



A Whiff of Pine, a Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems

Deborah Ruddell , Joan Rankin (Illustrator)

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In a watery mirror
the rugged raccoon
admires his face
by the light of the moon:
the mysterious mask,
the whiskers beneath,
the sliver of cricket
still stuck in his teeth.

Take a lighthearted romp through four seasons in the forest with these whimsical poems. Marvel at the overachieving beaver, applaud the race-winning snail and its *perfect* trail of slime, or head off to be pampered at a squirrel spa.

Warning: Deborah Ruddell's quirky cast of animal characters and Joan Rankin's deliciously daffy pictures will cause giggles. The woods have never been so much fun!

A Whiff of Pine, a Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems Details

Date : Published March 10th 2009 by Margaret K. McElderry Books

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Author : Deborah Ruddell , Joan Rankin (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review A Whiff of Pine, a Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems for online ebook

Jessica Gilligan says

Ruddell; Rankin. (2009). A Whiff of Pine, a Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems. Margaret K. McElderry Books: New York.

Picture Book: Poetry

SLJ Starred Review

As a vast collection of poems, this book offers children many chances to see and use end rhymes in action. The book centers around forest creatures, as each poem is an ode to a certain animal. Many of the poems are very silly and children are sure to be entertained. For example, there's a poem called Proposal for a Squirrel Spa and A Wild Turkey Comments on his Portrait (he is not very happy with a child's drawing of him). While the book is amusing, and does contain some factual information about different forest creatures, for instance there's a poem about how to recognize a green tiger beetle, the book is not the best example of using meter properly, and there are not a whole lot of other good examples of poetic sounds, such as alliteration or assonance. The book's readability is about at the 4th grade level. But I think it would be a good way to introduce a poetry project to the class. Students could create a class poetry book about the animals in their community using the book's silly style and use of end rhymes.

Janice Villwock says

PreK-3 Read aloud/Independent reading

Ruddell takes us through the seasons in a forest full of different creatures big and small. The poems are rhyming and have sense of fun in them. The front endpapers are illustrated with the different animals seen in a forest, some peeking from inside and behind the trees. The pages have some white space drenched in beautiful watercolor illustrations. The poems have a sense of the moods of the different animals, ie the turkey is very disturbed by the fact that he is always drawn by tracing the hand. His face does not look like a thumb! Children will enjoy listening to the different poems about their favorite forest animal.

Language Arts/Social Studies

Students could research the hibernation habits of different forest animals.

babyhippoface says

Usually I don't like rhyming poetry very much. It always seems trite to me, I guess. But the poems in this picture book don't come across that way. They're clever, brief, and illustrated--all the things I would've needed in a book of poetry for it to keep my attention when I was a kid.

One of my favorites, and one that's perfect for use in the classroom around Thanksgiving, is "A Wild Turkey Comments on His Portrait", where the turkey complains about kids tracing around their hands to draw his portrait and painting him in dull colors:

*I find it most insulting
that you traced around your hand
and colored all my feathers
either plain old brown or tan.*

*Where's the copper? Where's the gold
that a turkey should expect?
Where on earth is raw sienna,
and where is the respect?*

*Finally, I'm baffled
that you've made me look so dumb.
My head is quite distinguished
and it's nothing like a thumb.*

Funny, and perfect for sharing with kids when they are creating those insulting hand turkeys for the holiday.

My other favorite is "The Forest's Royal Family":

*In golden coats and velvet crowns
the deer inspect their royal grounds--
their breezy castles rising high,
their kingdom built of trees and sky.*

I like that one for the images it evokes of deer standing regally in the quiet of the forest.

Altogether, this is a quick and enjoyable read for kids, whether they think they enjoy poetry or not.

Oklahoma Sequoyah Children's Book Award 2012 Master List

Maribeth Tomas says

Picture Book Project

Category: Poetry (Picture Book)

Source: Teacher's Choice Award 2010

The students will like the quirky poems about these woodland creatures. Some are informational while others are just for fun.

The front jacket has several animals that you would find in the woods along with the title, author, and illustrator. The colors used are those you would normally see in the woods--blues, browns, grays, blacks, reds, oranges, whites. The animals look more cartoon-like than they do realistically. On the back of the jacket is a badger writing out a letter and hearts protruding upward from his head--he is clearly writing a love

letter. There is also a picture of another book written by this author and 3 reviews from different sources that claim how wonderful that book is. The left flap of the jacket has one of the poems and a small summary of what you will find in this book. The right flap has a little bio of both the author and illustrator. If you remove the jacket, the cover has the exact same pictures on both the front and back. The end pages have the same pictures. It is of the animals in the woods. You assume that these animals are what the poems will be about. The illustrations are done in watercolor and there are two dedications mentioned. One of the dedications is for a blind opossum named Annie who visited schools. Before the poems begin, there is a Contents page with all of the titles of the poems listed. Each poem is about a certain woodland creature. Most of the poems are short and they all rhyme in an abab format. The poem is usually typed up on white space and most of the illustrations are on one page per poem. There are only three poems that use a double spread. Some of the poems are about these animals doing human-things, like writing a love letter, going to a spa, or eating with a plate and cutlery. The other poems are about the animals in their natural habitat and their daily lives.

