

Picture Books

The Beeman

Laurie Krebs

Valeria Cis, illustrator

Barefoot Books

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“Here is his jacket, / with zippered-up hood, / that covers his face / just the way it should,” a little boy narrates while helping his beekeeper grandfather, known around town as the Beeman. The boy continues the invitingly rhyming verse that recalls “The House That Jack Built,” as he watches his grandfather carefully open the beehive, harvest the honey, return a bit of it to the bees to nourish them during the winter, and enjoy the rest at home over grandma’s warm muffins.

Bold text highlights important terms such as the *deep*, a box that holds the beehives; the *smoker*, which quiets the bees while opening their hive; and the *extractor*, which removes and collects the honey from beehive frames. The boy not only describes the art and science of beekeeping but also life inside of the hive and how the queen bee (“the heart of the hive”), drone bees, workers, and house bees all contribute and work together to make honey.

A first grade teacher for twenty years, author Laurie Krebs found inspiration for this accessible book from her beekeeping husband. Their travels have also inspired such titles as *We All Went on Safari: A Counting Journey through Tanzania*, *We’re Sailing Down the Nile: A Journey through Egypt*, and *Off We Go to Mexico!: An Adventure in the Sun*. *The Beeman* is Argentinean illustrator Valeria Cis’s first work on an American book. Her warm, handsomely patterned acrylic paintings aid in the comprehension of the beekeeping process and depict the grandson and grandfather’s respect for the bees, as well as their mutual adoration for each other.

Following the story is more in-depth information on the anatomy and life cycles of bees, bee colonies, and the beekeeper’s job and tools. The author also provides greater detail on how honey is produced and the importance of pollination and even bee dancing (“The faster they dance, the richer the supply of nectar”). Children learn early that bees make honey, but very few of them (as well as very few adults) know how they actually do it. This cozy intergenerational

story will delight young readers as it educates them on these industrious insects.