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Wham, It's a Poetry Jam

Donna Cardon

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Holbrook, Sara. *Wham, It's a Poetry Jam*. Wordsong, Boyd Mills Press, 2002. ISBN 1563979985. \$14.95. 55 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Non-fiction;

Subject: Children's poetry; Performing arts in literature; Books—Reviews;

Any teacher who has thought about putting on a children's poetry performance will be interested in this new offering by Sara Holbrook. In each of the 17 sections Holbrook introduces a style of performance poetry, gives suggestions of activities to prepare young people to perform the poems, and then includes one or more poems in that style. Much of the subject matter of the poems is geared toward pre-teens: relationships with parents, friends moving, baseball, and others. Some are more universal in theme, such as loneliness, cooperation, and imagination. At the end, Holbrook includes instructions for organizers of poetry performance competitions with suggestions on how to score, how to choose judges, etc.

This book is fun waiting to happen. The instructions are up beat and entertaining. The activities Holbrook suggests are age appropriate, but not trivial. The poems have rhyme and youthful bounce. The only illustrations are scattered, multicolored, geometric shapes that fill white space. The suggestions for organizing competitions show long experience. Holbrook has organized poetry jams across the country and has written other poetry books for children. Her enthusiasm for performance poetry is contagious. This is a good choice for parents or teachers who want to foster that enthusiasm in their students, or for children who are just looking for a great poem to perform in a talent show or story telling festival.