



Come Back to Me My Boomerang; The Box Room; Zoo of Dreams; Fluff and Other Stuff

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News & Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Here is a fine set of poetry books. They feature four accomplished poets. They offer cheerful and inviting black and white line drawings. They're generously priced. Best of all, they have engaging subjects, and there's no sign of those exhausted old standbys of children's poetry, the eccentricities of school life or the crazy and disgusting behaviour of friends and relations.

As usual, the publisher has an eye to the literacy strategy, and, where appropriate, the poems are helpfully labelled in the table of contents, according to their form, as haiku, triolet or limerick and so on. The stroke of genius, however, was to invite the poets to come up with a set of poems around a particular theme.

Sophie Hannah's chosen subject is boxes and what you find in them. John Agard, while waiting for his boomerang to come back, has written a collection of poems on the subject of shapes. Adrian Mitchell has persuaded Daisy, his golden retriever, to offer some insights into the world of animals, and one can imagine Adrian nodding in agreement as Daisy tells him that she doesn't like to think of pigs, 'In crowded sheds all packed in tight - / No sun, no moon, no day, no night.' Tony Mitton has been going through children's pockets and found a surprising number of poetic treasures tucked away there, amid the fluff, including: 'Ghost bug, / invisible, / it makes me wince and squirm / to think that in my pocket squats / a germ.'

It must be difficult, even for poets like these, to produce thirty or more poems on a single theme, without their inspiration flagging or some recycling of the same ideas. Yet, though John Agard and Sophie Hannah seem uncomfortable at times, the limited focus has encouraged all the poets to make interesting discoveries and connections.

John Agard's poem 'Shells' moves from a typology of shells to eternity in under forty words. Adrian Mitchell discovers in a ruminating cow the essence of cool, 'Only a cow with peace of mind / Can give milk of the richest kind.' In contrast, Sophie Hannah's 'Money Box' has all the cajoling confidence of someone on the make, 'I'm stinking rich. I'm blinking rich. / Give me some coins to scratch my itch.' In Tony Mitton's contemplation of a single screw, the reader discovers the human desire for safety and security.

Sophie Hannah's poems make most use of formal verse patterns, and, at the other end of the spectrum, Tony Mitton brings the child's own vocabulary of exclamations and colloquialisms into play. All of the poets have an eye to the kind of pattern and music in a line that grabs and keeps a child's attention. These are excellent collections that are enjoyable and thought provoking.

Running Order:

35

Source URL (retrieved on Nov '20): <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/133/childrens-books/reviews/come-back-to-me-my-boomerang-the-box-room-zoo-of-dreams-fluff-and>

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