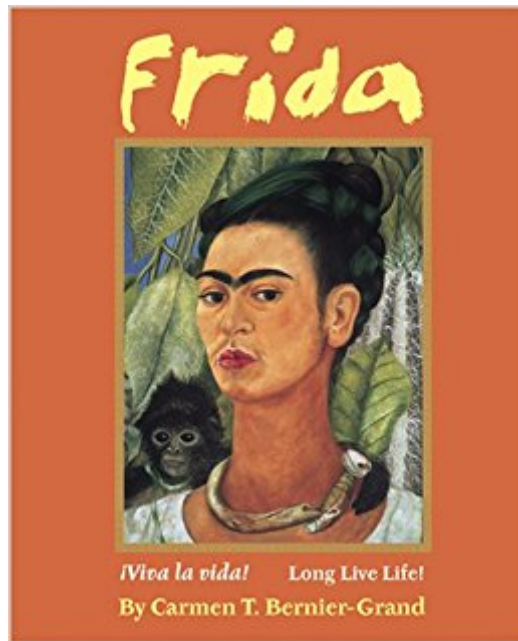




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# Frida: Viva La Vida! Long Live Life!



## Synopsis

"Wearing the white huipil with the lavender tassel, hiding my amputated leg in red-leather boots, I wheel the wheelchair to the Blue House studio that Diego so lovingly built for me. I dip the brush in blood-red paint and, embracing life with all its light, I print on a watermelon cut open—like I am—*¡Viva la vida!*—a hymn to nature and life." Frida Kahlo, a native of Mexico, is described here in biographical poems accompanied by her own artwork. Both text and images reveal the anguish and joy of her two marriages to muralist Diego Rivera, her life-long suffering from a crippling bus accident, and her thirst for life, even as she tasted death. Her favorite motto was: *¡Viva la vida!* (Long live life!) Back matter includes excerpts from Frida's diary and letters, a prose biography, a chronology of the artist's life, a glossary of Spanish words, sources, and notes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Carmen T. Bernier-Grand grew up in Puerto Rico. She is the author of several children's books, including *Shake It, Morena* and *Juan Bobo: Four Folktales from Puerto Rico*. She lives in Portland, Oregon

Frida Kahlo is one of the greatest artists of the 20th Century. Anything that sheds light or teaches about her is fantastic. The book goes into detail about her art in each period of her life as well as the other aspects of her life.

It's an ok book. Not long enough, but I did enjoy the pictures. She had a hard life.

A wonderful bio novella!!

Not enough detail of her life could have been more informative as had I not seen the movie I would not of been able to follow her life story

Frida Kahlo. I was expecting a sanitized version of the earthy, sometimes raw and tormented, but brilliant life of Kahlo. *Viva La Vida*, by Carmen Bernier-Grand, has an interesting format that works well. The author clearly has combed through and poured over a mass of archival and contemporary information, taken the essence, and written as poetry, some of the inner truth of Kahlo. In addition, some of Kahlo's own writings, as well as others, lends an even more grounded authenticity. This is not a child's simple and low level introduction to an iconic artist. When the final word is read and the cover closed, the reader becomes aware that this book is perfect, to avoid the telling of some of the reality would be like telling a lie. The reason for the above is obvious, Kahlo's works have always mirrored (in some cases, literally) the events and emotions in her life. Even the seemingly benign self portraits such as the one on the cover, hold clues that they are much more than an oddly stylized image of the artist. While some of her more heart wrenching and violently brutal paintings are not included, the legendary relationship with Diego, as well as the infidelities, are chronicled. Parents need to read it first in order to make a decision on it being too confusing for their child. This book is creatively written, and much like the work of Frida Kahlo, hauntingly beautiful.

The art in this book is stunning. The colors are vivid and the images powerful. Frida's art was born of pain and the end result was powerful and invigorating. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the mind numbing prose. It fails to portray Frida as multi-faceted and complex. Instead she is unlikeable and dreary. This author seems to focus on the negative, highlighting the least attractive facets of the personality without balance or explanation. She opens with Frida's mother, an apparently cold woman who dispatches with unwanted children and stepchildren with the same cruel efficiency as she drowns baby mice. She details the adultery that marred Frida's marriages to Diego Rivera, one of her miscarriages and the catastrophic accident that riddled her with pain for the rest of her life in a tired, colorless fashion. The Frida in these poems is dry and unpleasant, a far cry from the complex woman she was. It is unfortunate that there was so little focus on her development as an artist and how she transformed the pain and ugliness of her existence into

something beautiful. This is supposedly a children's book. Again the art is terrific but the verse is horrid. The focus on adultery is not appropriate for all age groups. So while the art shouts "viva la vida", the verse moans "todo es muerte."

As an artist, I've admired Frida's work for years, so have read several biographies about her. This book, which was illustrated with Frida's own work and photographs, is a marvelous example. Carmen T. Bernier-Grand wrote the book as a series of poems in first person based on different events in Frida's life. (Various quotes are integrated throughout as well.) It is obvious by her poignant writing that the author researched Frida's life thoroughly and had a real understanding of how the various events in Frida's life affected the intensity of her artwork. In addition, there is a short biography, chronology, and glossary at the end of the book that may help clarify the situations covered in the poems. I highly recommend this book. However, please be aware that although this book was written as an introduction to the artist's work for children around 6th grade and above, some of the life events discussed may be considered too mature for some audiences.

I wish I'd had a book like this back when I was homeschooling my son - I love Mexican surrealist painter Frida Kahlo's work and it would have been a wonderful way to introduce him to both her paintings and her thoughts, via various poems that accompany the artwork. This book is beautifully laid out and printed, with many of Kahlo's best-known works represented, and includes a chronology and biography of the artist and a glossary of terms. I would recommend this on the prints of the paintings alone - they're beautiful and haunting, and the poems help explain the situation and feelings expressed in them. Overall, I'd recommend this highly to anyone wishing to launch his or her child's artistic education.

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