

Bedtime Story

Brett Fleishman

Funny-Bone-Tickling Children's Poetry (Nov 8, 2018)

(72pp)

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Bedtime Story is an amusing collection of narrative poems, filled with enjoyable puns and idioms.

Brett Fleishman's smart and "punny" poetry collection, *Bedtime Story*, is aimed at advanced elementary school readers and features humorous wordplay, varied themes, and a strong ending lesson.

The narrative poems have a variety of topics: a marmalade maker named Pam who's stuck in a jam; a boy who streaks at the town pool; an omelet chef causing customers to walk on eggshells. Word-related games are also included throughout, as are explanations of the puns and idioms so that all can enjoy their humor.

Reliance on idioms and puns binds the poems together; they are not otherwise cohesive. Both features are clearly marked at the end of poems, which highlight that Marmalade Pam is "in a jam" and honeymoon planners are "all over the map." The poems don't generally deliver resonant messages, but they are intelligent in their use of wordplay. They are entertaining and inspire study of their techniques, making the collection a great classroom companion for lessons in English and poetry.

Rhyme schemes vary within each poem, and are roundly successful. The book is a love letter to words and what can be done with them, with its playful humor in poems like "Manure Machine" (which features a "crapshoot"), and when one Papa Silver names his sons Charcoal, Taupe, and Slate, and they talk about how life is full of "shades of gray." In "Disorderly Doc," a doctor finally gets "organ-ized" by cleaning the organs all over his room. The title poem is about a father "making a long story short" by tearing out the last pages in a book so his daughter will go to sleep.

Perhaps the most resonant poem in the collection is "'Famous People' Day," which discusses the importance of tenacity. It ends with "those who aren't afraid to fail are those who succeed" and includes examples of famous people who failed before finally becoming successful. It works well with the book's only poem not penned by Fleishman: "The Big Mess," which was written by sixth grader Caroline Stone, whose status as a published author proves that poetry can be created by anyone at any age.

Illustrations complement the poems with visual humor, though some are distorted and distracting. Splashes of color behind poems add to the book's aesthetic, while the illustrations explain concepts within the poems that are otherwise hidden, as with "Treasure Hunt," wherein "Freddy does not have a clue," a statement that becomes funnier with the illustration's revelation of the fourth clue in his back pocket.

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REBECCA MONTERUSSO (October 1, 2018)

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