

Books that might be paired with this one include *The London Jungle Book* by Bhajju Shyam (2014), *I Saw a Peacock with a Fiery Tale* by Ramsingh Urveti (2012), and *The Enduring Ark* by Joydeb Chitraker (2013). In each of these, the artist depends upon ancient, traditional art to convey the theme of the story.

Amrita Das is a young artist whose work frequently uses a theme of female freedom and choice. Her own autobiography reveals this theme as well. She strives for authenticity in her art as revealed at the beginning of the book where she creates a picture of her childhood only to state that her childhood was far from idyllic as perceived in her images. Her personal insights of the lives of many females in India is also considered realistic in contemporary society.

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Book Review: I am a Bear
Written by Jean-François Dumont
Translated by Leslie Matthews
Eerdmans, 2015, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9780802854476

I don't know how I got here . . . (n.p).

Bear finds himself alone in the city. He does not know how he got there or how to find help. People ignore him or worse, they run away from him. They do not listen to him before they judge him. As Bear becomes more and more disenfranchised from those around him, he is also more and more alienated from himself and the potential of who he is or could be—until he is seen by a young girl who does not fear him. From that moment, his life begins to change.

Jean-François Dumont has written and illustrated a powerful book about a homeless bear and a curious little girl, but astute readers will note the metaphor of homelessness and the possibilities that exist when one is visible to others—to see and be seen. Filled with engaging illustrations that take readers to the alley where Bear lives, to his hopelessness and confusion, and then to the possibility of hope, this lovely narrative reminds us that we all have the potential to see others and to acknowledge them as part of our community and the human family.

I am a Bear would make a terrific addition to a text set on the concept of alienation or disenfranchisement and what it means to be othered. Other books that would make thoughtful companions to this book could include *Like a Wolf* by Géraldine Eischner (2015) and Fiona Roberts' (2015) *A Tale of Two Beasts*, both of which highlight the importance of perception. *Like a Wolf* is more serious, but both would make wonderful additions to discussion starters on how our perceptions can be both damaging and beneficial to others. If interested in books about compassion, *I am a Bear* would make an interesting addition to a text set containing narratives such as *Thank You, Jackson: How One Little Boy Makes a BIG Difference* by Niki Daly (2015) and JonArno Lawson's (2015) *Sidewalk Flowers*, two books that show how even little actions can make a big difference within our communities. In addition, pairing this book with *The Lion and the Bird* by Marianne Dubuc (2014) would make for interesting discussions about friendship born out of helpfulness.

Jean-François Dumont lives in France and has written numerous books for young people, including *The Sheep Go on Strike* (2014), *The Geese March in Step* (2014), and *The Chickens Build a Wall* (2013). More information about Mr. Dumont can be found at Eerdmans.

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