I really liked this book. I think it's an easy read, but it's fun and enjoyable. It's different because it's a book of poems versus a story. These particular poems were amusing to me. I really liked the one about the turkey complaining about how children draw them by tracing their hands and coloring it in. The poems are short and simple, but very entertaining.

I would use this book to introduce abab poetry. I could also use this book to talk about the different types of animals you find in woods or I could use this book to talk about the woods. What would you find in the woods? What kind of animals? What kind of trees? What kind of insects?

Julia says

This is a nice introductory book for children to animals that may live in the woods and one that will also introduce them to fun poetry. Although much of it rhymes there are a few places where the rhymes are lacking but there is a nice rhythm to help carry the poem for the reader while most of them are only a few stanzas thus helping the beginning reader of poetry to not get swamped.

At the same time what makes the book interesting is the fact that some of the poems are told by a narrative point where the narrator is more than likely human. These particular poems also mostly show up to have nice bright colored illustrations with young children of all ethnicities meeting the animal subject in their own habitat and thus showing them as being explorers. There are a few where the narrator can be human but there is no child subject in the illustration given to the reader.

The remaining poems are given from an animal's viewpoint and so they confront all kinds of quite interesting subjects such as behavior or exploration. In keeping with the poetry, the main animal subjects are like the abovementioned shown in beautifully colored illustrations although sometimes given as more childish versions than as realistic animals.

All in all quite a charming and enjoyable collection for young readers and one that will at least make for a nice read before a walk through a wildlife park or nearby woods.

Jill says

My 1st graders would love hearing this read-aloud! It is a terrific introduction of poetry as told by forest animals, along with details to learn about them. It would be fun to change how you read each poem, putting a "voice" to each animal. For Grades K-3.

Curriculum Connection: This book is a good cross-curricular choice, tying in poetry and science. Students will learn some facts about forest animals while enjoying some delightful rhymes. At almost a 5th grade reading level, it does have some higher-level vocabulary words that may need explained.

Citation: Ruddell, D. (2009). *A whiff of pine, a hint of skunk: a forest of poems*. New York NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books.

Reviews: ALA Notable Children's Books 2010, Kirkus Reviews starred 01/15/09, Booklist 03/15/09(Vol. 105, No. 14), Library Media Connection starred 08/01/09, Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred 03/01/09, School Library Journal starred 04/01/09, Horn Book 10/01/09, Wilson's Children 10/01/10

Treasa says

This is a fun collection of poems about the animals found in the forest. All the poems rhyme, although they are all done in different styles with different rhyme schemes. I really liked some of the poems - some are very funny and clever. Other poems I just didn't really like - sometimes the rhymes felt forced or overdone. (Or maybe I just wasn't in the mood for lots of rhyming poems when I read the book. I'll have to read it again later and see if my opinion changes.)

Overall, this is a fun book of poems. If I were going to read it to a child, I would pick and choose which of the poems I would read. But the good poems certainly make the book worth reading.

Chris says

Some of the poems are quite good - I really liked the beaver one. Some of the poems are so-so. I do like the fact that some animals are female. Illustrations are wonderful.

Erin Ramai says

There are many poetry books about the seasons, but *A Whiff of Pine, A Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems* offers a fresh perspective. Ruddell's personification of woodland creatures is truly unparalleled. Whether the poem is about fighting woodpeckers, a badger in love, suited chipmunks or caroling coyotes, readers are sure to be amused and awed by Ruddell's insightful, creative and informative descriptions. And Rankin's whimsical watercolor illustrations will give both nature lovers and the lighthearted a sense of peace and joy. Author and illustrator seem to marvel and delight in the natural world. I hope to see more work from this team in the future.

My favorite poems in this book are: "Eau de Forest: A Woodsy Cologne", "Biography of a Beaver", "Woodpecker Feud", "Dear Badger, Beloved--", "A Wild Turkey Comments on His Portrait", "Proposal for a Squirrel Spa", "October Surprise Party", "Chipmunks, Inc.", "The Forest's Royal Family", "Coyote Carolers" and "Woodchuck's Wake-Up Morning".

