



## **The New Oxford Book of Children's Verse (Oxford Books of Verse)**

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The world of children's poetry is as diverse and as miraculous as the human imagination itself, a land where owls and pussy-cats set to sea in beautiful pea-green boats, and tigers burn bright in the forests of the night. It embraces word play, parody, nonsense, lullaby, and elegy, and ranges from brief nursery rhymes to long narratives. It can be utterly silly, but it also recognizes that if children's lives are full of wonder and delight, they are also fraught with worries, disappointments, and moments of sadness. The best children's poets come to terms with grief as well as joy. Now, in *The New Oxford Book of Children's Verse*, Neil Philip has surveyed and mapped this delightfully protean landscape, in a book that spans some two hundred and fifty years, from Isaac Watts, the first true children's poet, to such classic figures as Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and A. A. Milne, to scores of contemporary writers, such as Richard Wilbur, Sandra Cisneros, and Jack Prelutsky.

The range of poems is remarkable. Young readers will find long narratives such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride" ("Listen, my children, and you shall hear / Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere") and Robert Browning's "Pied Piper of Hamelin" ("Rats! / They fought the dogs and killed the cats") as well as Mick Gowan's "Rat Trap," a political satire that parodies Browning's poem. The book also includes many miniature gems, such as Ogden Nash's "The Eel" ("I don't mind eels / Except at meals, / And the way they feels") and Hughes Mearns's "The Little Man" ("As I was walking up the stair / I met a man who wasn't there; / He wasn't there again today. / I wish, I wish he'd stay away"). There is of course much zany verse, such as Hilaire Belloc's "Jim, Who Ran Away from His Nurse, and was Eaten by a Lion" ("Now, just imagine how it feels / When first your toes and then your heels, / And then by gradual degrees, / Your shins and ankles, calves and knees, / Are slowly eaten, bit by bit. / No wonder Jim detested it!"), Eugene Field's classic "The Duel" ("The gingham dog and the calico cat / Side by side on the table sat"), and A.A. Milne's "Disobedience" ("James James / Morrison Morrison / Weatherby George Dupree / Took great / Care of his Mother, / Though he was only three"). And Philip has also included many thought-provoking poems, such as Langston Hughes's "Children's Rhymes" ("By what sends / the white kids / I ain't sent: / I know I can't / be President"), Countee Cullen's "Incident" ("Now I was eight and very small, / And he was no whit bigger, / And so I smiled, but he poked out / His tongue, and called me, 'Nigger'"), and Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz" ("The whiskey on your breath / Could make a small boy dizzy; / But I hung on like death: / Such waltzing was not easy").

Ranging from Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," to Robert Frost's "The Pasture," to John Updike's "January," here is an anthology that captures the full breadth of children's verse in English. It will delight children of all ages, and launch the young on a life-long appreciation of poetry.

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