

Small Worlds

Illustrations by Peter Sís

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Born in Czechoslovakia in 1949, Peter Sís showed an early affinity for drawing and painting. His family tolerated this to the extent of allowing him to decorate the furniture and fixtures of the house. He attended the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague and created paintings as well as animated films before spending a year at the Royal College of Art in London. After creating animation and designing for movie companies in Los Angeles, he moved to New York in 1984 to pursue a career in children's book illustration.

He became a frequent contributor of illustrations to periodicals, including the *New York Times* editorial page. He also illustrated other people's books, including Sid Fleischman's Newbery award-winning 1986 novel, *The Whipping Boy*. In 1987 Sís published *Rainbow Rhino*, the first book he wrote and illustrated.

Exploration is a recurring theme in these books. Sís emphasizes both the thrill of discovery and the dedication that explorers must have to disregard conventional beliefs and the possibility that their explorations will go differently than expected. Sís's books are filled with the imagery of the countries that inspire them, from the baroque ornaments of *Starry Messenger* and *Follow the Dream*, to the Buddhist iconography of *Tibet*. Throughout these books the power of imagination is revealed as the key to remaking the world.