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God Went to Beauty School

Elizabeth Meyers

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Rylant, Cynthia. *God Went to Beauty School*. Illustrated by N/A. HarperTempest, 2003. ISBN 0060094338. \$15.89. 56 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Occult poetry; Humorous poetry;
Subject: God--Juvenile fiction;

What if God is a lot more like us than we admit? What if He takes a break once in a while? If He went to beauty school, what would he love most about it? In this collection of free verse poems, Cynthia Rylant explores such questions as what God would do if He caught a cold, climbed Mount Everest, or got cable, along with a myriad of other subjects. It ends, as it begins, with how God went to beauty school "to learn how / to give a good perm," (56) but stayed on because He loved the hands.

What at first glance might be mistakenly taken for an irreverent treatment of God is actually a marvelously loving, humor-filled text, studded with little gems of insight and wisdom. While Rylant's views of God may not fit everyone's perceptions, no one can doubt her genuine affection and respect for her subject. Numerous bits of humor will have readers chuckling to themselves, as they imagine a God who decides to simply have faith that his spaghetti is al dente because it vaporizes when he tries to make it stick to Jupiter. At other points there are flashes of powerful reflection as God climbs Mount Everest, (hating the snow), and then "at the top / He turned around / and His heart just broke. / Suddenly the whole world / was plain as day, / and still. / It was so still." (33) In the end, the book is not so much about God's understanding of the world as it is about our own perceptions of ourselves and our relationship to others. Teens and adult readers will benefit significantly from reading and pondering this powerful text.