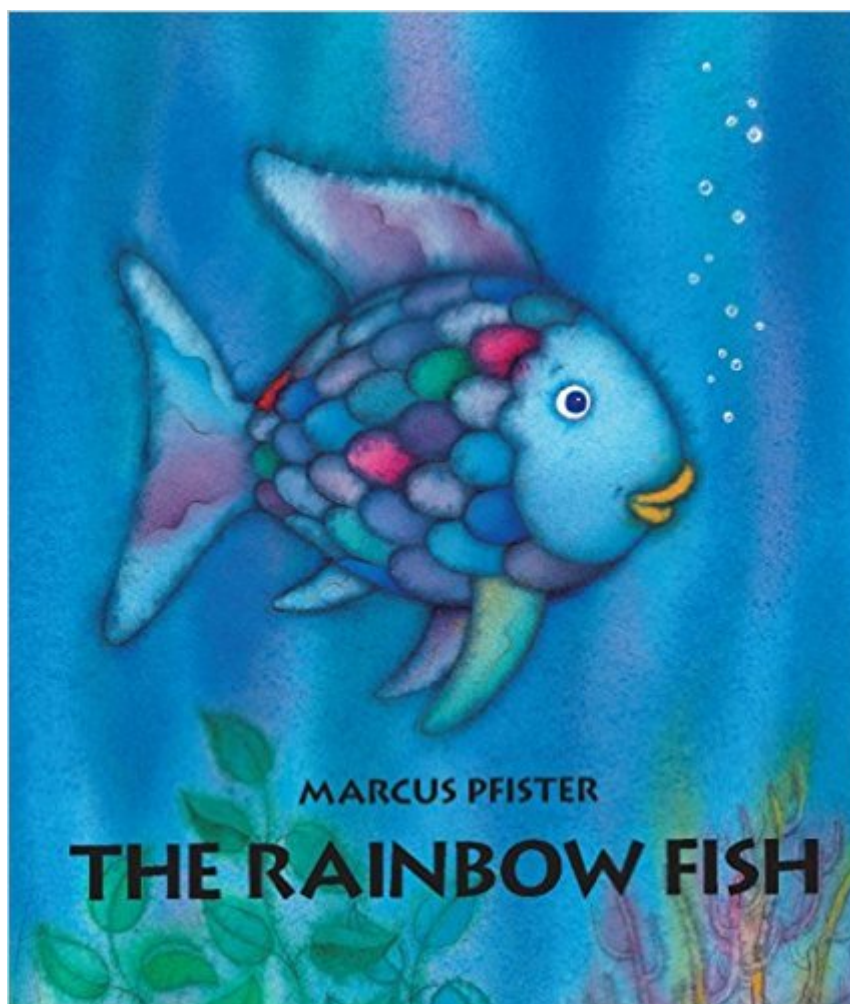


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# The Rainbow Fish



## Synopsis

The award-winning book about a beautiful fish who finds friendship and happiness when he learns to share is now available in a board book edition for the youngest child.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 410 (What's this?)

Board book: 12 pages

Publisher: NorthSouth (January 27, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1558585362

ISBN-13: 978-1558585362

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.4 x 6.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (659 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #7,606 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in [Books > Children's Books > Animals > Fish](#) #49 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values](#) #294 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship](#)

Age Range: 2 - 4 years

Grade Level: Preschool and up

## Customer Reviews

ISBN 1558580093 - It's a rare thing that I read a childrens' book knowing full well that there is an actual critical debate going on about it, but The Rainbow Fish is one of those. With that in mind, I'll begin with those parents. The message any child gets from a book that is read to them is more dependent upon you than the contents of the book. If you're going to be all freaked out by some wacky idea that this book teaches socialism, you're going to convey that to your child and you will do more harm than the book, all by itself, ever could - in that case, just pass up this book. No harm done to anyone. While I think you're crazy, I think you have the right to make that choice. If, on the other hand, you can manage two things: to actually read the book and get the message (which isn't socialism/fascism/communism and isn't really sharing, either) and to understand that you are not 4 years old and your 4 year old doesn't think the way you do, then this book is worth picking up. A beautiful, conceited fish lives in the deep part of the ocean. His scales sparkle and shine as he swims through the ocean - alone. The other fish attempt to befriend him, but he ignores them until

