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Stars in Jars

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This is tremendous value. Here are well over a hundred poems, some new and the rest collected from Chrissie Gittins' three previous poetry books, representing over a decade's poetic production. I am ashamed to admit I haven't come across the earlier titles so I don't know how selective she has been in deciding what to include here. What is striking is the consistently high quality of the poems, despite the fact that some of them may have developed from school workshops. They range from poems about pets, friends and brothers and sisters to haiku-like contemplations of the natural world and the changing seasons. They are full of simply constructed but compelling images, like the baby in the womb who swims with purple armbands and yellow ducks; and there are sometimes observations whose significance her readers may only sense rather than fully know: the grandma who is 'a fun nun?', who has many fine qualities, the best of which is that 'apart from God's, she's mine?'. Gittins assumes curious restless readers who will be happy to learn in a small footnote about fidget pie or that Suilven and Canisp are mountains in the Scottish Highlands. There are poems here suitable for different age groups. The reader who enjoys two stanzas about the different ways to eat noodles, may well find the wondering lyricism of Mary Anning contemplating the body of a washed-up shipwrecked woman more challenging. However, looking at it another way, nearly all of the poems can be read and enjoyed by adults as much as children; their simplicity is used to distil a common experience rather than focussing on a limiting childish or childlike viewpoint. It's a fine collection.

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