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Picture Books

The Sun in Me: Poems About the Planet
Beth Krommes, illustrator
Judith Nicholls, compiler
Barefoot Books
978-1-84148-058-9
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Just in time for Earth Day 2003 comes this lovely poetry collection in celebration of nature. Featuring poets ranging from Emily Dickinson to Sappho, this book will especially please parents who have faith in their children's abilities to enjoy poetry on a higher level than *Mother Goose*.

In keeping with the publisher's mission of "celebrating art and story" by inspiring children to "read deeper, search further, and explore their own creative gift," the editor has chosen poems representing many diverse styles, cultures, and time periods. From the spare haiku of Issa and Buson to the Caribbean rhythms of Grace Nichols, these selections are intended to open children's minds to the breadth and beauty of poetry as well as nature.

The poems also explore the child's relationship to nature, as in the title selection by British children's writer Moira Andrew: "The sun is in me, / pale morning flames / setting my still-sleeping / heart alight. // The wind is in me, / clear blue breath / leading / my bare feet / into a new day."
The remaining three stanzas praise the sea, the river, and the moon. The lovely and fanciful illustration shows a young Inuit girl riding an albatross above ice floes, polar bears, and walruses.

Nicholls is one of England's best-known children's poets and the author and compiler of nearly forty books of poetry. Yet her expertise accounts for only half of the book's worth; the remaining accolades belong to Krommes for her soft, rounded watercolors that provide a rich and gorgeous setting for each poem, perfectly capturing the mood of each selection with scenes of children interacting peacefully with the natural world.

Sharon Flesher