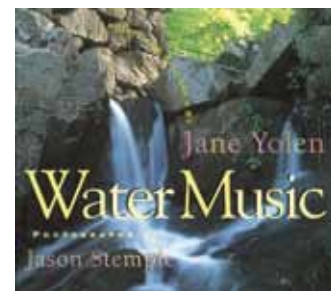


Water Music: Poems For Children

By Jane Yolen
Photographs by Jason Stemple
Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 1995



Inspired by the clarity and beauty of Jason Stemple's photography, *Water Music* by Jane Yolen explores, in verse, the character, sound, movement, and playfulness of water in its various forms and settings. The book begins with the scientific definition for water, followed by the poems. The seventeen poems, with their stunning photographs, describe water in forms from icicles to crashing waves, pristine mountain streams to pond scum.

The first poem, "Reflection," describes the dull, gray sky mirrored in a still pond. The reflection of a partially submerged branch, highlighted in the cropped section of the picture around the page number, resembles a dark kite or flying bird.

Winter continues in the next poem, "Icicle." The title travels vertically down the side of the poem, echoing the icicle images. Each word is written on a separate line. Reading the poem aloud creates a slower, disconnected pace reminiscent of an icicle.

"The Rock Cries Out" tells of nowhere to hide from the crashing waves. The white spray of the ocean hitting and overwhelming the rock illustrates the need to escape to safety.

After the subdued grays and blues of the first few poems, the green of the photograph for "Water Jewels" pops from the page. The poem compares sparkling dewdrops balanced in straight rows on each ovate leaf to jewels created by rain. In a similar vein, droplets of water glimmer on the rich purple of the iris in the picture accompanying "Observation." The deep blue sky contrasts the lavender of the page, just as the poem contrasts the clear sky with evidence of the previous rain.

"Waterfall" is an anticipation, then sudden descent as the letters on the ends of the phrases curve down in imitation of a waterfall. The words rush faster and faster to end in stillness.

Three of the poems are pond scenes. White flowers and green leaves float upon dark water to illustrate "Water Lily." The poem describes the lilies waking and opening to the sun. In "Wet Eden," a goldfish swims in the murky water beneath shiny lily pads, a spot of orange among the green. What is heaven to a fish? In contrast, the slimy, green ooze pictured for "Algae" is unpleasant enough to appeal to boys. This brief, five-line poem suggests life.

"Embroidery" compares the patterns of white ocean foam to lace. In the photograph, the crest of the wave delineates the pure green of the sea and threadlike, random designs created by the bubbles. "Tangles" also describes natural patterns on the water, textile-like knots of plant stems and leaves on a glassy surface. The defined wheat curls of dried grass contrast with the muted, green, underwater blades.

Two poems delve into bubbles: "Washing the Dog: A Haiku" and "Bath." A poof of bubbles in the grass illustrates what's left after washing the dog, a short poem for a short event. "Bath" compares the sounds and senses of a bubble bath with an old woman relaxing and remembering. The photograph of a yellow rubber ducky gazing pensively across a field of bubbles conveys the reflective nature of the poem.

"Washed Away: A Double Haiku," "Two Stones, One River," and "Water Music" each convey the intensity and sound of flowing, moving water. "One Hundred Percent" reflects on taking

away. The stark shades of black, white, and gray add to the abandoned feel of the footprints in the snow.

The words and images naturally lend themselves to interpretation in sound and movement. With these poems of just the right length, children can explore with movement the different ways water flows and is still. Silver, white, blue, and green scarves, fabric, or ribbons add more possibilities to represent each line of a poem in motion. The children can then create a coherent choreography for a poem, choosing a non-pitched percussion instrument sound to accompany each phrase or motion. The children may also compose music for the words, adding a *bordun* or *ostinato* accompaniment on Orff instruments.

Songs related to water may be interspersed between the poems. Possibilities include the folk songs "Shenandoah," "Sweet Water Rolling," or "The Water Is Wide" to reflect the nature of the poetry describing flowing rivers. Poems about pond life could include songs about frogs, crawdads, or fish. Raindrops bring to mind the numerous rain songs. The poems and photographs of Jane Yolen's *Water Music* offer many creative opportunities for the music classroom. This book is a welcome addition to an Orff teacher's library. ■

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