

Reviews

Poetry

Reviewed by Susanna Thomson

There appears to be an international flavour to this issue's poetry selection. Firstly, there are two Canadian produced books. Cartoonist, illustrator and set designer Hans Saefkow's first book is of English folk-singer Dave Sudbury's song *King of Rome* (Simply Read Books/ Turnaround, £9.99, ISBN: 987-1894965941). This is the true story of Derby man, Charlie Hudson, who bred a pigeon that raced from Rome to England in 1913. The lyrics perhaps benefit from being heard sung before read (there are versions on the net) and the illustrations capture the grey world that Charlie is escaping from with the help of his pigeons. An unusual setting and story for a children's poetry book which has been beautifully bound.

City Kids: street and skyscraper rhymes (Tradewind Books, £9.95, ISBN: 978-1896580449) takes a decidedly North American look at life in the city, capturing the noise and bustle and colour of urban life. Phillipe Béna's illustrations are bold and striking, and again the book is beautifully bound and produced.

Stunningly illustrated by Mique Moriuchi, Danielle Wright's collection *My Village: Rhymes from Around the World* (Frances Lincoln, £12.99, ISBN: 978-1847800862) contains nursery rhymes from a wealth of countries, accessibly translated. There are action rhymes, lullabies and observations of children's everyday life. A version in the original language and, where appropriate, in original script, are placed alongside each poem giving this fascinating and colourful book long lasting appeal.

There are more international poems in *All the Wild Wonders: Poems of our Earth*, compiled by Wendy Cooling and illustrated by Piet Grobler (Frances Lincoln, £12.99, ISBN: 978-1847800732). In this collection the poetry explores both the beauty of nature and the threat that faces the world, including our



more immediate environments, plants and creatures. Poets selected range from Milton to Magee, Blake to Brownjohn, and, whilst rarely becoming too heavy-handed, the book provides a good starting point for discussions on our influence on the world around us and what we want for the future. Piet Grobler's bold illustrations complement the poems and add meaning to the words.

Less a poetry book, perhaps, but an excellent rhyming picture book, *Not Last Night But The Night Before*, (Walker Books, £5.99, ISBN: 978-1406325560), is written by Colin McNaughton and illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark. Not last night but the night before ... all sorts of familiar characters come knocking at the door and, in their rush, repeatedly trample on the poor protagonist! The reason for their hurry is finally revealed, and all the rumbustiousness has been worth it. There is boisterous behaviour, amusing twists in the story and pictures to delight all readers.



Finally, two reissues: John Foster can always be trusted to find unfamiliar and new poems for children. *Whizz Bang Orange-Utan: Rhymes for the very young* (Oxford University Press, £9.99, ISBN: 978-0192729934) is a bumper book of modern poetry full of lively characters and language; suitable for the not-so-young too.

Well done Barn Owl Books for the very welcome return of Tony Mitton's *Plum* (Barn Owl Books, £5.99, ISBN 978-1903015858). Now here's a poet with a powerful feel for story and language. Strong images and ideas are created in single stanzas, enhanced by Peter Bailey's delicate illustrations. A must-have for every bookshelf.



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