one day when a small blue fish approaches him. The small blue fish tells the Rainbow Fish how beautiful his scales are, and asks for one of them. Horrified, the Rainbow Fish refuses and swims on, puzzling aloud over his loneliness. A crab directs him to an octopus, whose advice is simple: give away his scales to the other fish and he will be happy. After some thought, and a second request from the small blue fish, the Rainbow Fish takes the octopus's advice and finds friendship and happiness. Let's face it - this book has a large number of 5-star and 1-star reviews for a reason. Here's my two cents on those reasons: One, look closely at reviews and you'll notice that many negative reviews are for the board book edition, which is truncated to suit the format. The book has already been translated from its original language (Swiss) and then it's edited to fit a smaller book - of course there is going to be missing information in that version. Two, adults are reading this book, assessing it by their own standards and forgetting that children see a very different story here. Adults see the scales as what they are in the real world: a part of the body of a living creature that doesn't talk. In this book, which isn't the real world (as evidenced by the talking fish), the scales are more comparable to clothing or jewelry - a possession, not a physical feature. Adults also seem to fail to see one glaring thing: while their eyes are on the "give away your possessions" issue, they forget the way the story starts. In the beginning, the Rainbow Fish is vain and lonely, concerned only with his scales and their beauty, certain that he should be liked for his beauty alone ("I really am beautiful. Why doesn't anybody like me?"). The idea that the message here is about sharing is easily proven false. The summary inside reads "The most beautiful fish in the entire ocean discovers the real value of personal beauty and friendship" - not a single word there about sharing. The message in this book is more about not letting your possessions possess you, about understanding that others won't like you just because you're pretty, and about recognizing that friendship isn't about someone else adoring you but about sharing something, even if all you share is play time (not necessarily possessions). For that alone, if those are messages that you're able to convey to your child, the book is worthy of the shelf space. Add in the lovely pastel illustrations (and the person saying this usually despises pastel illustrations) by Marcus Pfister with the scales that actually sparkle and you've got a winner. The worst I can say about the book is that, perhaps, something is lost in the translation by J. Alison James. Children will enjoy the story and be very happy that, in the end, the Rainbow Fish isn't alone anymore. If you like this one, be sure to catch up with the sparkly fish in *Rainbow Fish Finds His Way*. - AnnaLovesBooks

If you have read through some of the controversy, and are on the fence about this book, I would suggest buying the full hardcover version rather than the board book edition. Having read both, I

can more readily agree with the naysayers' point of view when applied to the board book. The text is simplified in such a way that makes it easy for a vigilant parent to misunderstand the message. However, I found the hardcover book to be perfectly lovely. In this version, it was more clear that the reason the Rainbow Fish had no friends was because of his arrogant attitude and unwillingness to share - not because the other fish were envious, or needed to be "bought" with gifts. The sharing of his scales was not to "buy" friends or to promote communism - rather, it represented his learning three important lessons: 1) that his identity need not be tied into his appearance or his possessions, 2) that he shouldn't consider himself to be superior to the other fish just because their scales were a different color than his, and 3) that sharing your blessings with those around you makes you - and them - feel good. I highly recommend this book, in its original version.

This book is very pretty. I've read it to a group of children (not my choice - a teacher asked me to do so) and to my own child, who got it out of the library, and I've certainly seen its appeal to young children. They can't sit still. They just have to reach out and touch the lovely, shiny, foil scales. (Although the look of disappointment on their faces when they find out it's just a flat surface is also obvious.) I think getting children interested in books at a young age is crucial, so ordinarily I would love a book with this kind of appeal, even if it wasn't a book that especially appealed to me. I perfectly understand that sometimes children and adults have different tastes. But this book, despite its prettiness, is awful. A beautiful fish, different from all the other fish because of his glittering, jewel-colored scales, has a hard time making friends, because the other fish don't like the fact that he does not look like them. In order to win friends, he gives away his scales, one by one, until all the fish in the ocean look alike. I understand that the book is supposed to be about sharing, but giving away everything you have isn't sharing, it's buying friends. That's something many young children are already prone to do, and it's not something any caring parent or teacher would want to encourage. The book's success also bothers me because it is a blatant rip-off of a much better book - Leo Lionni's classic *Tico and the Golden Wings*. In Lionni's book, a bird gives away the golden feathers of its wings. But the tone of the book is very different. Lionni's bird is born without wings, unable to fly. He wishes for wings, and is granted golden ones. As he flies around the world, he sees people living lives of great hardship and he gives each person one of his golden feathers in order to help them. Each time he gives away a golden feather, a real one grows in its place. In the end, his bird friends see him with his black wings and tell him that now he's just like them. But Tico realizes that although he looks like them, he is different inside. Unlike *The Rainbow Fish*, *Tico and*

the Golden Wings teaches children to be generous AND to be themselves. It doesn't make it seem like it's impossible to be a unique individual and still get along with others.

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