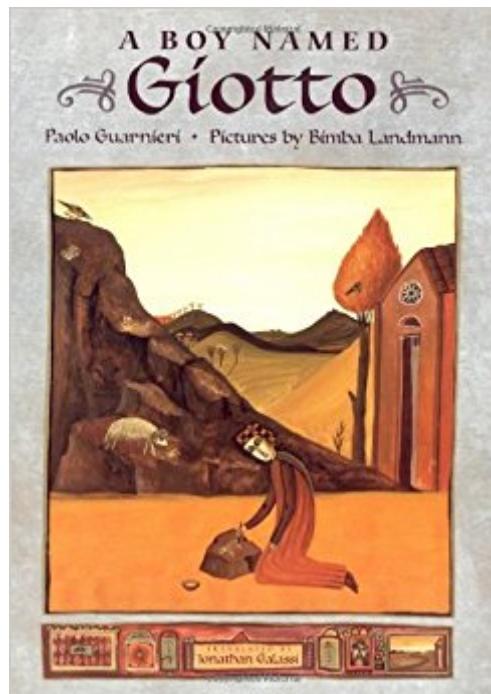


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# A Boy Named Giotto



## **Synopsis**

A sparkling celebration of the pre-Renaissance master Centuries ago, a shepherd boy drew pictures of his sheep in the sand and on stones. Today, everyone knows him as Giotto, the pre-Renaissance master whose magnificent frescoes illuminate the Church of St. Francis in Assisi and the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. In *A Boy Named Giotto*, Paolo Guarnieri tells a story of how young Giotto might have been apprenticed to the great master Cimabue and taught how to paint frescoes. In legendary fashion, Cimabue, as any other artist of the times might have done, realizes that the student has outdone the master and will subsequently find a permanent place of honor in the history of art. Bimba Landmann's stunning paintings, with highlights of glittering gilt, call to mind the work of Giotto but exude a style that is distinctly Landmann's own.

## **Book Information**

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Age Range: 5 and up

Grade Level: Kindergarten and up

## **Customer Reviews**

"In the pasture, instead of keeping watch over the flock, Giotto spends his time sketching." He may not be much of a shepherd, but this talented 8-year-old boy doesn't have to remain one for long; after timidly introducing himself to the painter Cimabue, he becomes the Florentine painter's protégé--and before long Cimabue looks at Giotto's work and thinks, "the pupil has outdone the master." The present tense lends immense vitality to this simple exercise in biography, written by Italian art critic Paolo Guarnieri and translated by Jonathan Galassi. The lively, immediate story is perfectly matched by the stunning paintings of Guarnieri's wife, Bimba Landmann, which imitate the

style of the great pre-Renaissance master while maintaining their own absolutely modern flavor. Children who find themselves absorbed in drawing, music, or any project other than the one at hand will find young Giotto's story inspirational. (Click to see a sample spread. Copyright 1998 by Edizioni Arka, Milano. With permission of the publisher, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.) (Ages 7 and older)  
--Richard Farr

The spare, mellifluous quality of first-time children's book author Guarnieri's prose is matched only by the fluidity of line and stark perspectives in Landmann's paintings, which emulate the work of their subject. The author focuses on the makings of the artist from boyhood and concludes with Giotto's pivotal pilgrimage to Assisi, where his frescoes are still revered today. He characterizes the shepherd boy cum master painter as both gifted and driven from the first. Growing up in pre-Renaissance Italy, young Giotto takes the family's sheep to pasture each morning and spends the day sketching pictures of everything he sees on stones and in the sand. After viewing Cimabue's Madonna with Child being carried in a procession, Giotto becomes determined to confide his burning desire to the painter. Cimabue warmly receives Giotto and teaches him to mix pigments from minerals and plants. When the painter later sees the boy's rendering of a sheep he exclaims, "No painter I know has ever succeeded in making a creature look so alive." Giotto's parents then agree to allow the boy to study with Cimabue in Florence when he is old enough. Landmann's (Journey into the Blue Night) gilded, fresco-like paintings shimmer in earth tones. He authentically depicts the stylized landscapes and the flat perspectives of Giotto's time. For aspiring artists and art buffs alike. Ages 5-up. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I couldn't get this book at the library, as our library system did not have it. I considered not purchasing it, but I couldn't be happier that I did. The book is geared toward a young student, about second grade, however; my ten year old loved it. It was quick and fun. The information provided in the story was educational as well. The pictures were fantastic. The illustrator did a wonderful job. The pages are full of gold ink that shimmer when they hit the light. A high quality book, and a great find! It is definitely a keeper!

