



## Grandpa, I'm Afraid

### Mart Grams

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*Through its thoughtful dialogues, Grandpa, I'm Afraid will help chase away all those proverbial monsters from under the bed.*

In Mart Grams's imaginative picture book *Grandpa, I'm Afraid*, a grandfather and his granddaughters explore a variety of childhood fears.

From stinging bees and monsters in the closet to mean-looking clowns and visits to the doctor's office, a child's imagination can turn ordinary considerations into extraordinary, heightened fears. In a down-to-earth and lively conversation, Grandpa and his granddaughters, Alli and Sophia, examine the scare factors of insects, dolls, dark basements, and Halloween, showcasing each in a more positive and friendly light.

Grams's introduction, directed at adult coreaders, discusses fear as a common part of the growth process and notes that anxieties may include more emotional or worldly concerns. The subsequent text is organized into ten specific dialogues with well-chosen subjects that will be an easy and direct draw for youngsters. These stories defuse concerns with solid responses that acknowledge and validate worrisome situations while also providing solutions. Grandpa's appropriate key emphasis is, "What you're afraid of [is] what you don't know."

From shining flashlights on unknown creatures in the dark to tales of parents who also had childhood fears, the simple solutions are a nice counterbalance to the book's emphasis that fear is linked to imagination: "Like a book, if [imagination] gets too wild we can close it." Explanations—unruly clowns are broken down as ordinary people dressed in a special uniform—are smart.

The work does not follow the typical design of a picture book. Instead, it is formatted as a collection of inquisitive dialogues, three or four questions long, each of which can be considered on their own. The text for each conversation is ample but contained within a page.

Colorful crayon drawings are interspersed throughout the work. With their emphasis on big eyes, sharp claws and teeth, and monstrous grins, the images demonstrate a child's handiwork, broad vision, and fantastical style. The final image is noteworthy. Brighter and more electrically colored, it is of a patchwork animal comprising bat-like wings, amphibious feet, a tail, furred jowls, and a pig's snout that captures the far-reaching dimensions of a youngster's thought process.

*Grandpa, I'm Afraid* is an insightful and therapeutic picture book. Ideally, it will help chase away all those proverbial monsters from under the bed.

CAROL DAVALA (November 12, 2018)

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