



Water Sings Blue: Ocean Poems

Kate Coombs (Illustrations) , Meilo So (Illustrator)

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Come down to the shore with this rich and vivid celebration of the ocean! With watercolors gorgeous enough to wade in by award-winning artist Meilo So and playful, moving poems by Kate Coombs, Water Sings Blue evokes the beauty and power, the depth and mystery, and the endless resonance of the sea.

Water Sings Blue: Ocean Poems Details

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Author : Kate Coombs (Illustrations) , Meilo So (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Water Sings Blue: Ocean Poems for online ebook

Kathryn says

This is a challenging one for me to rate. Most of the poems were maybe three stars for me, but a few I really liked (the title poem and the Octopus Ink especially) and the illustrations are lovely! I also appreciate the variety of ocean creatures portrayed in the collection. So, overall I was not as smitten as I'd hoped to be but I'd still recommend that any fans of poetry and sea life check it out for themselves. You might also want to check it out simply for the stunning artwork.

Rachael says

"I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by."

"For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea."

Admission: I have a great weakness for sea poetry. Like Melville's Ishmael, "when my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off--then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can." Or at least to seek out some nautical literature.

And sea poets, in turn, seem to have a weakness for formal meter and rhyme. Maybe it's something about the rhythm of the sea itself, but look at those two excerpts above, from poems by John Masefield and e. e. cummings. Don't they just capture the great, surging rhythm of the world's oceans? I think so.

So it was with great pleasure that I opened *Water Sings Blue* to find that Kate Coombs has chosen to write about the sea in rhyming, metered verse. It feels like there's not a lot of "serious" modern children's poetry that rhymes. Plenty of light verse and nonsense verse rhymes, of course. But when children's poets get all SRS BSNS, they seem to feel the need to do so in free verse.

Not that *Water Sings Blue* is uniformly serious. To paraphrase one of the reviews, it has as many moods as the sea. While the individual poems vary in tone, though, they are united by the poet's arresting use of imagery and metaphor. "Please, O Lord," entreats a fish in "Prayer of the Little Fish. "Protect me from / the high, dry, breathless air." Breathless air, y'all. That knocks me out.

At its best, the musicality of Coombs' language adds another layer of meaning to the poems. In "Sand's Story" she writes, "Now we grind and we grumble / humbled and grave, / at the touch of our breaker / and maker, the wave." All that alliteration and internal rhyme just reinforces the relentlessness of a force that slowly crumbles mountains.

And yet... and yet. Despite the gorgeousness of the language, despite the stunning imagery... not all of this verse scans properly. In fact, quite often, it doesn't. "I'm going shopping at the tide pool. / They carry everything there - " My, that feels awkward. Incongruously awkward, given the talent of the poet and her

attention to detail otherwise.

Ultimately, though, the weird scansion is not nearly enough to sink this pretty little book. No pun intended. Content trumps form for me, so it's definitely among my top ten of the year. As for Newbery... well, it's a strong year and poetry rarely medals, but I'd be happy to see a silver Honor sticker on the cover of this one.

(Cross-posted from For Those About to Mock)

Susan says

A lovely book. Beautiful, clever rhymes with well-crafted rhythms and word choices. Beautiful, expressive illustrations to go with the poems.

Overall a truly enjoyable read.

Melissa says

Wonderful variety in the poems: in form, rhyme scheme, tone, vocabulary, topics. Outstanding watercolors.

Kim says

Gorgeous book ... saw it last night and had to buy it... Beautiful poetry and gorgeous illustrations!

For the silly to the sublime...

For example -

Tide Pool Shopping:

"I'm going shopping at the tide pool.

They carry everything there-

mussels by the bushel

and three kinds of barnacle,

starfish and gobies to spare.

My mama gave me a shopping list.

I know I can find what she likes....etc."

and

Jellyfish

"Deep water shimmers.

A wind-shape passes,

kimono trailing."

My daughter has thoroughly studied the pictures and now we are savoring the poems... Wonderful!

Donalyn says

A delicate, lyrical love letter to the ocean and its creatures. This would make a wonderful read aloud. Full of figurative language and science vocabulary.

The watercolor illustrations by Meilo So perfectly accompany the poems with soft edges and vibrant colors. So's bio in the back is a treasure all its own.

Carolynne says

Charming poetry with a seashore theme would get this book four stars, perhaps, but the exquisite watercolor illustrations deserve 5 stars. These are no wishy-washy watercolors, either, but vividly colored paintings that enhance the poetry. Notice the illustrations for the poem "What the Waves Say," for example. The artist, Meilo So, describes her self as "Made in Hong Kong, Packaged in England, Domiciled in the Shetland Islands," and the reader can see the Chinese influence along with the rich experience of the sea.

The poetry does not quite live up to the paintings, which I thought deserved award recognition. Some are serious, but many are humorous. Lots of vivid imagery in these poems. Others have mentioned the imperfect meter of some poems, and I agree that some would be hard to read aloud. Coombs includes a variety of poetic forms, which other readers have criticized, but I think they make this slim volume more useful in teaching poetry. Here's a verse from "Jellyfish Kitchen" that includes an image I like: "The prim bell jar with ruffled rim my grandma used to cover cake has learned to swim." Does it scan? No. Is it poetry? I think it is. If you take young children to the beach this summer, be sure to take this along.

No Lexile Measure is available.

Jenny says

I really loved the illustrations in this book! They are really lovely. (I also really love the short bio about the illustrator: "Made in Hong Kong. Packaged in England. Domiciled in the Shetland Islands. Ingredients: multiple cultures, tangled histories, freedom.... and it continues. Very clever!") It makes me want to sit near the beach and look out to sea, scuba dive or snorkel and also learn more about some of the creatures (for example, I've never heard of a kittiwake which is apparently a small gull).

