

Desiderata

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This popular philosophical statement is neither anonymous nor ancient, having both an author and a fairly recent date. Nonetheless, what it says remains timeless. Illustrated by an award-winning artist/designer, here is a poem that sees clear an eternal truth. Line drawings.

Max Ehrmann was an attorney turned philosopher-poet who live in Terre Haute, Ind. He spent his life wrestling with the realities of making a living and following his personal calling to a life of poetry, literature, and thought. He wrote A Prayer, which became a message of hope for thousands, but he is best known for Desiderata, which he wrote for himself,

"because it counsels those virtues I felt myself most in need of." Max included this work as part of a personal Christmas greeting in 1933, and Desiderata's power and appeal have continued to reach out to and significantly affect readers ever since. He died in 1945. Grade 6 Up-Ehrmann's well-known inspirational work, written in 1927, offers cogent advice on how to live at peace with oneself. This edition is distinguished by Tauss's striking photographs, most of which show children and adults of different cultures. Each of the images captures the essence of the passage it accompanies. For instance, the opening sentence ("Go placidly/amid the noise and haste./and remember what peace/there may be in silence") is matched with a scene of a deserted city street that brilliantly creates a sense of stillness. Lines on the timelessness of love ("Especially do not feign affection./Neither be cynical/about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment/it is as perennial as the grass") are accompanied by one photo that shows parents and children nestled in bed, and another of them engaged in a pillow fight. Perhaps the most memorable illustration shows a boy and a girl set against a galaxy of stars. This complements the life-affirming statement, "You/are/a child/of the/universe,/no less than the trees and the stars:/you have a right to be here." All of the photos are well composed and have a dreamy quality, suffused with a soft light. However, while the pictures have intergenerational appeal, the vocabulary employed and the philosophy expressed in the text are adult in nature.

Karey Wehner, formerly at San Francisco Public Library

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Other Books

New York Public Library, Slavic and Baltic Division's Catalog of Desiderata for Russian Imperial Periodicals.

? ? ? ? ? . Desiderata for Russian Imperial Periodicals . New York : S & B Division , 2000.81pp . (vol in the additions to our printed catalogs) Note : in RLIN notations , " fragmentary " means."