Picturebook

words

Main Text: 840

NORMAN’S WAY

By

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Pages 2-3

Norman always seemed to do the unexpected. It was just HIS way. When he came into the world his mother had expected a baby girl. But her baby was a boy and she named him Norman Percival Rockwell.

Pages 4-5

Everyone expected Norman to be good at sports like his older brother. But that wasn’t his way. Norman couldn’t hit a baseball or kick a football if his life depended on it. When he raced he ALWAYS came in last.

Pages 6-7

Norman noticed that even his looks were different.

“I look like a beanpole”

“My neck is too long”

“My Adam’s apple is too big.”

“I have spaghetti arms.”

Sometimes he wished he could just be like everyone else.

Pages 8-9

*Getting good grades could do it!* Norman thought.

But when he worked on his sums, the numbers looked backwards, sideways and upside down.

When Norman had to read in the front of his class, he wanted to hide his head under his shirt and turn himself inside out.

Pages 10-11

Norman worried that everyone would think that he was like the tail end of a coin. A loser.

So, he did silly things like talk from the side of his mouth, wiggle his ears, stick out his tongue, and snort milk out his nose.

Sometimes he got out of his seat in class and did a little jig.

EVERYONE thought he was a clown.

Pages 12-13

But on family nights when Papa read the stories of Charles Dickens aloud, Norman closed his eyes and stepped into the tales. The gloomy room came alive with the chatter and clatter of old London streets.

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Then, Norman drew!

…Old-fashioned Englishmen tipping their tall hats.

…street orphans begging for bread.

…ghosts rattling chains.

If the stories were too scary with pirates and villains, he drew them in silly ways and made his pictures funny. Just the opposite of what anyone else would do!

Pages 14-15

Norman thought that if he worked harder at drawing he would get better at it. So he drew. Then he erased and smudged and erased and smudged again until each detail was perfect. It was just his way.

Pages 16-17

Norman couldn’t read a lick without tripping over his words, but when his friends cried out, “Norm, draw us a lion…draw us a fire engine” he yanked chalk from his pocket and let his imagination fly. *A yellow-eyed lion prowled the Serengeti...streaks of red swirled as fire trucks raced-bells clanged, angry flames leaped.*

Norman covered the sidewalk with his art.

Pages 18-19

In class he did the opposite of paying attention to his lessons. Doodles squirmed around the columns of his schoolbooks. No paper was safe from his pencil. His sketchbooks burst open with drawings.

 *“Stop that Norman!”*

*“No more drawing, Norman!”*

*“Put that pencil away and do your math!”*

Pages 20-21

One of Norman’s teachers thought his drawings were pretty good and she came up with a plan. "Come to the board and draw a Christmas picture for us!"

In history class, Norman drew pioneers sweating on the Oregon Trail and George Washington on the march. For science he created murals of birds, lions, and elephants so detailed they almost seemed to breathe.

Even the popular kids liked Norman’s way of doing things.

Pages 22-23

It occurred to Norman that when he grew up he didn’t have to become what was expected. He didn't want to be a clerk like his father. Or, a fireman like the neighbor who

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lived down the street. He could do things his way.

“I’m going to become a first rate artist!”

Pages 24-25

When Norman Perceval Rockwell turned 14, he decided to go to art school.

“I'm going to devote all my time to art.”

His father gasped. “You’re going to quit high school?”

His mother moaned, “You’ll end up starving to death in an attic.”

But Norman had made up his mind.

He worked hard and saved his money so he could pay his own way.

…He raked leaves.

…He had a mail route.

…He painted Christmas cards.

He tutored kids in French, even though he didn’t speak it!

Pages 26-27

As the youngest student in art school Norman wore short pants while everyone else wore long.

Some students skipped classes or grumbled about difficult assignments, but Norman never complained about the long hours and hard work.

