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Different Like Coco



Synopsis

The rags-to-riches story of Coco Chanel plays out in a wonderful picture-book biography as full of style and spirit as its heroine. Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel was always different. And she vowed to prove that being different was an advantage! Poor, skinny, and orphaned, Coco stubbornly believed that she was as good as the wealthier girls of Paris. Tapping into her creativity and her sewing skills, she began making clothes that suited her (and her pocketbook) — and soon a new generation of independent working women craved her sleek, comfortable, and practical designs. Now an icon of fashion and culture, Coco Chanel continues to inspire young readers, showing just how far a person can come with spunk, determination, and flair.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 990L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars — See all reviews — (29 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #56,654 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Modern #18 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Art > Fashion #70 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Women

Age Range: 5 - 9 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 4

Customer Reviews

Children's non-fiction books have come a long way, not just in style but in subject matter. How great that Candlewick saw fit to publish a picture book biography of, astonishingly, someone the average child is probably unfamiliar with -- a woman who died long before the child was born, from a country not much studied in grade schools, representing a profession hardly mentioned at all: fashion designer. But Elizabeth Matthews, through text and pictures, has made Coco Chanel someone little girls (and open-minded little boys?) can identify with. Chanel's story is a literal rags-to-riches tale, and Matthews' enchanting art work captures her heroine's style and joie de vivre (not to mention

chutzpah, to mix linguistic tags) beautifully. The cover image itself could be posted on a little girl's bedroom wall. And underneath, perhaps, the words "Dare to be Different. Like Coco."

As Maurice Chevalier sang, "Thank Heaven for little girls" . . . at least we can thank Heaven for one who grew up with an independent spirit, and an imagination for corset-Less chic. Coco Chanel (1883-1971) said "In order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different." The book's end papers reproduce other quotations from this fashion icon, including "Fashion is made to become unfashionable!" Elizabeth Matthews has written a perfect Springtime fancy, and the pen & ink illustrations are every bit as lively, just right for introducing children & their very willing parents to a story about the little girl Coco who overcame her tough childhood with sewing skills learned in a Catholic orphanage. She could hold her own with snobby students of privilege and learned much by watching her peers. She later hung fabric on mannequin forms and basted in her relaxed styles which brought her fashion immortality. The author, who graduated from the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, chose Chanel as her somewhat innovative subject for children's picture books. Matthews is sure to have studied much about Coco Chanel and her clever "inventions" of the cartigan suit, and in 1926 "the little black dress." Reviewer mcHaiku isn't quite as old as the famed Chanel No. 5; it contained more than 80 ingredients, a new fact about 'parfum' for this reader. Chanel epitomizes a certain fortitude & determination that we hope young readers will try to replicate. Perhaps they will remember another of her sayings: "INNOVATION! One cannot be forever innovating. I want to create CLASSICS."

I love the illustration but the story is definitely not for a kid...or even a teenager. It says in several pages that Coco was thin and she would make clothes for slender women. Okay, that might be true in the fashion world but do we want to stick these ideas in a child's mind to be thin in order to look good or fit into fancy clothes? There are better books out there for children. I'll just keep this one for myself since I like Chanel and I'll just give it to my daughter when she's old enough to understand that body image is not important. Slender or voluptuous does not define anyone. Also, it gives an image of Chanel asking her lover for money so she can open her boutique - it happened, I saw the movie, but come on! It's a children's book!

Very fun book purchased by me a 53 year old that ran across this book and another similar by accident. I had to have it for me! Yes, I'm 53, but the books are lovely and I have my two new books in a spare room that is decorated for a little girl. My husband thought I was crazy, but this and Piggy

Goes to Prada are just lovely and I read them both!

As a policy I don't give book 5 stars unless they knock me down with their excellence, but this book is great - definitely worthy of purchase. This is a wonderfully inspirational book for children. I saw it years ago, didn't buy it, but I kept thinking about until I finally bought it recently for my daughters. They love it! It sends very positive messages about being independent, creative, and resourceful. The primary weakness of the book is its focus on the word "different." What comes out of the biography is Chanel's determination, drive, personal power, and creativity - characteristics that helped her follow her own mind and become "different" as a consequence. Too often in kid's literature and other media, children are exhorted to be "different" and "express themselves" without thinking about what they're doing, and they end up as conformists. Chanel was a thinker, and that made her different from all the other "different" people. By focusing on the word "different", the book sells itself a little short. Some aspects of Coco Chanel's life during WWII are considered morally questionable, but they've been left out of this book to render a narrative appropriate for children. This is fine for the age group it's targeted for, and the simple story in this book is most effective.

This is a short biography of Coco's life. It is not for kids. It is not cute or child friendly. The only thing about it that would be interesting for a child are the pictures but all in all it could have been done better. There are many other fashion based children's books that tell a better story and are really for children. If you are buying this for another adult it is not written well enough to be fun. I was sad I could not like it more.

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