



***Max and the Dumb Flower Picture* by Martha Alexander**

Charlesbridge, 2009

9781580891561 (Hardcover)

*Ages 4-8: (Suggested by Publisher)

Preschool to Grade 3 : (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

It's time to color outside the lines.

Max's teacher wants the class to color-in pictures for Mother's Day presents, but Max knows that his mother would not want a dumb flower picture drawn by someone else. Determined to express his creativity, Max runs off to draw his own picture. Max's drawing not only inspires the rest of the class to create their own original artwork but also enlightens the teacher.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

The problem here for a freethinking pre-schooler is presented on the first page: "Max didn't want to color the dumb flower picture. Miss Tilley wanted him to." Instead of filling in the prefab flower for Mother's Day, Max (looking wonderfully grumpy) runs off to make his own drawing. It's a triumph when the class joyfully follows suit. Martha Alexander (1920-2007) left notes and sketches for this story about the possibilities of "a blank sheet of paper," and James Rumford ably completed it. --*New York Times Book Review*

An angry child provides the drama in this small picture book about a young kid who refuses to stay inside the lines. With lots of white space, the detailed line-and-watercolor illustrations show Max with his arms crossed as he fumes and scowls at his cheery teacher, who has made copies of a flower picture for each student in the class to color for Mother's Day. 'Make the flowers pretty,' she gushes. Max grabs the flower picture and hides under a bush for so long that the teacher eventually calls the police to find him. While he is hiding, Max turns the pre-drawn picture over and creates his own flower, and when he shows it to the class, all the kids decide to draw unique flowers, too. When they see the results, the children's mothers love the kids artwork: 'Each is so different.' Kids will enjoy the story about the young, triumphant rebel, and the creativity message is for adults too: there is no one way to get things right. --*Booklist*

Before her death in 2006, Alexander (the Blackboard Bear series) left her manuscript and sketches in the hands of James Rumford (*Beowulf: A Hero's Tale Retold*). The tender result honors both Alexander and the children for whom she wrote for 40 years. Asked by his teacher, Miss Tilley, to color in a picture for Mother's Day, the scowling, carrot-topped protagonist refuses: 'Max didn't want to color the dumb flower picture.' Despite the teacher's repeated insistence, Max knows his mother would rather have his very own drawing. After some stomping, sulking and hiding in the bushes, Max reveals the beautiful flower picture he has drawn on his own which inspires his classmates to do the same. Alexander is spot-on with her understanding of the pressures children feel to conform (You'll be the only one without a nice picture for your mother, says Miss Tilley) and her respect for their individualism, which to the uninformed, may appear like acting-out. Framed by

white space, the soft sketches are color washed digitally and by hand, and with Rumford's collaboration, st
--*Publishers Weekly*

Published posthumously, this small, timeless book will resonate with children and pays a lovely tribute to Alexander. Faced with his teacher's assignment to color in a picture of a flower for Mother's Day, Max feels increasingly frustrated. He knows his mother would prefer his own drawing. While the other children obediently stay in the lines, Max finally grabs his paper and crayons and runs out of the classroom. Safely hiding, he makes his own picture of a flower. In the end, the children (not to mention the teacher and policeman) are relieved to find Max--and so inspired by his picture that they create their own unique flowers, too. Alexander left her original sketches along with the manuscript to Rumford, who helped to complete them with some digital manipulation and watercolors. The book is respectful of her quiet but expressive style, and the illustrations work well with the text to bring Max's internal struggle to life. Interesting endpapers featuring flowers designed by Alexander's friends and family beautifully frame the theme of creative individuality. Rumford's note at the end explains how the book came to be. --*School Library Journal*

***A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.