ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Chickadees at Night
Bill O. Smith
Charles R. Murphy, illustrator
Sleepytime Press
978-0-615-56972-7
(Jul 1, 2012)

The chickadee: a bird so small it fits into a child's hands; a birdfeeder resident twelve months a year; and a songster with a "fee-bee and a buzzy chicka-dee-dee-dee." Using rhyming short phrases, Bill O. Smith and Charles R. Murphy set a scene of day turning to dusk and render a tranquil bedtime mood for little ones in the lovely *Chickadees at Night*.

> *The sun comes up.*
> *Chickadees tweet.*
> *Chickadees flit.*
> *Chickadees eat.*
> *They dip and dart*
> *through a tangle of trees,*
> *chittery flittery chickadees.*
> *But sometime near the end of day,*
> *chickadees fly away, away—*
> *through the branches, out of sight…*
> *where do chickadees go at night?*

Award-winning Smith has taught children and authored many plays and educational materials for elementary classes. Murphy exhibits watercolors nationally and has won awards as an artist and educator. Throughout this well-crafted book with brilliantly colored pages, the collaborative efforts of both men bring a world of delight along with teaching young minds and senses. In answer to their own question,"Where do chickadees go at night?" they give possibilities of what children will recognize in their own routines: scrubbing in showers, resting in hidden perches, watching the moon, wanting to play instead of sleep. Imagination also figures in: How about a chickadee trampoline or a game of hide-and-seek? What kind of pajamas would

chickadees wear? Might they take “a moonlight whirl on a flying squirrel,” or “glide on an owl like a jumbo jet?”

The last page of this bedtime story contains “Chickadee Nuggets,” a list of facts that will interest parents and caretakers as well as children. The tiny bird weighs about as much as a quarter; it lives in every contiguous state of the US and every province of Canada; and its serenades can last from twenty minutes to an hour.

The book illuminates the natural world while creating a fantasy where children can take part by safely exploring and using their imaginations. The story builds hope and brings satisfaction while offering exhilarating adventure, satisfying the child in each of us. *Chickadees at Night* is destined to become a bedtime classic which will appeal to toddlers and pre-schoolers, and may also bring joy to the elderly.

Mary Popham