



2003

Because I Could Not Stop My Bike: And Other Poems

Donna Cardon

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Shapiro, Karen Jo. *Because I could not stop my bike: and other poems*. Illustrated by Matt Faulkner. Charlesbridge, 2003. ISBN 1580890350. \$15.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon;

Reading Level: Primary;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Poetry;

Subject: Children's poetry; Humorous poetry; Book--Reviews;

This is a collection of twenty-six light-hearted poems that are silly imitations, with apologies to the original authors, of well known poems. Some of the imitations follow the rhyme scheme and meter of the original poem fairly closely, like "I Never Saw a Talking Hat" which imitates "I Never Saw a Moor" by Dickinson. Many of the poems are shorter than the originals. The title and first line sound like the originals, but after that they take on a life of their own, like "Oh Mommy, My Mommy" which recalls "Oh Captain, My Captain" by Whitman. All the poems are illustrated with brightly colored and action packed watercolor cartoons.

This is a book that can be enjoyed on two levels. Children will enjoy the well crafted and silly poems and the equally silly illustrations. Adults will chuckle at the clever spoofs of poetic classics. It is unlikely that children will appreciate the parody of the poems because they are unlikely to be familiar with the originals. One would wish that the author had included the original poems in an appendix for easy comparison. Perhaps she did not because almost all the poems imitated are not children's poems, and some deal with mature themes, like, "To His Coy Mistress" by Marvell. Because the poems are unlikely to be familiar to kids, this book will not be as popular with kids as *Take Me Out of the Bathtub* (McElderry 2001). It will be popular with grown-up-literary-types and their kids will be happy to come along for the ride.