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A Story about Afiya

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This poem by James Berry, written in 1991, has been re-imagined by Anna Cunha, with the approval of James Berry's partner Myra Barrs. 'Afiya has fine black skin that shows off her white clothes, and big brown eyes that laugh and long limbs that play.' Her name in Swahili means 'health' and she wears a pure white dress, which she washes every night. Each day, the dress 'picks on something to collect, strangely'. The dress may have an imprint of sunflowers, red roses, or butterflies, each illustrated on a double page spread. Then Berry explains that every night the imprint stays on her dress when washed, 'yet, next morning, every day, the dress is cleared and ready, hanging white as new paper'. Her dress takes on the pattern of a flight of pigeons, tigers from the zoo, and fishes from the sea. 'She walks between round and towered boulders and takes them away, pictured on her' and the book finishes with her amazement to find herself 'covered with windswept leaves of October, falling.'

This poem has no rhymes, but the writing is beautiful, and Brazilian illustrator Anna Cunha has produced some equally beautiful pictures in chalky colours. This could be an inspiration for children to illustrate their own experiences on their clothes, or just to enjoy the idea- a book to treasure.

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