



Swing Around the Sun

Barbara Juster Esbensen
Cheng-Khee Chee, Illustrator
Janice Lee Porter, Illustrator
Mary GrandPré, Illustrator
Stephen Gammell, Illustrator

Lerner Publishing Group (December 2002)
Unknown \$17.95 (48pp)
978-0-87614-143-4

Children's books about the seasons abound, but this one has stood the test of time. Originally published in 1965, it stuns the reader in this new and revised edition with page after page of amazing artwork. Brilliant pastels and emotionally evocative watercolors, the artwork of four critically acclaimed artists, combined with the already lyrical poetry, make *Swing Around the Sun* a delight to behold and read.

The book is divided into sections for each of the four seasons, with five poems for each season. Each artist has not only matched the tone of the poetry, but has also visually communicated the visceral experience of fall, winter, spring, and summer. Spring is gray skies with daubs of brilliant color here and there on umbrellas and robin breasts in the muted watercolors of Chee, who also illustrated *Old Turtle*. Heat and warmth radiate off the page in Porter's summer pastels. GrandPré, the now-famous illustrator of the *Harry Potter* series, creates a magical autumn of ghosts, fairies, and windy, starlit nights. The glitter of frost and snow falling is perfectly portrayed by Gammell, the Caldecott winning illustrator of *The Song and Dance Man* and *The Relatives Came*.

Like the poet, all four illustrators are natives of Minnesota and acknowledged greats in the world of children's literature. Esbensen's poetry speaks to the experience of children, not over nor under them, but directly into their ears. She writes of empty fall gardens, geese returning, fireworks and snow clowns ... themes that are central to childhood. Her poetry is neither simplistic nor overly grand; her imagery and the rhythm of her language are both intelligible to young children, as well as instructive. They teach the ways in which poetry can be simple and beautiful and accessible to all.

The language and art of *Swing Around the Sun* express the magic of the turning year for both children and adults.

(May / June 2003)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.