

ABOUT

the Author

MICHELLE MARKEL is the author of many children's books, including *Tyrannosaurus Math* (Tricycle/Random House) and *Dreamer from the Village: The Story of Marc Chagall* (Henry Holt). Michelle lives in California. Visit her website at www.michellemarkel.com.

the Illustrator

AMANDA HALL has illustrated many books for children, including *Tales From India* (Candlewick), *Prince of the Birds* (Frances Lincoln), *The Barefoot Book of Animal Tales* (Barefoot Books), and *The Stolen Sun* (Eerdmans). Amanda lives in England. Visit her website at www.amandahall-illustration.com.



PRAISE FOR

The Fantastic Jungles of Henri Rousseau

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— *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Markel's simple, poetic text . . . is matched with Hall's vivid, venturesome illustrations. The bright watercolor and acrylic paintings have an impressive vitality and wonderfully channel Rousseau's fantastic motifs."

— *Kirkus Reviews*

THE FANTASTIC JUNGLES OF HENRI ROUSSEAU

Written by Michelle Markel

Illustrated by Amanda Hall

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If you have any suggestions for using *The Fantastic Jungles of Henri Rousseau* with young readers, we would be happy to hear from you.

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THE FANTASTIC JUNGLES OF HENRI ROUSSEAU

Written by
Michelle Markel

Illustrated by
Amanda Hall



*Henri Rousseau wants to be an artist.
Not a single person has ever told him he is talented.
He can't afford to go to art school.
He's a toll collector, forty years old.
But he buys some canvas, paint, and brushes,
and starts painting anyway.*

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ Art
- ❖ Biography
- ❖ Creativity / Imagination
- ❖ Persistence
- ❖ Courage

*Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
Discussion Guide*

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1. Henri Rousseau's name is pronounced *ahn-ree roo-soh*.
2. Look up the word naïve in the dictionary. How might this word describe the art on the cover of this book?
3. What are your favorite subjects to draw or paint? Are they subjects from real life, or from your imagination? What do you think might have inspired Henri Rousseau to paint?



VOCABULARY

Use an online or print dictionary to look up the meanings of the following words: talented, satiny, latticed, anatomy, exhibition, hothouse, rosette, frayed, tenderly.



QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AFTER READING THE BOOK

1. Henri learns about anatomy by studying illustrations on postcards, magazines, and catalogues. Have you ever learned about something with no one else's help? What did you do to find out more about it? What did you find most difficult about teaching yourself?

2. When Henri goes to the greenhouse he feels like "someone else completely," as if he's in a dream. Do you have a favorite place to go that feels different from everywhere else in the world? What does it feel like to go there?

3. Henri keeps painting even after the experts say that his art is terrible. Have you ever had someone criticize something you do? Did you keep doing it, or did you quit? Why do you think Henri continued painting even after everyone else made fun of him?

4. In the illustration that shows Henri examining postcards and magazines with a magnifying glass, why do you think the illustrator chose to show him floating?

5. In the illustration where Henri wheels his paintings in a cart to the exhibition, he is very small and the critics who judge the paintings are enormous in comparison. Why do you think the illustrator chose to represent them this way?



ACTIVITIES

1. Henri Rousseau often painted jungles full of wild animals and huge plants and flowers, though he never traveled outside of Paris during his lifetime. Choose a place you're interested in but have never been to, and draw yourself in the middle of it. Use your imagination to guess what

it would be like. Make one element of the picture larger or smaller or more colorful than it would normally be. What did you choose, and why? How did your drawing of this object change the way you see it?

2. On the pages of the book showing the concert at Henri's home and the banquet for Henri thrown by Picasso, several of the guests are famous artists and writers. Look at the listing of their names in the back of the book. Choose one to research and, using an encyclopedia or online resources, find out what kind of work they did and how they knew Rousseau.

3. Henri Rousseau received support and encouragement from other artists living in Paris at the time. Form your own art club and invite your friends to share drawings and paintings with one another. Tell each other what you like about their work and what you find unusual or interesting.

4. Amanda Hall has cleverly incorporated elements from Rousseau's paintings into her illustrations. Find a website that shows pictures of Henri Rousseau's paintings, and see if you can find elements of his paintings in any of the book's illustrations. How many can you find? Can you identify any of the paintings that are hanging on the wall in the illustration of the concert at Henri's home?