FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Picture Books

A Plump and Perky Turkey
Teresa Bateman
Jeff Shelly, illustrator
Winslow Press
978-1-890817-91-6
(October 10, 2001)

Shredded wheat for Thanksgiving dinner doesn't sound like a very special meal—unless, of course, you are a wily, plump turkey who has evaded the Squawk Valley oven. The villagers are worried, according to this cleverly rhymed picture book, that they won't be able to find a turkey for their Thanksgiving feast. The turkeys have been getting smarter; they hide when autumn comes.

Hoping they can come up with a way to trick a turkey to get into their pot, the townsfolk are quite taken by a plan outlined by Ebenezer Beezer. He proposes that they hold an arts-and-crafts fair with a turkey as a grand prize. "And since our goal is turkey / that's the theme we'll take to heart. / We'll fill our fair with folks / and fun and tons of turkey art."

The townspeople decide to create their turkey art out of spuds, clay, oatmeal, and soap, and invite turkeys to pose for them. Pete, a turkey plump and perky enough to be the ideal model, is also cocky and clever. He reclines in a lovely green chair as the townsfolk paint and sculpt his likeness. When they are done, Thanksgiving Day arrives and they ask their excellent model to judge the results. The plan is to pop him in the oven as soon as the contest is over. Ebenezer Beezer can envision the wonderful spread with a plump brown turkey as the centerpiece.

The text and illustrations work as deliciously well together as do turkey and all the trimmings. Bateman is an award-winning author whose experience as an elementary school librarian perhaps gives her insight into creating a story that will tickle young readers. Shelly's pictures are busy and fun, with lots of autumn colors in the countryside, and wild colors and designs for the art show birds. In the end, in what may be a visual pun, Pete and the other turkeys brown themselves in the sun as they celebrate their escape.

Linda Salisbury