Some of the poems are okay and some are really great. I love Sand's Story, Tide Pool Shopping, What the Waves Say, Sea Turtle, and Tideline. I love this line from Sea Turtle: "There's a wide green map on sea turtle's back." And I love the idea of sand explaining:

Once we were massive,
looming in rings,
holding up temples
and posing as kings.
Now we grind and we grumble,

humbled and grave,
at the touch of our breaker
and maker, the wave.

Richie Partington says

Richie's Picks: WATER SINGS BLUE: OCEAN POEMS by Kate Coombs and Meilo So, ill., Chronicle,
March 2012, 32p., ISBN: 978-0-8118-7284-3

"Song of the Boat

Push away from the stillness of the nut-brown land,
from the road that leads to the shore.

Push away from the town with its tight tree roots,
from its closed brown shutters and doors.

Push away—heave-ho—from the heavy brown pier,
from its pilings huddled and dull.

For the water sings blue and the sky does, too
and the sea lets you fly like a gull."

For the kid in me – the Pisces kid from Long Island, who grew up a stone's throw from the sea; for whom a beach has always been my favorite environment – this was a wonderful birthday present.

Months ago, I drove down over the Golden Gate to San Francisco to attend a presentation at Chronicle Books. Sure, there were all sorts of wonderful, upcoming titles being presented. But what got all my attention that morning were the displayed pieces of original art – watercolor paintings of the sea and of sea creatures and sea plants and sea shells and sea birds – created by Meilo So for this collection of poems. I've been waiting ever since to see the finished book.

And so it was such a treat to have this visual feast of ocean poems show up in the mail on the eve of my birthday and, no, I don't mean feast like you'd want to bite into one of these.

"Not Really Jelly

You're not really jelly,
you're not really fish—
you're free-floating noodles
escaped from a dish,
all slither and jiggle
and tremble and squish."

One of the things I like so much about wandering through this book is that it is put together in a manner that, in turning the pages, you can imagine yourself walking down a beach, surrounded by the sounds and smells

and sights of the sea, repeatedly discovering its treasures and mysteries. There is page after page of visual surprise and rich textual imagery. In fact, the endpapers contain faint footprints traversing the damp sand amidst the randomly strewn crab claw, seaweed, feather, and shells that you find surrendered by the sea when on just such a walk.

“Tideline

Ocean draws on the sand
with trinkets of shell and stone,
the way I write on the sidewalk
with a stick of chalk at home.

She signs her name in letters
long and wavy and clear,
saying ‘Don’t forget me—

I was here,

wasss h e r e

wassss h e r e...”

Richie Partington, MLIS

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Paula says

Watercolor illustrations add to the nature of these ocean themed poems

Paul says

Some of the poems in this book shine, but the consistent beauty throughout is Meilo So's watercolor illustrations as she captures waves, fish and other sea creatures, birds and shells, the deep and the sky above.

Savannah says

Summary: A beautiful gift to the ears and the eyes, this book of sea poems would calm even the most fiery soul. There were poems for each piece of the ocean and beach, all written in a different meter and rhythm. It was a wonderful depiction of even the smallest elements of the ocean, written and illustrated wonderfully.

Evaluation: I'm obsessed with the ocean so I loved reading about it in poem form, which is my favorite type

of writing. I enjoyed how some were shorter and more to the point than others while some were descriptive and told about the jobs that the different parts of the ocean plays. I love how creatively and beautifully each poem was illustrated and I loved that the poems varied in rhythm so that you had to reset your reading mind before you started.

Teaching: I would use this book to specifically teach poems because I think it does a wonderful job of giving different examples of long and short poems being written in different styles. I would assign the class a topic, such as the circus or school or the playground, and each student would pick a different element of that location or event. Each student would write a poem about their element and we would combine it at the end into their own book and create a title for our book of poems.

GoldGato says

*Here lie the bones of twenty trees,
lost far from home under gallons of seas.*

A shipwreck in the locker of Davy Jones never sounded so yearning, taken from the viewpoint of the decaying wood. It's an example of the ocean poems by Kate Coombs, written for children but useful to the wee adult, too. Accompanied by shimmering watercolours from Meilo So, this is a good book for parent and child to either read together or for children to begin learning easy poetry.

*Deep water shimmers,
A wind-shape passes,
kimono trailing.*

Doesn't that describe a floating jellyfish? "Kimono trailing"...beautiful image in words. Some of the poems are whimsical (comparing seagulls to beagles) and some are serious (the shark), but all are enjoyable. A nice read on a hot day in front of the shimmering sea, the beautiful sea.

*For the water sings blue and the sky does, too,
and the sea lets you fly like a gull.*

Book Season = Summer (humbled driftwood)

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

A lovely group of poems about the ocean accompanied by watercolor illustrations. Favorites: "Sand's Story," "Tide Pool Shopping," "Prayer of the Little Fish," all the jellyfish poems. Wish I could write like that.

Barbara says

The 23 poems in this themed collection explore the beauty and mystery of the sea in descriptive language guaranteed to prompt readers to book an oceanside vacation immediately. The evolution of sand is described thusly: "Now we grind and we grumble,/ humbled and grave,/ at the touch of our breaker/ and maker, the wave" (unpaged). The poems hop and skip from tide pools to a sea urchin who "fell in love with a fork" (unpaged) to waves that "Roll green, rise and lean--" (unpaged) as well as paying homage to driftwood and shipwrecks. The author sees things differently, even describing the jellyfish whose dome reminds her of her grandmother's coverings for cakes as hiding a "frosted sting" (unpaged). The poems are accompanied by memorable watercolor illustrations.
