

Guest Reviewer Brian Moses. Brian Moses' latest book is *Lost Magic: The Very Best of Brian Moses*, published by Macmillan. £5.99. ISBN: 978-1509838769.

There often seems to be a dearth of children's poetry books published these days but for this issue it seems I have a plethora to review from a number of different publishers. What would be really good now, is if they all started appearing on bookshop shelves, or are we always destined to remain members of an exclusive club, appreciated only by those who make an effort to seek us out?

Little Lemur Laughing



Written by Joshua Seigal Illustrated by Chris Piascik
Bloomsbury £5.99 ISBN: 978-1472930040

Good to see this collection of poems by Joshua Seigal for a younger age range. Many would go down well as performance pieces with lots of joining in opportunities, particularly 'My Dog Eats Spaghetti', 'Monsters' and 'Chat'. 'Come Yab With Me' is illustrated by two aliens:

Let's yab till our hearts / Are content / Lets yab all day I can honestly say / It'll be a day's yabbing / Well spent

There's a message from Joshua at the back of the book, along with ideas for writing. When I wrote about him as being "...a bright new flame on the children's poetry scene", it was a pretty accurate statement and this book is evidence of his talent.

The World's Greatest Space Cadet

Written by James Carter Illustrated by Ed Boxall
Bloomsbury £5.99 ISBN: 978-1472929464

A new collection by James Carter is always worth looking out for and doubly so this time as the book also features superb illustrations, linocuts and collages by the talented Ed Boxall. James' subject matter includes poems about space, creatures, night, mystery, teachers, written in a variety of styles. I particularly like 'How Many Minibeasts?' with its list of collective nouns:

A stampede of millipedes? / A festival of fleas? / An earful of earwigs? / A business of bees?

The ex-teacher in me is already thinking, I could have had fun with this in the classroom. Similarly, with 'What To Say When Olaf Olafsson (A Very Ancient Hungry Viking) Turns Up Unexpectedly For Supper One Saturday Evening.'

The final verse is a great example of the humour in lots of these poems:

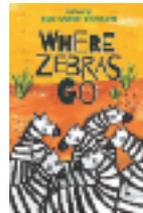
Weird Beardy - / come and see... The Axe Factor / is on TV!

I think my favourite poem here is 'Sweet Meadow', a reflective poem about childhood and the passing of time, a subject that in less skilful hands, could be clichéd. James Carter however, knows exactly the right path to take here, and in doing so, creates a very fine poem indeed.

Moon Juice

Written by Kate Wakeling Illustrated by Elina Braslina
The Emma Press £8.50 ISBN: 978-1910139493

The Emma Press hail from Birmingham and began publishing poetry for adults and children in 2012. Already they have built up an impressive list of titles including this one from Kate Wakeling. It is her first book for children and a fine debut. She writes skilfully across a range of subjects from 'Bad Moods' to 'The Ten Dark Toes at the Bottom of the Bed'. I particularly like her poems 'My Ghost Sister' with its poignant ending, 'Thief' and 'I Found a Dinosaur Under the Shed'. There is humour in this book too but also moments where the reader will stop and think. As a bonus, there are interviews with both author and illustrator plus suggestions to children for writing their own poems.



Where Zebras Go

Written by Sue Hardy-Dawson
Otter-Barry Books £6.99 ISBN: 978-1910959312

Sue Hardy-Dawson is both a poet and an artist, and *Where Zebras Go* is a perfect marriage of these two disciplines. This is an accomplished collection from a poet who has been refining her craft for many years now and whose poems have appeared in numerous anthologies. I envy poets like Sue who can think their poems in word pictures and there are several clever examples of picture poems throughout the book including 'Talking Toads' where toad is portrayed as, *Gorgeously guileless, stupendously stylish, yet so very deliciously ugly*. There are many more observations of animals here including Mole – *Old shovel-hands picking seams, sickle-thumbed/in pink leader gauntlets* and Wolf who, *sings the notes of distant stars*. Poetry is often about finding new angles on old subjects and Sue does this skilfully in her poem, 'The Pied Piper's Wife' whose character comments on what the Pied Piper brings home with him. There is also humour in 'Poetry Olympics Rules' and in 'Twenty Ways to Avoid Monsters and Mythical Beasts', but for me the final verse of the final poem is perhaps the best example of why this book is the gem that it is. From 'The Kiss'....

Mum wrapped me in her strong warm arms, / showed me the moon, still small and new. / Some things, she said, cannot be owned, / then gave me a kiss. I have it still.

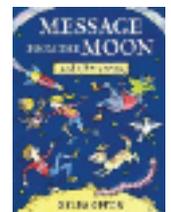
Message From the Moon and other poems

Written and illustrated by Hilda Offen
Troika Books £6.99 ISBN: 978-1909991439

This is Hilda's second collection of poetry from Troika, the first was nominated for the CLPE Award. It's an attractive production in a slightly larger format than most poetry books, with Hilda's line drawings perfectly complementing the poems. In 'The Troll Speaks Out' we discover the troll's side of the 'Billy Goats Gruff' story:

There was no 'Fol-de-Rol', / No field of green grass, / No rickety bridge – / The whole thing's a farce.

There is an intriguing secret revealed in 'The Reading Dogs' and in 'The Stranger'spring sidles in....through the half-open door/ Of the year. This book is perfect for younger readers who would appreciate poems about both familiar and unfamiliar situations.



Reaching the Stars: Poems About Extraordinary Women & Girls

Written by Jan Dean, Liz Brownlee and Michaela Morgan
Macmillan £5.99 ISBN: 978-1509814282

What a good idea. Ask three of today's respected children's poets to write about extraordinary women and girls throughout history. There are, of course, the subjects that we would expect to be included - Boudicca, Marie Curie, Edith Cavell, Rosa Parks, Malala - but there are poems too about other women who are less well known, including the painter Frida Kahlo, of whom Jan Dean writes: *her spirit was / a flame as bright as stars ... / ah, Frida shone*. And this is true throughout the book. The women here do shine, and in their skilful portrayals are once again shining examples to today's young readers.