear and can also be used as a tool to foster discussion regarding their own fears.

The most critical theme of the book is that it normalizes the feeling of fear, which is an emotion that often is avoided. The feeling of fear is crucial to explore among young children in order to encourage them to openly discuss their fears as opposed to developing reluctance or sense of shame in sharing their feelings, particularly their fears, with others. The story emphasizes that fear is a very real and strong emotion. Additionally, it touches on how seemingly typical situations, such as going to the beach, can induce fear. Specifically, the core fear of the story revolves around Suki's (a dog's) fear of swimming in the ocean due to concern of lobsters in the water. Focusing on a fear associated with a situation that may be benign to others offers a reminder that individuals can be apprehensive and fearful about situations that others may not be afraid of. Finally, within the normalization of fear, the book presents the overarching notion of the fear of the unknown through Suki's concerns that lobsters may be present in the ocean and may cause some unknown, unidentifiable harm.

In addition to emphasizing the notion of fear, the book also addresses critical elements related to overcoming it. The book highlights overcoming fears in two ways, both progressively and dramatically. First, the book highlights the sequential progression that is often associated with overcoming a fear. Specifically, Suki makes smaller steps toward progress in addressing her fears by moving from the land to the beach and slowly moving toward the water. Addressing fear in this manner allows children to learn that we must face our fears, and that it is normal and acceptable to do so slowly and with appropriate caution. Secondly, Suki later addresses her fear in a more dramatic manner when her beloved toy, Chunka Monka, is swept into the ocean. In this moment of the book, Suki addresses her fear with abandon by literally diving in and facing her fears. Finally, the book touches on the need to be patient with our fear as well as that of others. Specifically, Suki's owner never forced or pushed Suki to face her fears beyond her place of readiness. Thus, the book emphasizes that individuals have to overcome their own fears; another person cannot make one overcome a fear.

This book also underscores the notion that growth and fear are inseparable, wherein personal growth cannot be achieved without addressing one's fears. Specifically, Suki slowly and timidly progresses from the land to the beach area. This slow progression of growth set the stage for her to ultimately be able to dive into the water to rescue her precious toy. The book challenges readers with the ultimate message that if one avoids feared situations, then they will be inhibited in their personal growth and can also miss out on new, potentially worthwhile experiences.

There Might Be Lobsters could be a helpful learning tool for younger children within both individual conversations with adults as well as classroom discussions. Specifically, either individual or classroom discussions can emphasize the thematic elements that are detailed above, such as the universality of fear, the normalization of fear, and the importance of addressing one's own fears. Within discussions, children can discuss their own individual fears in order for their fears to be normalized and validated by others. Children's discussion of their own fears can also serve as a first step through which children face their them—by verbalizing them. Additionally, children can work with adults to discuss how they might proactively face their fears with the goal that they realize that they are scarier in their minds than in actual reality. However, of important note, within the discussion of fears, realistic and healthy fears should also be explored (e.g., healthy avoidance of strangers) and honored as opposed to altered.

Overall, the book *There Might be Lobsters* can serve as a tool to help children discuss the feeling of fear and discuss their own fears through the normalization of the feeling, highlighting elements related to overcoming fears, and noting that growth and fear are inseparable.

About the Author

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