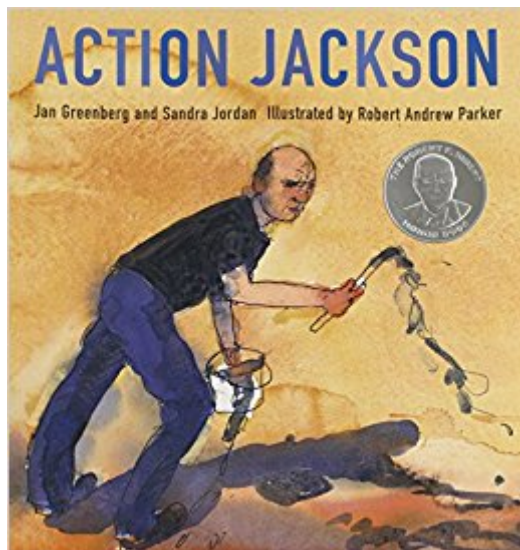


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Action Jackson



Synopsis

One late spring morning the American artist Jackson Pollock began work on the canvas that would ultimately come to be known as Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist). Award-winning authors Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan use this moment as the departure point for a unique picture book about a great painter and the way in which he worked. Their lyrical text, drawn from Pollock's own comments and those made by members of his immediate circle, is perfectly complemented by vibrant watercolors by Robert Andrew Parker that honor his spirit of the artist without imitating his paintings. A photographic reproduction of the finished painting, a short biography, a bibliography, and a detailed list of notes and sources that are fascinating reading in their own right make this an authoritative as well as beautiful book for readers of all ages. Action Jackson is a Sibert Honor Book, a New York Times Best Book of the Year, and a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year.

Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 10 years

Grade Level: 1 - 5

Customer Reviews

Nicknamed "Action Jackson" for his kinetic style, abstract artist Jackson Pollack takes the spotlight in this outstanding picture book biography. Collaborators Greenberg and Jordan (Chuck Close: Up Close) frame their account around a significant period in Pollack's life in 1950, when he created Number 1, 1950 (also called Lavender Mist), one of his most famous paintings. Readers follow Pollack into his barn studio, watch over his shoulder as he lays the canvas on the floor and begins

to work all the while learning about his early life and influences ("Like the Native American sand painters he saw as a boy out West, he moves around the canvas coaxing the paint into loops and curves"). Weaving in quotes from Pollack himself and such child-friendly details as the artist's pets (including a tame crow named Caw Caw), the authors craft an imaginative account grounded in solid research and enlivened with lyrical prose ("He swoops and leaps like a dancer, paint trailing from a brush that doesn't touch the canvas"). Parker (*To Fly*, reviewed below) suggests the artist's graceful motion with the barest of penstrokes; in one spread, Pollock's body curves across both pages as he paints. Whether capturing the intensity of the creative process and the artist's unique choreography or the spare vistas of sea and sky near the artist's Long Island home, Parker's impressionistic pen-and-watercolor illustrations pay homage to the painter's sweep of line and color ("energy and motion made visible," to quote Pollack). An extensive afterword offers notes and sources, as well as photos of Pollack at work and quotes from his friends and colleagues. Ages 6-10. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Grade 1-8-Greenberg and Jordan offer another remarkable book as they capture a two-month period during which Jackson Pollock created *Number 1, 1950, (Lavender Mist)*. Though only focusing on this one painting, the authors manage to include interesting and revealing details about Pollock's childhood influences, his pets, his studio, and his environment. The active tense of the text lends immediacy and liveliness to the subject, "an athlete with a paintbrush" who "swoops and leaps like a dancer." Quotes from Pollock himself reveal his distinctive artistic process. The thoughtfulness and care that went into his painting should effectively put to rest any of the "I could do that" skepticism his art sometimes evokes. The authors remark on the widely varying responses to Pollock's work, and make note of his seminal place in 20th-century American art. Parker's watercolor illustrations capture the spirit of the text: dynamic as Pollock dances/paints, more introspective as he sits on the beach, watching the gulls. This is an exemplary picture-book biography, with lyrical prose and appealing illustrations that capture the moods of its subject, plus fascinating biographical details, photographs, and source notes. The text is accessible enough for younger readers to appreciate if read aloud and lively enough to appeal to older readers, who just might be inspired to learn more about the artist. Robin L. Gibson, Perry County District Library, New Lexington, OH Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

