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Forest Has A Song: Poems



Synopsis

A spider is a "never-tangling dangling spinner / knitting angles, trapping dinner." A tree frog proposes, "Marry me. Please marry me | / Pick me now. / Make me your choice. / I am one great frog / with one strong voice." VanDerwater lets the denizens of the forest speak for themselves in twenty-six lighthearted, easy-to-read poems. As she observes, "Silence in Forest / never lasts long. / Melody / is everywhere / mixing in / with piney air. / Forest has a song." The graceful, appealing watercolor illustrations perfectly suit these charming poems that invite young readers into the woodland world at every season.

Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Gr 3-4-Creatures and plants and the sights and sounds of the forest are described from the perspective of a girl who appears occasionally in this collection of nature poems. Simple watercolor scenes, set on softly washed backgrounds or white space, run above, beneath, below, or alongside each selection, which generally focuses on a specific aspect of forest life. For example, "Moss" reads, "Barefoot on this emerald carpet/toe-by-toe I squish across./I softly sink in velvet green./Oh how I wish for socks of moss." The girl, other human companions, and her dog encounter chickadees, tree frogs, lady slippers, lichens, and fossils, and these forest experiences span the seasons. The poems are simple, well-shaped, and pleasant for read-aloud sharing. The book is an

inviting tour for those who enjoy observing the natural world through poetry.-Margaret Bush, Simmons College, Boston
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VanDerwater's collection of 26 breezy, accessible poems explores in close-up detail the fascinating microcosm of the forest, from its lush sensory experiences throughout the seasons to its charmingly diverse cast of characters. Playful word choice, effortless rhyming schemes, and simple metaphors and imagery ("Ferny frondy fiddleheads / unfurl curls from dirty beds") brighten the collection's quiet, contemplative tone, while personification of many of the subjects, from a courting frog to maple leaves affecting fall color, bring the subjects even closer for young audiences, while still offering kernels of factual information. As with most themed collections of this size, some poems stand out and others less so, but the crisp, bright watercolor illustrations on white backgrounds, which depict a girl and her brother's ventures into the woods throughout the year, add another layer of distinction to each poem and further express the meaning in the words. Dip into this appealing collection for an introduction to early nature studies or poetry writing, or for generating some well-deserved enthusiasm for a stroll in the great outdoors. --Kristen McKulski

(Cross Post from my own Goodreads Review of FOREST HAS A SONG)"I'm here./Come visit./Please?"I get excited when someone out there who gives so much to the poetry community by way of celebrating the works of others releases a first work of their very own. Well-known already in the social media circles with her presence in on-line discussions and forums and via her own blog, Amy Ludwig VanDerwater is someone to befriend and follow now. . . .because, in time, she is going to be huge. If FOREST HAS A SONG is any indication of what we might be able to draw from Amy by way of verse, she is well-poised to join the ranks of cherished children's poets such as Myra Cohn Livingston, Rebecca Kai Dotlich, Betsy Franco, Joyce Sidman, Laura Purdie Salas, and Marilyn Singer. In fact, it brings me a certain amount of delight to slip Amy's new book onto the shelf with the others mentioned here.If "Forest" does, indeed have a song, it is gentle lullaby composed for the many voices that would come from within the foliage. And Amy captures many of them within the collection. Beginning with "Invitation," Amy welcomes readers into the focus of the book by employing the senses (and what a beautiful way to welcome new readers of poetry into the genre as well as into the book).In the following poems, italicized font represents the voice of the forest responding with its gentle voice to the presence of a small girl who has come into the forest. Like a