The older students even stopped calling him *Kid* when he learned to paint like the Old Masters. No one mentioned his spaghetti arms or noticed that he couldn’t kick a football.

Norman no longer felt like the *tail end of a coin* and the world opened up for him.

Pages 28-29

Norman followed his own dreams. He became an illustrator and told stories in his paintings.

He painted kids living in the country and fishing all day.

He painted big happy families with perfect moms and dads.

He painted boys playing football, even with spaghetti arms.

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Norman Rockwell became one of America’s most beloved artists. He received many fan letters from people who told him how much they loved his work.

He paid special attention to writing back to kids. The illustrator of this book was one of them!

Pages 30-31

Norman Rockwell

"The Dickens of the Paintbrush"

*“It is no exaggeration to say simply that Norman Rockwell is the most popular, the most loved, of all contemporary artists...he himself is like a gallery of Rockwell paintings–friendly, human, deeply American, varied in mood, but full, always, of the zest of living.”*

–Ben Hibbs, Saturday Evening Post Editor

Norman Perceval Rockwell’s life spanned the Gilded Age, The Klondike Gold Rush, the Depression, two World Wars, and the glory days of the American Space Age. He was born February 3, 1894 in New York City. Norman's older brother, Jarvis, was athletic and popular. Norman felt awkward and neglected. He felt that he didn’t fit in. As a child he was frail, shy and in many accounts, he had dyslexia, which made reading and doing arithmetic difficult.

From an early age Norman showed artistic promise and it garnered him the attention he craved. In 1908 he enrolled part time at the Chase School of Art, now the New York School of Art, when he was just 14 years old. He later quit high school and attended the National Academy of Design and The Art Students League. As an illustrator, he told stories through his art but the stories did not represent his own life. Norman’s paintings often showed happy children in big families with perfect moms and dads, and idealized images of rural life and kids at play.

The growth of magazine publishing created many opportunities for illustrators. By the time Norman was 17 years old he got his first job in 1911 illustrating a children's' book. He painted covers for Boy’s Life, and became the art director of that magazine while he was still a teenager. In 1916, he sold his first cover to The Saturday Evening Post, a magazine that printed some four million copies weekly.

Norman’s work quickly become popular, but he was plagued with anxiety and self-doubt. He spent weeks, even months, getting his pictures to look just right. An excellent observer of everyday life, he captured the details, expressions and gestures of ordinary

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people getting haircuts or going to the dentist.

Norman continued to paint covers for the Saturday Evening Post and other magazines including Look, McCall’s and Ladies Home Journal during the forties and fifties. He

became one of the best-known illustrators of the twentieth century.

Throughout his life, he was concerned with political issues and social injustice. When the United States entered World War II, Norman wanted to help with the war effort. He painted four canvases to represent values that Americans were fighting for: freedom of

speech, freedom to worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Under the title, The Four Freedoms, the paintings were shown around the country and raised millions of dollars in war bond sales.

Norman also addressed important concerns such as integration, civil rights, poverty, and the Vietnam War, as well as triumphs such as humankind’s journey into space. Even when he tackled serious topics his paintings had a sense of hope and optimism.

Over the course of his career Norman Rockwell created more than four thousand images. The hardworking, optimistic, and oftentimes humorous characters in his illustrations represented the best of what it meant to be an American. In 1977 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for "vivid and affectionate portraits of our country."

By the time of his death in 1978, his work was beloved by millions. Some critics complained that it was sentimental and idealized. Others pointed out that he was simply an illustrator, not a fine artist. But in 1999 a selection of his work was taken on tour to such respected galleries as the San Diego Museum of Art and the Guggenheim. The tour was a huge success. Original Rockwell paintings now sell in the millions of dollars.

Rockwell was the people’s painter. He reflected the ideals that Americans held dear even in times of suffering such as the Depression and World War II. His familiar images are part of the American consciousness. When he was asked to explain his art, he simply said, "I showed the America I knew and observed to others who might not have noticed."