



Maddi's Fridge

Written by Lois Brandt

Illustrated by Vin Vogel

Flashlight Press, 2014, 32 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1936261291

Maddi's Fridge is, at its heart, a story about friendship. Sophia and Maddi are friends, and one day after playing together, Sophia gets hungry and looks around Maddi's kitchen for a snack. When she opens Maddi's fridge, she is surprised to find only one carton of milk inside. Maddi acknowledges that her mother does not have enough money to purchase food. She makes Sophia promise not to tell anybody that her family does not have food. Sophia wants to keep her friend's secret even though it weighs heavy on her heart. Over the next several days Sophia attempts to bring Maddi food – fish (too stinky), eggs (too cracky), but finds out that some foods do not travel well in a backpack. Finally, Sophia tells her mother and breaks her promise to Maddi. Sofia and her mother buy groceries and take them to Maddi's house. Maddi's mother accepts the groceries and shares a cup of coffee with Sophia's mother while the two girls play together.

At the end of the story, Maddi's refrigerator is full of food. This resolution is not necessarily realistic. The groceries in the refrigerator are a quick fix to a much larger problem. In another week, Maddi's refrigerator will be empty again and her mother will still not have enough money to purchase more groceries. Despite the unrealistic happy ending, this book brings awareness to the plight of hunger in the United States. For children who live comfortably, this story provides an entry point to begin to understand and empathize with others who are struggling in some way. Hunger is a very real issue and made known through the story of Maddi and Sophia's friendship. In the Author's Note at the end of the book, Brandt provides suggestions for ways that people can help fight hunger.

The illustrations are a colorful digital cartoon style, depicting a diverse city neighborhood. Each illustration is charming and inviting with a muted palette of yellows, oranges and greens. Two books that could be paired with *Maddi's Fridge* are *Shoebox Sam* by Mary Brigid Barrett (2011) and *The Lunch Thief* by Anne C. Bromley (2010). Both of these books address homelessness and poverty. "Shoebox Sam" owns a shoe store on the corner of Magnolia and Vine where old shoes become like new and anybody in need can find a friend. *The Lunch Thief* addresses homelessness and hunger. Rafael's lunch is stolen at school and he knows who did it, but he decides to bide his time to address the issue and not pick a fight. However, later when Rafael is driving with his mother he sees Kevin, the new kid who took his lunch, carrying a bundle of laundry into a motel room. His mother tells him that many of the people in the motel lost their homes in the wildfires and Rafael decides to invite Kevin to share his lunch the next day rather than accuse Kevin of taking the lunch.

Maddi's Fridge has won numerous awards for both the story and the illustrations. Lois Brandt received the 2015 International Literacy Association Primary Fiction Award, a 2014 Christopher Award, nomination for the 2015/2016 Washington Children's Picture Book Award, nomination for the 2016 Nevada Young Readers' Award, Picture Book Category, a 2014 Top Mighty Girl Book For Younger Readers, 2015 Mitten Honor Book, and was an Anti-Defamation League Book of the Month. Vin Vogel won the 2014 Christopher Awards - Books for Young People for *Maddi's Fridge*.

Maddi's Fridge is Lois Brandt's first book and comes directly from her own experience. Lois, like Sophia, once looked in her best friend's refrigerator and found only one small carton of milk. In addition to her own writing and illustrating, Lois teaches writers of all ages to tell their stories. She lives close to Seattle, Washington, with her husband, kids, dogs, and cat. You can visit Lois at www.loisbrandt.com.

The illustrations in *Maddi's Fridge* are by Vin Vogel. Vogel is an author and illustrator originally from Brazil, though currently living in New York City. Vin has illustrated over 50 children's books to date. In addition to his book illustrations, he provides designs for a variety of print, animation, apparel, and web projects in Brazil, Canada, France and the U.S.

Megan McCaffrey, Governor's State University, Chicago, IL