



# 101 Poets for Children: A Laureate's Choice

Books Reviewed:

[101 Poets for Children: A Laureate's Choice](#) [1]

Issue:

[198](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not to be taken~~  
Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

The laureate's collection of mostly other people's poetry is, in some ways, quite conventional, and, in other ways, as a collection for children, rather radical. It's conventional, perhaps, in concentrating on the pastoral, devoting many pages to the natural world and its creatures. Unconventional in that this a contemplative, even meditative poetry, quietly humorous sometimes, but usually closely observed, precise and evocative, requiring concentration and inviting thoughtfulness from its readers, and only rarely revelling in the sensuousness of sound and rhythm. It's a mix of the classic and contemporary, although there is a preference, I think, for the modern; and, whether old or new, most of these poems are not usually found in anthologies for children. Some of the exceptions are poems that I suspect Duffy remembers from her childhood, like *The Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly* and *Jabberwocky*. There are poets that will be new even to child poetry aficionados and unfamiliar work from poets they do know. Women poets are well represented. Duffy gives space to the quirky and to nonsense ? Carroll and Lear for instance ? but she has little place for the drama and comedy of home, school and leisure time that is the stuff of so much of the best and worst of modern poetry for children. While there are poets here, like Adrian Mitchell, Charles Causley, Jackie Kay and Ted Hughes, who have written children's collections alongside their adult work; there are none here who write just or predominantly for children, so don't look for Rosen or Zephaniah. This may reflect Duffy's own reading. It certainly fulfils her aim of creating a collection that 'a child can live with for a long time' ? some poems are lying in wait for future years.? This is poetry that takes you away from the everyday or, if beginning there, invites you, with Blake, to contemplate a world in a grain of sand. It's characterised, even in moments of absurdity, by wonder and mystery and tinged with feelings of loss or nostalgia. Emily Gravett provides lively decoration.

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[1] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/101-poets-for-children-a-laureate's-choice>

[2] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/198>

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