

Imagination Blast: Poems for Children

Vicky-Lyn Ashby-Harris

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The interactive picture book Imagination Blast utilizes rhyming poems and illustrations to enhance children's perspectives of the world and themselves.

In Vicky-Lyn Ashby-Harris's picture book *Imagination Blast*, poems are paired with whimsical pictures for children to color in.

The book is made up of sixteen poems that describe the beauty all around and within people. Their subjects also include showing kindness to others, believing in oneself, and daily experiences. "Spring Delight" describes flowers and birds; "Cargo Train" finds the wonder in trains; "Deep Blue Sea" focuses on colorful fish, deep sea diving, and the unknown monsters far below.

"Night Sky" goes far out into space where all dreams are possible. "Creation" has religious tones, honoring the creator of all. And "A True Masterpiece" epitomizes the book's perspective:

*A beautiful jewel that is what you are
Like radiant colors, you are a shining star.*

It, like other entries, seeks to elevate children's images of themselves.

The book's black-and-white illustrations are rudimentary images of the poems' subjects. The skewed perspectives of the drawings are unrealistic in their depth, though, leading to distortions. And some pages are unfinished, or left blank, to encourage audience creativity, though there is little instruction for how they should be filled in. In the end, the imagery in the poems themselves overshadows the more basic illustrations.

There's a didactic element to the book as well, with instructions on writing poetry. Some poems themselves encourage participation: In the rhyming entry "United," the last word of each sentence is left blank, with a list of words provided for possible completion. In contrast, "The Stormy Days" has sporadic blank lines to fill in words but no list of suggested terms, muddling its delivery.

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MARY MCNICHOL (October 5, 2023)

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