

KIRKUS REVIEW

Is another picture book about Ben Franklin really needed?

The answer is yes, as unlike many of its predecessors, this one takes a fresh approach by focusing on a single childhood fascination—swimming. As a boy, Ben was unusual in that he loved to swim at a time when it was thought that swimming caused sickness. Ben's frustration was that he could not swim like a fish, and true to his nature, he searched for a solution, one that would enable him to swim like a fish. He first made swim fins out of wood and string (they looked like a painter's palettes), then swim sandals. Emphatic, alliterative verbs accentuate both his enthusiasm and his methodical nature: “Ben **SPRINTED** straight to the river, **STOOD** on the bank, **STRIPPED OFF** his clothes, **STRAPPED** his feet into the sandals, **STUCK** his thumbs back in the swim fins, **SPREAD** his arms wide, **STOMPED** his feet, and **SPLASHED IN.**” This first discovery would lead to bigger and better scientific creations. The finely detailed ink-and-watercolor illustrations, varying type sizes and colors, and clever page design effectively and delightfully depict this significant American scientist. (Schindler deftly keeps Ben's privates underwater.) While the subtitle claims the book is “*mostly true*,” the backmatter provides solid information.

As inventive as Ben himself, this presentation is awash with delight and definitely makes a *big splash*. (author's note, timeline, sources, source notes) (*Picture book/biography. 6-9*)