

# Reviews Poetry

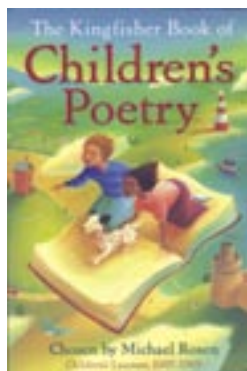


Let's start with two sure-fire collections. *The Usborne Book of Poetry*, collected by Sam Taplin, illustrated by Kristinn Swarner, is a handsome new hardback which would make a good gift. It has spacious pages, sparkling colour and silk book marks to mark your favourites. It is full of traditional plums from poets such as Kipling, Hardy, Lear and Tennyson as well as poems from the era marked by Frost, Larkin and Hughes. There are also newer poets like Kit Wright and Richard Edwards and two good poems from

the compiler. A collection to be browsed by young readers and serve as a useful reference volume for adults.

Published by Usborne £14.99 ISBN: 978-0746084151

The second collection is a welcome reprint, now in paperback, *The Kingfisher Book of Children's Poetry*, chosen by Michael Rosen. This is an especially rich collection which surprises as well as satisfies. The range (era, location, mood) is inspiring, from Wordsworthian uplift to Eve Merriam's poetic poke in the eye, *Mean Song*. The poets are arranged alphabetically and are then followed by sections of ballads, nonsense verse, limericks, riddles and boasts. This collection is like a good friend who constantly introduces you to new gems.



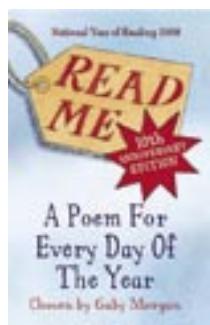
Published by Kingfisher £6.99 ISBN: 978-0753417089



For an unusual collection, choose *Poems United*, edited by Diana Hendry and Hamish Whyte. This is an excellent collection, divided by country and with a map and a geographical fact-finder. Most of these fascinating poems will be new to British readers and are full of the colour of their place of origin. Impossible to single any one out, they all throw sometimes unexpected light on the countries and constantly delight and surprise. Jaded seekers of new poems should get this book immediately. Published by the Scottish Poetry Library £7.99 ISBN: 978-1845021405

Macmillan also offers a paperback reprint with *Read Me*, a more conventional collection, chosen by Gaby Morgan. When a book has "a poem for every day of the year" there are bound to be many that appear in most anthologies but the poems are arranged by date so something can be found for specific moments of the year. The poets range from Anon. to Seamus Heaney, taking in the classic, the modern and the plain quirky.

Published by Macmillan £6.99 ISBN: 978-0330457163

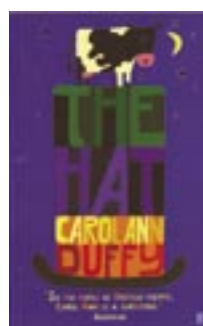
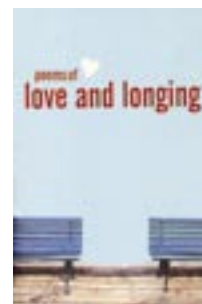


For older readers, *Poems of Love and Longing* is a set of poems which features the work of ten poets. The love comes in many forms and the longing is for

things lost or past. These are all contemporary poems from some of Wales' foremost contemporary poets.

Published by Pont £7.99 ISBN: 978-1843238157

Fiona Waters provides some good cheer in *Laugh Out Loud*. Her chosen poets play with language, take a different perspective or comment on life's hiccups. "Darren took all / the labels off / the tins in Mummy's / shopping bag" starts *A Lesson* by Brian Morse. Graham Denton's *I Took My Dog to a Movie* is strangely satisfying as we absorb the dog's fascination with the film and finally learn "It's really most peculiar / He didn't like the book!" There are plenty of good jokes but especially beguiling is *Escape Plan* by Roger Stevens, with its mixture of madness and rationality. Stegosaurus stands motionless in the museum. "At noon / Tyrannosaurus rex / will cause a diversion / by wheeling round the museum's high ceilings / and diving at the curators and the museum staff / while I / quietly slip out of the fire exit / and melt / into the London crowds." A book to have to hand to cheer things along and get poetry a good name among the unconverted. Published by Macmillan £4.99 ISBN: 978-0330454568

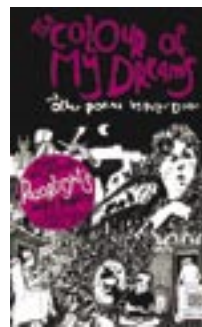


Finally, the single poet collections. With *The Hat*, Carol Ann Duffy gives us a constant shower of images which take us elsewhere. *She wouldn't say Boo! to a goose / But she rode on the back of a mouse / in a field of corn*. There is nothing out of reach of young readers though they may occasionally have to stretch a little. Try *Be Very Afraid* on a bouncy class. The dangers of the *Hanging Lightcord Snake* or the *Toilet Roll Scorpion* are very convincing. There is an attractive playfulness both of language and subject matter.

She has a lot of fun with *The Manchester Cows: A girl called / Annabel Jessica Pickles / bumped into a cow / in Harvey Nichols...* The book closes with a long poem about the Hat itself, which starts on Chaucer's head and passes from poet to poet down through the ages - *whose head ... will I settle on next?* Maybe on the head of a reader who has been enchanted by this collection.

Published by Faber £6.99 ISBN: 978-0571219667

*The Colour of My Dreams* by Peter Dixon talks of subjects close to children's concerns: family, school, fears and delights. *Dad's Tale* makes one want to know Dad. Was he really snatched as a baby and brought up by stray dogs? *Foolish Robert* reads like one of the old, compulsive monologues. *Last Patrol* talks of the September wasps being "Goggle eyed and tiger garbed" like fighter pilots on their last sorties and *Beware* echoes a traditional menace at the bottom of the garden. The book is accompanied by a CD by Andy Burrows of Razorlight and both book and CD benefit the Naomi House Children's Hospice. Published by Macmillan £5.99 ISBN: 978-0330469647



Pat Thomson