

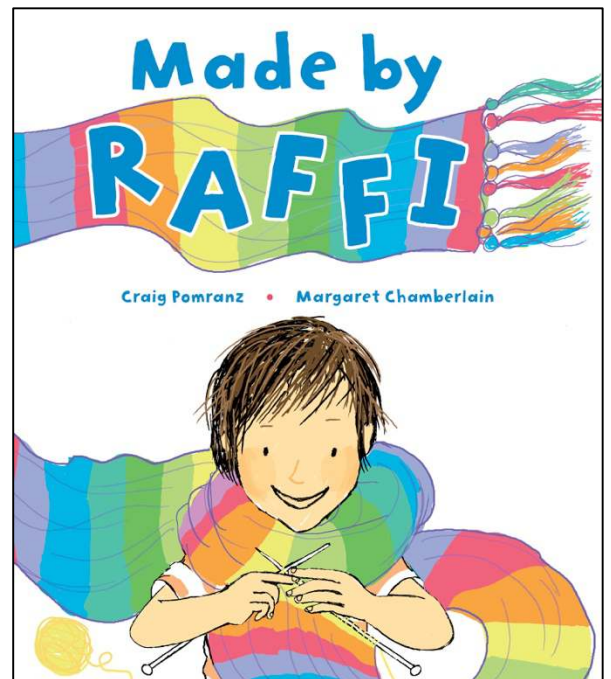


A discussion guide provided by MERGE for Equality

Made By Raffi

By Craig Pomranz

Illustrated by Margaret Chamberlain



Book Summary:

Raffi is a shy boy who doesn't like noisy games and is often teased at school. But when he gets the idea of making a scarf for his dad's birthday he is full of enthusiasm, even though the other children think it is girly to knit. Then the day draws near for the school pageant, and there is one big problem - no costume for the prince. And that's when Raffi has his most brilliant idea of all - to make a prince's cape. On the day of the pageant, Raffi's cape is the star of the show.

Why has MERGE selected this book?

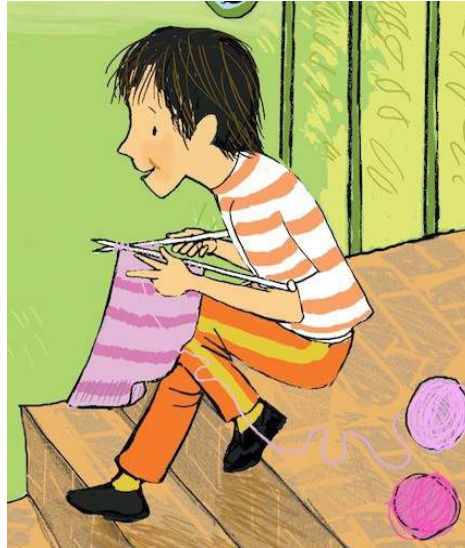
Raffi was the first book selected for the MERGE Children's Book Campaign, before a formal selection process and team had been formed. Raffi's message celebrates the inherent creative and artistic spirit experienced by many boys, as well as the painful reality that such qualities are often devalued in favor of more socially acceptable rough and tumble boy-play. This narrative reinforces a MERGE core practice of advocating for more flexible gender norms as well as disrupting the harmful gender norms and stereotypes that limit the emotional and social experience of boys, and the men they become.

Before reading you may wish to develop background knowledge and anticipation by asking questions such as:

- What makes you different from the other children in your class? (or what makes you special?)
- What activities do you like to do?
- Do you prefer it to be really noisy or very quiet?

Invite children to be active participants in making meaning of what they see and hear. This helps children think critically about the book. While you are reading the story, ask questions such as:

- What do you think the title means?
- Who do you think the book may be about? What makes you think that?
- Throughout the book ask, what do you see happening in this picture? Tell me how the picture says that.



After reading you can help children communicate what they have learned by asking the following questions. Ask them how the words and pictures communicate ideas to them. This assists them in thinking critically about what they are seeing and hearing.

- What ideas about gender norms (ideas about how people should behave based on whether others see them as boys or girls) does Raffi struggle with early in the story?
- How do the adults in the story support Raffi?
- What helps the children change their behavior toward Raffi?
- How do you think Raffi and the other children feel at the end of the story?
- How might this story help your friends and family reconsider ideas about how people should behave based on whether others see them as boys or girls (gender norms)?

About the author: Craig Pomrantz is a saloon singer, song stylist, actor and author. Growing up in St. Louis, the youngest of four sons in an orthodox Jewish home, Craig discovered he could overcome his tremendous shyness through music. His parents encouraged him with theater classes in the basement of the Tropicana Bowling Alley. Energized by his visceral reaction to singing, acting and the effect he could have on an audience, Craig, on his own, began looking for professional work. He is now an award winning singer often found performing in New York City.

About the illustrator: Children's Illustrator Margaret Chamberlain produced her first children's picture book illustrations while still at the Royal College of Art. She has produced illustrations for many more children's books since then including; 'The Man whose Mother was a Pirate', still a bestseller after more than twenty years; and 'The Tale of Georgie Grub' now re-issued with completely new illustrations.

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