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Rhyme & Punishment: Adventures in Wordplay

Donna Cardon

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Cleary, Brian P. *Rhyme & Punishment: Adventures in Wordplay*. Illustrated by J. P. Sandy. Millbrook Press, 2006. ISBN 1575058499. 15.95. 48 p.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: humorous poetry;

Subject: Puns and punning--Juvenile literature; Children's poetry, American--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Everyone has at some time groaned at an unexpected pun. Cleary's collection of light hearted rhymes is full of puns; some groaners, and others that merit a real chuckle. The book is divided in four sections easily distinguished by different colored background paper. All the puns in the first section involve musical terms. "My friend Ray borrows books to reed/ and balls to pitch and throw/ I keep good notes, and so fa re/ owes mi a la ti do." The punned words are printed in a font of a different color and weight from the rest of the text. Explanations of the musical terms appear in footnotes. The other sections which contain animal, food, and geography puns, are formatted the same way. The formatting and footnotes help young readers "get" even the more obscure puns. The illustrations also help illuminate the meanings. Sandy's humorous stylized cartoons incorporate both meanings of the puns. The illustration of the poem quoted above shows "Ray" standing on a pitcher's mound surrounded by both books and musical notes. Teachers could use this book as a fun way to introduce homonyms and build vocabulary. Children will enjoy reading it alone or sharing the "punny" rhymes with their friends.