



Life Doesn't Frighten Me

By Maya Angelou



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Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all"

Maya Angelou's brave, defiant poem celebrates the courage within each of us, young and old. From the scary thought of panthers in the park to the unsettling scene of a new classroom, fearsome images are summoned and dispelled by the power of faith in ourselves.

Angelou's strong words are matched by the daring vision of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose childlike style reveals the powerful emotions and fanciful imaginings of childhood. Together, Angelou's words and Basquiat's paintings create a place where every child, indeed every person, may experience his or her own fearlessness.

In this brilliant introduction to poetry and contemporary art, brief biographies of Angelou and Basquiat accompany the text and artwork, focusing on the strengths they took from their lives and brought to their work. A selected bibliography of Angelou's books and a selected museum listing of Basquiat's works open the door to further inspiration through the fine arts.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Boyers, a TV producer and art collector, deserves a standing ovation for her performance in pairing Angelou's poem with abstract paintings by the late Basquiat. "Dragons breathing flame / On my counterpane / That doesn't frighten me at all. / I go boo / Make them shoo / I make fun / Way they run / I won't cry / So they fly"--had it been teamed with representational or whimsical illustrations, the verse might well have lost its dignity; instead, the proximity of Basquiat's edgy, streetwise pictures adds even greater power and authenticity to Angelou's refrain, "Life doesn't frighten me at all." Conversely, the affirming quality of the poem mediates Basquiat's disquieting urban images. Basquiat's first works were drawn onto the walls of Manhattan buildings, and the frenzied, sometimes angry compositions here have the rawness of graffiti. The reproductions invite close scrutiny, implicitly teaching the viewer a way of approaching contemporary art and reinforcing the tough beauty of the poem. Ages 4-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 3-6-A unique book that combines the words of a renowned African-American poet laureate and the primitive, modern paintings of a young Haitian-American artist. With lines of verse that shout exuberantly from each page, a young voice rails against any and all things that mean to do her harm. Whether they are "Shadows on the wall/ Noises down the hall" or even "Mean old Mother Goose/Lions on the loose"-to one and all she responds- "they don't frighten me at all." In the middle, the pace and intensity quicken as "I go boo/Make them shoo/I make fun/Way they run." Despite the scary things around her, the poet's determined courage remains. The art provides a jolting counterpoint to the optimistic words, reflecting a dark, intense vision. Violent splashes of color bleed and drip one into another, and white letters are scratched into black backgrounds. Stark figures with grotesque features face off against one another. Symbols such as arrows, birds, crowns, and letters emphasize the artist's anger and sense of irony. The choice of the paintings, taken as they were from an extant body of work, give levels of meanings to a poem already strong with images of its own. A powerful exploration of emotion and its expression through the careful blend of words and art.

Jane Marino, White Plains Public Library, NY

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 4-8. Both a handsome art book and a rhythmic read-aloud, this is great for sharing with audiences of many ages. Angelou's direct, lovely poem is the text of a dramatic large-size picture book with paintings in glowing color by young New York City artist Basquiat. Words and pictures work together because the editor has made no attempt to match literal images. Both poet and artist confront our archetypal fears, out there and in our nightmares ("Panthers in the park / Strangers in the dark / No, they don't frighten me at all"). Fear is answered with dancing energy and daring imagination and laughter ("Mean old Mother Goose / Lions on the loose / They don't frighten me at all"). Basquiat's work has the directness of street art, with a bold combination of magic realism and abstract geometric shapes--sometimes Picasso, sometimes African mask, sometimes child's scribble. Also included are long, excellent biographical sketches of Angelou and Basquiat. "Life Doesn't Frighten Me at All" was the title poem for a popular YA anthology edited by John Agard (1990). *Hazel Rochman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leticia Hodges:

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