

Books

Four in All

By Nina Payne, illustrated by Adam Payne

Front Street Press

Reviewed by Marjie Van Gunten



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The simple poetry of this lovely book evokes images of humble things that become eloquent through the presentation. Well-crafted word chains

and elegantly executed collages combine to create texture in sound and sight that invites the reader to linger on each double-page spread.

The four-beat word chains are paired to create rhyming, question-and-answer phrases that conjure images from a child's world and celebrate humble things. "Fork, plate, knife, spoon" is followed by "morning, evening, midnight, noon" and "earth, air, fire, water" joins "mother, father, son, daughter." Orff Schulwerk teachers will immediately start creating rhyming pairs of their own and the possibilities for rhythm exploration are abundant. The opportunity to make beauty from such sturdy language invites us to encourage our students to try this for themselves.

The book is illustrated with beautifully detailed cut-paper collages using a palette of muted purples and blues, greens and reds. The combination of simple words and earthy scenes creates a calm mood that appears understated, yet is rich with meaning. A single child reappears in each scene, connecting the word chains with a story line while standing at a crossroads, crossing a bridge in the sky or dancing on the

roof. There is also a delightful cast of animals and a collection of musical instruments: a fish plays a double bass and a snake balances a tambourine. The small size of the book (8" x 8") contributes to the sense of quietness and makes it enticing to young readers.

You will enjoy this book over repeated readings. Your students will connect with the familiarity of the words and the serenity of the illustrations. It will inspire word art in your classes. *Four in All*, like "comfort food," is basic, nourishing and beautiful in its simplicity.

