

Title	The Story of Ferdinand				
Author (Text & Illustration)	Munro Leaf				
Publication Year	1936	Publisher	Grosset & Dunlap		
Translated Versions	Japanese translation available.				
Words	737	Pages	32	YLLevel	1.5
Synopsis					
<p>The story takes place in Spain and the main character, Ferdinand, is an eccentric bull who loves flowers and prefers spending his time alone on the ranch unlike his friends who dream of bullfighting. However, in an unexpected turn of events, he is mistaken for a fierce bull and is forcibly taken to a bullring. Still, Ferdinand refuses to fight until the end and is reluctantly returned to his ranch.</p>					
Introduction					
<p>This famous picture book was referenced by the American film <i>The Blind Side</i> (2009) and was also made into an animation. Since it was first published two months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Ferdinand's refusal to fight was praised for its pacifist message. (Conversely, it was also criticized for having a weak stance.) Although the author himself denied any political agenda, in light of the situation during the time of the Spanish Civil War, the men who came to inspect the bulls for the bullfights appeared to correspond to the European powers that surrounded Spain. There are exactly five of these men who seem to personify Germany, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and Italy, consequently making this theory very plausible. These interpretations and claims in relation to pacifism are also interesting and bullfighting itself is a highly debatable topic from the perspective of animal welfare and the preservation of tradition.</p> <p>However, amongst the various interpretations and opinions, it is the idea of living with a sense of "being different from everyone else" that really grabbed my attention. Ideally, everyone's individuality must be embraced and not all bulls are meant to be in the bullring, but the reality is that it is not always easy to accept oneself as being different from others. We all have felt, to some degree, the discomfort of living in a society with social norms that enforce stereotypes of masculinity and femininity or even elicit bullying. Ferdinand, who embraces his own identity without worrying about what others think of him, is brilliantly self-assured and a true role model for our time.</p> <p>The black-and-white illustrations are also very expressive and playful. Spain and Portugal</p>					

are famous for their cork production and under the shade of a cork tree is Ferdinand's favorite place to be. The illustration depicts a cork stopper hanging on the tree. The expression on Ferdinand's face when he appears in the bullring is a sight to behold. Having a sense of humor is also an important factor that can bring comfort to your daily life.

Notes

Part of this text is a substantially revised version of the draft frontispiece, "Seeking Inspirational Picture Books" [Ehon o Sagashini] [10] from "English Teachers' Magazine" January 2020 (Vol. 68, No.11), TAISHUKAN Publishing Co., Ltd.

(Text: Megumi Kobayashi)