

I Have Nothing to Say, but I'm Going to Say It Anyway: Thoughts, Questions and Nonsense

Ken Skoby

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I Have Nothing to Say, but I'm Going to Say It Anyway: Thoughts, Questions and Nonsense is Ken Skoby's aptly named collection of poems, statements, and queries focused on absurdities in life and love. Intentionally meandering, this loose assortment tackles themes of time, age, joy, and pain.

Pages feature self-contained poems, statements, and questions, with the various themes woven throughout. Artwork either reflects the sentiment or provides a humorous counterpoint. With no overarching narrative or direction, the pieces idly switch back and forth, reflecting the stream of consciousness alluded to both in the title and within the poems themselves. The structure of the book works well with this aspiration in mind, as the poems capture random intrigues. Illustrations appear as brief flashes to round out these thoughts.

The poems usually focus on a single topic, and the themes spread sporadically throughout the text. An idea will be picked up, discussed, and then discarded as a new train of thought is established; this quick succession of ideas both helps and hinders the work. At one point, for example, in less than a page the focus shifts from earning respect to political correctness to memory and history to understanding based on the senses. In this way, the book successfully captures the transitory nature of thought as the brain engages with first one notion and then another; however, the content loses impact as scope and topic constantly shift.

The key themes woven into the poems involve a love for life, a yearning for knowledge and conversation, a solemnity of the self, and the chaotic shared experiences of journeying through life. Poems are not always evocative, and sometimes in their simplicity they forgo musicality and rhythm.

The artwork—line-art doodles of stylized animals, trees, flowers, faces, and more—is intriguing. Illustrations of birds, road signs, forests, people, and symbols convey a sophistication and grace that give the poems added weight. Because the art is kept simple and sparse, the eye is naturally drawn to it, and its ease of presentation guides and enhances the poems it accompanies.

I Have Nothing to Say captures the relative mess of thought that our brains create, constantly focusing on and abandoning ideas and images just as quickly as they appear. Still, deeper engagement and expression are needed in order to fully absorb those quick snapshots into the mind.

CJ TRIPLETT (December 7, 2016)

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