The Boy Who *Sells Rainbow Fish*

by Adam G.





Every morning, Joseph went to the market.

“Blue fish!” called one fisherman.

“Red fish!” called the other.

Their fish flicked and splished in two big tubs.



“Red or blue, Joseph?”

Joseph stood between the stalls.

He looked left. He looked right. He looked left again.

Even the seagulls seemed to squawk, “Red or blue!”



Some days, Joseph chose red.

Some days, he chose blue.

After a while, whenever he thought of fish, he saw only two colours.



Until one evening, when he lay in bed and closed his eyes.

The market grew quiet in his head.

Behind his closed eyes was a sea with no stalls.

And something bright was swimming in it.



It had a red nose. An orange belly. Yellow spots.

Green fins. Blue stripes.

And a purple tail that wiggled like a ribbon.

A rainbow fish!



Joseph opened his eyes.
Then he shut them again, quickly.
He wanted another look.



The next morning, Joseph ran to the market with a drawing.

“Today, I’m looking for THIS!”

The first fisherman leaned closer.

The second turned the paper upside down.



“Never caught one,” said the first.

“Never sold one,” said the second.

“Then I won’t buy a fish today,” said Joseph. “I’m going to look for a rainbow one.”



On the way home, Joseph tugged Grandma's sleeve.

"What if there aren't any?"

Grandma looked past the market, towards the water.

"Those are two little stalls," she said. "That is a very big sea."



Joseph looked too.

He had never thought about it that way.



So Joseph and Grandma went fishing.

Joseph brought a little net, a bucket, and his picture.





On Monday, he caught seaweed.

On Tuesday, he caught a boot.



On Wednesday, he caught a crab that refused to leave the boot.

“Keep it,” Joseph told the crab. “It suits you.”

But there was no rainbow fish.



By Thursday, Joseph's shoulders drooped.
He sat on the pier beside Grandma.
"Perhaps I should just choose red."
"You can," she said.



Joseph looked at his drawing. The purple tail had a muddy thumbprint.

Then he looked at the sea.

“Could we try somewhere else first?”

Grandma picked up the bucket. “Where shall we look?”



They followed the shore to a little cove.

Joseph saw green pools.

Yellow sand.

Purple shells.



He crouched beside a pool and peered in.

Two tiny blue fish darted under a stone.

Joseph waited.

Then something flashed behind them. Red. Yellow. Purple.



“GRANDMA!”

SPLASH!

Joseph’s net hit the water.

The colours disappeared.



Joseph stared into the pool. Nothing.

He lifted his net. Still nothing.

This time, he sat very still.



A shrimp tickled his toe. He did not splash.
A gull squawked overhead. He did not shout.
And slowly... from beneath a rock...
a purple tail peeked out.



Joseph lowered his net. Waited. Then lifted it.

Inside was a fish with a red nose, an orange belly, yellow spots, green fins, blue stripes, and—

"A PURPLE TAIL!"



Grandma nearly dropped the bucket.

Joseph gently slipped the fish into the seawater inside it.

The fish gave one enormous wiggle.

Joseph gave one enormous wiggle too.



At the market, everyone gathered around his bucket.

“A rainbow fish!” “Where did you find it?”

“In the sea,” said Joseph.

“OUR sea?” asked the fishermen. “Our sea!”



Both fishermen looked towards the water.

For a moment, nobody said a word.

Then the rainbow fish splashed them.



That night, Joseph closed his eyes again.

This time, he saw a little stall.

His little stall.

People stood around it, choosing rainbow fish.



By morning, he had drawn that too.

Grandma found an old wooden crate.

One fisherman brought a plank. The other brought a spare net.

Joseph painted the sign himself. It was gloriously crooked.



JOSEPH'S RAINBOW FISH

At first, his stall held one bucket.

Then two.

Then three.



Joseph learned where the rainbow fish swam, when they came close, and how to lift his net gently.

Some mornings, he found none.

Some mornings, his buckets shimmered.



People began coming from villages far away.
"Is this where Joseph sells the rainbow fish?" they asked.



Now, when Joseph went to the market, there were three stalls.

Red fish. Blue fish. Rainbow fish.

He loved watching people stop in front of his.

They always looked twice.



One morning, a little girl came along.
She looked at the red fish. She looked at the blue fish.
She looked at the rainbow fish.
Then she frowned.



"Haven't you got a fish with stars on it?"
Joseph almost said, "You have to choose one of these."
The words were right there on his tongue.



Then he remembered his little drawing. And the boot. And the purple tail beneath the rock.

"I haven't found one," he said. The girl's face fell.

"Yet," Joseph added.

Her eyes grew wide.



"What would it look like?" he asked.

The little girl closed her eyes.

Joseph waited.



Then he shuffled his buckets along, making a little space beside his stall.

Just in case.

After all, it was a very big sea.

Three questions to explore together

1. If you had a stall beside Joseph's, what would you put in it?

2. What could you try if your first idea didn't work?

3. What do you imagine when you close your eyes?

The End