This is a beautiful book. We are studying illumination in school and this was the perfect childrens story about a master illuminator.

ordered for school. very nice book

Great book to go along with our study of Giotto.

My son loved to read the book it was very artistic and interesting for him. It was a lively book for a kid to read.

Our 5-year-old twins received this book from their grandmother ("Nonna"), and absolutely loved it. The most amazing thing was that about a week later, they were in the grocery store with their mother, and they saw the cover of LIFE magazine. They immediately recognized it as a Giotto fresco, and informed their mother, who had not noticed it. We bought a copy (of course) and had to call Nonna and tell her all about it. I can think of no better way that we could be instilling an appreciation and knowledge of art in our children.

I picked this up for a read-aloud because I'm an art history nerd (not a geek, just a nerd), and I wanted to introduce my youngest to "Giotto Eyes." The illustrations were a lovely homage to Giotto's style without being copycats. The story itself was a little predictable (mean dad doesn't want son to be an artist but Obi-Wan, I mean Cimabue comes along and calls forth the prodigy etc etc). Still, it was a nice little story and a great way to introduce young eyes to Florentine frescoes.

Beautiful illustrations accompany the story of Giotto, an eight-year-old shepherd-boy who had a natural talent for drawing. The story begins with a daydreaming Giotto, a sheep-shepherd boy, who draws on anything he can find such as rocks and in dirt, and with anything he can find, such as chalk or charcoal. His talents go unnoticed by his family and he is scolded for neglecting his shepherding duties, which at one point in the story, resulted in losing a lost sheep. He meets the painter, Cimabue, and learns that there is such a thing as paint and the people paint on wood panels just for the sake of making art. Cimabue asks Giotto's parents to let him become his apprentice and they refuse. Giotto is kept shepherding sheep at home for seven more years, and then his parents let him receive art instruction from Cimabue. Cimabue teaches Giotto how to paint a fresco (not an easy task) and as the book closes, we see Giotto going on to start a new assignment: painting the fresco at a church dedicated to Saint Francis. The story ends there, nothing more is said of how his life turned out and of the many wonderful works of art he produced, or that this sheep shepherd born in poverty ended up a wealthy man. Some parents may not like that the parents come across in a negative way when they refuse to let their eight year old boy leave

them to go into apprenticeship with Cimabue. The father states he wants him to stay home to work as a shepherd (with no positive messages about the value of a child helping their family make a living). The mother says she feels he is too young, and for some reason, it comes across in an overly protective way. I got the impression that the parents were being stupid not to let their very talented son leave for an apprenticeship at age eight. Nothing is said to indicate that the next seven years that he remained with his family to work and mature was a good thing. In other words this is not portrayed as a positive work ethic/helping the family type of situation. Another moral issue that a parent may take with this story is that Giotto meets Cimabue when he sneaks out of his house after being grounded as punishment for losing a sheep; Giotto's entire future was changed for the better as the result of not respecting his father's authority. I mention these, as I know some parents will take issue with these moral issues. This is a wonderful story, especially for the message that young children can have natural talents that can be valued by people, and that if natural talent is combined with further training, wonderful works of art, and fame, may be achieved. The illustrations are just beautiful. I was disappointed that the beginning of the story didn't even state the time period or location. Since this is a true story why not have the opening sentence contain the place and time that this happened? Children who don't know anything (yet) about Giotto will have no clue as to the time period that this is taking place in, or where. Perhaps it would be best if the child receive some background information about Giotto before they read or hear this book read aloud. Since the book does not contain any reproductions of Giotto's work, I suggest following up by showing the child(ren) some of his actual work (some can be viewed on the internet for free). Usually nonfiction books like this are followed by an afterward or some author's notes containing more detailed factual information that the parent or teacher can read and then discuss with the child(ren). Unfortunately this book does not provide that. For these reasons I give the book 4 stars instead of 5.

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