Genee121 says

I enjoyed Deborah Ruddell's book "A Whiff of Pine, a hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems" I think it's an easy read for both adults and children, lots of fun. It's unique because it's a book of poems not a story. These particular poems were entertaining to me. I really liked the one about the turkey complaining about how children draw them by tracing their hands and coloring it in. The poems are short and simple, but very entertaining.

As a teacher, I could also use this book to talk about the different types of animals you could find in the forest or I could use this book to talk about "The Forest" themselves. Every page you turn in this book is like peeking around a tree in the forest only to find another creature or critter peering back at you. You just never know who you are going to meet and what you might find them doing. You would never expect to find a squirrel at a spa being doted on by three mice buffing her nails and combing out her tail. There are the snails racing (if you can call it that) up and down the leaves leaving a "perfect trail of slime" behind. At night you might just be able to see the night owl. The illustrations are fantastic for any age group. They are funny and a wonderful introduction to poetry. The watercolors used are those one would typically see while in the forest....browns, blacks, oranges, reds, blues, greens, grays and whites. I would engage students in conversation by asking questions like "What would you find in the woods? What kind of animals? What kind of trees? What kind of insects?" Countless ways this book could be used. Simply lovely.

Brittany Williams says

No Awards

Appropriate grade level: 2-3

This book is a collection of poems about different animals. Some animals the poems are about include raccoons, beavers, and badgers. They are very short, fun poems!

I like this collection of poems. They are simple, yet fun for kids of younger ages. The illustrations are simple, but add an extra aspect to the poems.

You could use these poems in a classroom for transitions, because they aren't long. Also, you could teach about the outdoor animals that children might not know a lot about!

Nicole Baher says

This is a great poetry book for a nature lover! This book is full of poetry that has funny stories about woodland creatures and their adventures. One is about a snail winning a race, another about a toad. They are very imaginative and talks about a lot of different animals and their habitats. Poetry. 2009.

Miss Lee says

Great book to introduce poetry! The pictures and language are vivid, and there's a healthy amount of challenge with the vocabulary without it being too much. Quite enjoyed!

Cathy Mealey says

Delightful tongue-tickling, toe-tapping poems featuring forest critters of all sorts and amusing, spot-on illustrations have made this book a consistent family favorite. We quote its oh-so-memorable descriptive lines when we spot a critter in the woods, and our Thanksgiving tradition is to read aloud the hysterically funny *A WILD TURKEY COMMENTS ON HIS PORTRAIT*.

Author Deborah Ruddell offers a plethora of classroom activities at her website, including a sensational classroom guide. Joan Rankin's detailed and colorful illustrations are sure to promote giggles!

You'll want to take a sensory-filled walk through the woods to see, smell, and listen to the wonder around you. I'd be remiss not to suggest tracing your hand and coloring a turkey in vibrant colors including copper, gold and raw sienna!

See full review here: <https://bildebok.wordpress.com/2012/1...>

538pm_sarahszymanski says

Summary: Jump from one quirky scene to the next as poem after poem about forest animal antics are described in a humorous and lighthearted manner.

Children will find these poems silly and endearing. From the rhyme and rhythm of each poem to the word plays and illustrations, these poems offer a unique and engaging approach to reading a story.

Author: Deborah Ruddell

Illustrator: Joan Rankin

Illustrations are done in watercolor

Award(s)/Honor(s): International Reading Association (IRA) Teachers' Choice Book (2010); ALA Notable Children's Books (2010); School Library Journal Best Books of (2009); The Bulletin Blue Ribbon Books; Junior Library Guild Selection; CCCB Choices; NCTE/CLA Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts (2010); Bank Street Best Books of the Year.

Fiction; Poetry

Grades: 1-3

Illustrations: Rankin's use of watercolors to depict each poetic scene adds a whimsical quality not only to the pictures but also to the poems themselves. The illustrations allow the reader to "read" the story without even looking at the words on the page. Character facial expressions capture the essence of the mood in each poem.

Classroom Connections: This book would be a great book to help reinforce phonemic awareness in (K-1), just be sure to heed the above advisory. Each poem uses both word play and rhymes. This could easily become a class favorite for rereading for confidence building, fluency, and word familiarity. This would also be a great book to use as an introduction into poetry. The compilation of poems in this book is simple and clearly demonstrates rhyme and rhythm. This book should be used during read alouds at first but then offered as an option during independent reading.

Readers' Advisory: There is some content in which children may not be familiar with throughout the story. Teachers may need to take the time to discuss certain animals (e.g. Opossums, bandicoots, wallabies, salamanders, etc.) and where these animals might be found/from.
