

Clarion Review ★★★★★

PICTURE BOOKS

## The Fin-Tastic Cleanup

**Laura Mancuso**

Mascot Books

(40pp)

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*The Fin-Tastic Cleanup is a lively picture book in which three mermaids learn about the dangers of the trash that enters the ocean every year.*

Three mermaids swim into action against ocean pollution in Laura Mancuso's picture book, *The Fin-Tastic Cleanup*.

Sara, Alix, and Lucy enjoyed living in their coral village beneath the sea. Then a fun trip to the beach reveals how dangerous their underwater world has become due to pollution. The mermaids are dismayed by the dangers caused by the trash dumped into the sea, but they channel their anger into positive action. After rescuing several sea creatures ensnared or injured by trash, they meet a group of girls who are cleaning the beach, and they join forces with the girls to collect and dispose of the trash.

The story touches on several concepts: the fun of being in a lovely place with congenial companions; the hard work needed to preserve such places; the joy of making new friends who are also dedicated to causes; and the good feelings that come with taking action to solve problems. The large, lively illustrations convey the characters' emotions well; they are also inclusive, showing girls of various ethnicities working together to tackle the beach clean-up.

The artwork depicts the beauty and variety of the underwater world with a striking complementary color scheme and a wide sampling of unusual flora and fauna. It also shows the many types of trash that pollute the environment, from broken bottles with jagged edges to plastic bags. The contrast between the beauty of the underwater world in its pristine state, and what it looks like as litter accumulates, is striking.

While advocating for personal responsibility, the narrative is realistic in explaining that the problem has become too big for individuals to handle on their own. Facts are presented to show the scope of the problem, and a list of national and local environmental organizations that are engaged in protecting the oceans and their inhabitants is included, together with their contact information.

Written in the form of a rhyming poem, this is an impactful introduction to the effects of ocean pollution. Some of the rhymes are forced, though, and line lengths and internal rhythms are often irregular.

*The Fin-Tastic Cleanup* is a lively picture book in which three mermaids learn about the dangers of the trash that enters the ocean every year.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May 13, 2021)

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