

My Snorkeling Days

Jacqueline Messer

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Bright pictures and an inventive story make My Snorkeling Days an involving tale for young readers.

In Jacqueline Messer's colorful picture book *My Snorkeling Days*, a young boy discovers that families can live anywhere, even under the sea.

The narrator of this short, sweet story spends a lovely summer day exploring what appears to be a tranquil underwater scene. At first, he sees only a single fish, but it is not long before he is surrounded by schools of them. He is also quite surprised to see what looks like a city along the coral reef, with all the hustle and bustle that goes with it.

Messer gives the fish human qualities: some are eating a meal, and others are washing off. When the boy is finished for the day, he feels like he has made a ton of new friends and drifts off to sleep dreaming "of my snorkeling days," bringing everything full circle.

A running metaphor effectively compares underwater life with city life, using phrases like "lots of busy traffic" to make it easy for children to understand the similarities between the two worlds, including their many different shapes, sizes, and colors.

Most of the text is set in quatrain form, though only some of the stanzas rhyme. Reading the book out loud is an uneven experience, particularly when rhymes become shaky in the course of a single page.

The oversized illustrations add a great deal of color to each page and are particularly beautiful when the boy is surrounded by all different hues of fish. Children are sure to find their imaginations prompted by the last page, where the narrator daydreams about his snorkeling days while he's in his fish pajamas and underneath his shark blanket.

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KELLY THUNSTROM (March 29, 2019)

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