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Only One of Me

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This is James Berry's selection of his poetry from four previously published collections for young people over the last 15 years or so. It also includes eight new poems. His very first collection was awarded the Signal Poetry Award, making him part of a select band of modern children's poets, and a lot of these early works can be found here. His subsequent collections have maintained the same high standard. Berry's Caribbean origins are celebrated often in the themes of his poems but consistently in his use of language. Even when his is not using dialect, his language is an intoxicating mix of the cadences of the spoken word and the literary, coining new words and syntax. His preoccupations and sensibilities move between the enjoyments of the rural world of his own youth and the urban pleasures and trials of the childhood of his readers in Britain, giving equal weight to each and always, whatever his recognition of tragedy and injustice, rejoicing in the gift and enjoyment of the life around us and within us. These are lip-smacking poems to be relished in their music and their passion, but they are also thought provoking. Berry never patronises his readers, never goes for the cliché or the easy effect. As the title of this collection suggests, he is always pushing his readers to recognise the individual voice in others and themselves: often imagining himself into other personas and equally at home as a pet rabbit or a girl dressing up for a night on the town. His 'People Equal' is as much a hymn to difference and a plea for tolerance and understanding as it is an assertion of equality: 'Some people rush to the front. / Others hang back, feeling they can't. / Yet people equal. Equal.'

Running Order:

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