this book portrays an imaginative reenactment of Pollack creating a famous work. The art is well done. I used this to give an art lesson to a bilingual classroom of first graders (1/2 English 1/2 Spanish speakers) They enjoyed the story and creating their own action paintings. The book contains a biographical section at the end including photos of the painter as a boy.

Great book, simple enough for kids but with enough detail to be used in a classroom. Beautiful illustrations to go with the story of how Jackson made his paintings. I read this to my students before we did our own drip paintings and they all listened intently during the story.

This is a wonderful picture book in which the two writers and one illustrator imagine what it was like for Jackson Pollack to think about and then create one of his paintings -- specifically, "Number One, 1950 (Lavender Mist)." It's fascinating to watch Jackson go into "action" as he twists and turns his body in order to better throw paint on the canvas and continue the "line" he seeks. It's also fascinating to read about the influences on Jackson (Indian sand painting, for one). The authors imagine with great insight and respect and create a wonderful book. I particularly like turning one of the final pages and encountering the painting that Jackson works on throughout the book: very dramatic.

Very cute book- has a lot of good info on Jackson Pollock and what his daily life was like. Took me about 15 minutes to read and discuss with my class before creating a Pollock-inspired artwork.

I was hoping it would have better illustrations. We will see how it works out.

I probably enjoyed this more than my six year old son, but it's a good book anyway. Maybe could have made it a little more interesting for a child's imagination but worth buying. Great artwork.

This book is an unusual children's book and about a character whose artwork will appeal to children. Although his life is not an uplifting story, the book picks up on the important parts and gives a feeling for what "Action Jackson" was all about. His freedom to create what he wanted and put his feeling on canvas is an important message to children who need to know that there are many ways to be creative. That is it is OK to put their feeling into their art without worrying about whether it is "right" or "good". It is a quiet book about an artist who was quiet but whose life was certainly active as was his art.

When modern art is brought to the table, the question for the untrained is quite often: Is this art? What makes art? Can I do this? For such questions, answers always vary. It is art if you think it is art even if it may not be good art. The final consensus is that it is art if it challenges and sustains. Such art is universally held to be art. Early on, modern art broke tradition, broke stereotypes, and set the art world on its heels. Until this time artists tried to capture a realistic experience--people, objects, landscapes--and put them on canvas. The moderns were the first to ignore the boundaries of the canvas. In fact, iconoclasts that they were, they acknowledged the confines of the canvas and its two-dimensional world and started experimenting with new techniques. The Impressionistic painters were the first, then the Post-Impressionistic painters went jumps ahead. Instead of painting broad realistic pictures, they began defying shapes, colors, time. Jackson Pollock represents one segment of this new modern art, that which is called "action painting," or "spatter painting." This book, "Action Jackson," details Jackson's technique of creating art and making the viewer feel and appreciate his vision and told simply enough for a child to understand. How did Jackson work? He lay out a huge canvas on the floor of his studio, studied it, then spattered house paint across it--directly from the can, from a stick, a brush. He worked over a series of days to get everything just right. His vision was to lay out colors and patterns and the intermixing of colors and patterns to create a canvas that spoke of something more cosmic than a bowl of apples. For Jackson the process of painting said as much as the final product. This book beautifully conveys the idea of his vision and his process and his final product. I never dreamed a writer and an illustrator could capture the essence of Pollock's work in one thin children's book, but this most definitely does. Perhaps the success of this book in capturing Jackson's style and work earned it an Honor Award in the Robert F. Siebert contest, and a New York Times Best Book of the Year, and a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year. "Action Jackson" was published in 2002. Jackson Pollock died in a car crash in 1956.

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