A Tribute from Eric Carle

Like all of Leo Lionni's work, *Swimmy* is a magnificent blend of story and graphics. Here, I feel, he has been more daring than ever. Both childlike and sophisticated, the images in the underwater environment glide by like a film across the screen. The jellyfish halfway through the book is similar to a potato print done by a child and is as sophisticated as the best art of our time. And this is true of all his creatures, big and small. I was especially intrigued by the forest of seaweed growing from sugar-candy rocks. Both words and pictures blend harmoniously. (Sugar-candy rocks! The Beatles would have loved that.) Lionni, ever inventive, using the ornamental edge on a napkin or doily, painted on it and made prints. The joy that Lionni must have felt while doing this couldn't possibly escape the viewer.

The story is as old as an Aesopian lesson of outwitting a bully. Here the big bad tuna fish not only intimidates and scares a peaceful school of little fish but – *horrors!* – gobbles them up. But don't worry, help is on the way. And charmingly, wittily, and most satisfyingly at that.

Recently I was asked whose picture books I could not live without. Guess my answer? You are right.





For my friend Alfredo Segre
who gave Swimmy his name.

Swimmy

by Leo Lionni



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A happy school of little fish lived in a corner of the sea somewhere.
They were all red. Only one of them was as black as a mussel shell.
He swam faster than his brothers and sisters. His name was Swimmy.



One bad day a tuna fish, swift, fierce and very hungry, came darting through the waves. In one gulp he swallowed all the little red fish. Only Swimmy escaped.

He swam away in the deep wet world.
He was scared, lonely and very sad.

But the sea was full of wonderful creatures, and as he swam from marvel to marvel Swimmy was happy again.

He saw a medusa made of rainbow jelly. . .