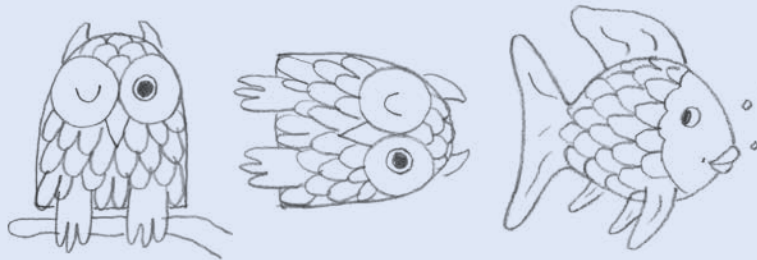


AUTHOR'S NOTE

What was the origin of *The Rainbow Fish*?

Is the account I always give actually true, or is it just a myth that's somehow fixed itself in my mind over the last thirty years? We don't get any younger, but at least our long-term memory ought to keep functioning properly!

Here is how I think it all happened... Brigitte Sidjanski, cofounder and at that time editor of NordSüd Verlag, wanted me to write something along the lines of my first book, *The Sleepy Owl*. And then at some time the cover of that book must have been lying on my desk at an angle of about 90 degrees—the same desk that I've been using for the last thirty years for my stories and illustrations.



And that's how the little owl turned into a fish, which then set out to conquer the world—or at least to win the hearts of lots of children and grown-ups.

Of course the story is about sharing—but not just that. For me it's the first part of the book that's more important. Wealth, beauty, a great pair of sneakers, or the latest mobile phones are no reason to look down on others, to feel and behave as if we're superior. It's what we think and what we do that determines what sort of person we are.

Right from the start, the other fish in the shoal want to play with Rainbow Fish, even without asking him to give away any of his shiny scales. Rainbow Fish could have kept his scales or given them away—whichever he wanted. The decisive factor was his change of heart, with the realization that arrogance, selfishness, and an excessive desire for admiration are of no help if you want to share your life with friends. Perhaps that's also what has made him such a sympathetic character.

Rainbow Fish is not some classical superhero like Robin Hood or Batman. He's a character with weaknesses who sometimes makes mistakes but is able to change and to develop.

This year the walls of a children's hospital in Chile are being painted with pictures of him, a diving club in Thailand has been named after him, in Kathmandu he's being celebrated at a little book festival, and in Germany there's an association for the visually impaired that bears his name.

The little fish has grown up.
I'm proud of him.

Marcus Pfister