child might do, this little girl picks up a wet stick and begins to break it apart: Spongy springy stick I pick it into tiny bits. Sliver sail the wind. I don't want to disrupt the natural feel of this wonderful book by mentioning the new standards coming out for teachers and students, but looking at this sample piece of Amy's verse, we can see into the simplicity of the genre while taking a closer look at how we might introduce alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme. And while Amy may not follow the rigidity of haiku (see what I did there), here is a mentor text in how the style may provide the frame for creative writing. Amy likens the tracks of the forest creatures as a text we might be able to "read" upon entering the forest in her piece, "Forest News." The poem ends: Scribbled hints in footprint tell about the day. I stop to read the Forest News before it's worn away. Amy, via her sojourner, moves deeper into the forest to find: fiddleheads (who sing "greenest greetings"), fossils ("forever dead calm"), lichens ("messages in cursive code") and lady's slipper (with masterful allusions to the familiar character of Cinderella). With these entities, I see an opportunity to employ Amy's book within a unit on field flowers or the ecology of a forest. As Amy's collection moves through the seasons, the reader experiences some of the changes--and some of the visitors who come and go--that occur over the course of the year. That the book moves through these seasons would make *FOREST HAS A SONG* a wonderful ladder to the D. B. Johnson series of Henry books that would introduce younger readers to the classic work, *WALDEN*. Robbin Gourley's water color illustrations and the colorful, leafy end papers round out a beautiful, beautiful little book that should be in classroom libraries every where. Just in time for National Poetry Month, this is one you would love to have on a desk during a poetry flood for that reader looking for gentle verse with a nature theme. There is so much to celebrate within this collection. I wanted to come out early in support as well as praise of this collection. Reading through it a tenth time, I am reminded that Amy's gentle spirit throughout this book is best found in her not telegraphing her unique play on words or her ability to render thoughtful verse, but it is found within Amy's continual and consistent pointing back to the forest she has invited us to consider and she has invited us to come in to take a look.

With so many children bereft of outdoor time to explore the forest and the natural world around them, books like *Forest Has a Song* become even more important. Never pandering to children, striking a great balance between being accessible but still leaving room for individual interpretation.... Amy VanDerwater draws both parents and children into a delightful experience of seeing the natural world as something to slowly and thoughtfully explore.

Amy's straightforward and simple poetry leads us along like a quiet, knowledgeable nature guide who is eager to introduce her friends of the outdoors to the rest of us. My five year old

daughter and eleven year old son both loved the book.... making several stops while reading saying "Oh Mommy, read that one again!" and again....and again....savoring the word choices of something simple like a spider knitting angles. One my favorite images is of "reading the Forest News" by looking at the animal tracks in the snow, or a bite of wintergreen in the summer-- "Snowflakes fill my mouth." The watercolor illustrations by Robbin Gourley are a perfect accompaniment to the author's poetry, gentle but authentic. We were inspired to do a bit of watercolor painting after seeing the illustrations. Amy VanDerwater has much to offer to all who value children's literature as a means of expanding their experiences beyond an inch deep and a mile wide.

If you love the forest like I do, you will also love what Amy and Robbin have offered in this new book of poems. They have shown the real things, like in the poem Puff, telling about those earthy wonders that one finds in the damp and dark of the forest, emitting a little cloud of spores when squeezed. And the poem Squirrel, pleading for the whereabouts of its secret stash. Amy's poems take us from entering the forest in full flower with a kind invitation, "I'm here./Come visit./ Please?" through the autumn in poems like Maples In October, to winter celebrated in poems like Snowflake Voices. And then there are the magical forest voices which appear in an young owl's voice, First Flight; along with the beautiful Lady's Slipper, named in the poem as "Forest Cinderella." Robbin's illustrations take us further into the poems with her beautiful and sometimes whimsical illustrations. A young girl is "us", wandering through, seeing all the wonder of this forest, and keeping the theme of the invitation to visit, we can pretend we're there too! I hope I've written enough of the beauty of Amy's poems to make you visit too. After reading this book, you can find more of Amy's poems at her blog, The Poem Farm.

Beautiful pictures and clever poems! I love it and can't wait to share this with my students!

My granddaughter, Satya, and I love Amy Ludwig Vanderwater's book! Last weekend when Satya had a sleepover at my house, we read and discussed The Forest Has a Song. She seemed so fascinated by the book's content and illustrations that, afterwards, we went for a long walk in a nearby forest. We found all the poem's pieces right there in the woods. Gorgeous baby fronds! Old dead logs---one of which Satya dubbed "too crowded for any animals in this one!" A family of birches, much like one of the book's illustrations! She noticed everything, making connections all

over the forest! What fun---for Satya and her grammy-teacher! I not only recommend the book, but also that follow-up forest walk afterwards.

My 7 and 9 year-old daughters have a new favorite book, and I couldn't be happier with their wonderful taste! We absolutely love Forest Has a Song. Each poem in the collection is an opportunity to explore the world through the eyes of a child. The lovely illustrations complement the writing, and each time we read the book we find more to enjoy. Forest Has a Song has earned a treasured place on our bookshelf, and the book will be our new go-to gift for other children.

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