

Famous Seaweed Soup

Antoinette Truglio Martin

Penny Weber, Illustrator

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A plucky, ignored little girl on the beach makes her own fun in the upbeat picture book Famous Seaweed Soup.

In Antoinette Truglio Martin's sunny picture book *Famous Seaweed Soup*, a young beachcomber dishes up a make-believe concoction.

Sara is on a trip to the bay with her parents and baby sister. But everyone is too busy setting themselves up on the beach to help her. Armed with a trusty yellow pail, she decides to find ingredients, from two types of seaweed to snails, by herself.

The book echoes a classic format: a prompting question and answer fuel its action. In this case, Sara asks, "Who will help me?" and her parents respond with different reasons for needing to say "Not I," from being occupied with feeding the baby to making sandwiches or applying sunblock and untangling a fishing line. Each instance of "Not I" is met with Sara's pluck in meeting her own needs.

Sara's independence is also illustrated through artwork that showcases her spiritedness: she stands with her hands on her hips, expresses determination and glee, and crosses her arms and "cooks" her soup with relish, adding items that she gathered along the way. The beach's green-blue waters further draw out the seaweed theme. And fun details dial up Sara's imaginary cookery: her snails have barnacles on them and are called "a delicacy among Famous Seaweed soup lovers," and she takes a pinch-of-this, pinch-of-that approach to perfecting the dish.

However, shadowy placements throughout the illustrations resemble bruising. And on the pages, the text is sometimes crowded too near to images of people, resulting in a busy sensibility that is at odds with the airy, relaxed beach setting. The familiar course that the story takes leads to a quiet ending.

In the straightforward picture book *Famous Seaweed Soup*, a girl collects beach treasures to share with her family.

KAREN RIGBY (July 8, 2023)

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