

***Big Book of Verse for Aussie Kids* by Jim Haynes**

From the minute I flicked this book open to find one of the most moving poems of my childhood *Little Boy Blue* by Eugene Field on page 244 I was hooked. And I could prove to my children that there was a poem about *The Triantiwontigongolope* and I hadn't just made it up.

In the book is most incredible array of poetry ever gathered together in one book and I defy anyone not to find a poem they have either heard, read or enjoy. All of the verses are in rhyme which makes for very easy reading.

With classics from Australian bards in the ilk of Banjo Patterson, CJ Dennis and Henry Lawson to ditties by anonymous authors such as *If You Meet a Crocodile* and *Song of a Sock* there is something for everyone in this book.

It also includes poetry from those whose verses are classics, loved by generations of Australians, even though the authors may be from the USA or the UK. So the likes of Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Noyes, Spike Milligan and Eugene Field make an appearance in the book.

Young boys who are not readers will find their funny bones tickled by the limericks and traditional poems about worms (*Nobody Loves Me* and *Erky Perky*) and dogs' toilet habits (*Dog Poo* and *Pooper Scooper*).

Of course the inimitable Mr. Haynes has some of his own verse in the book including *Rindercella – a Tairyfale*, *The Noses Holiday* and *How Silly Can You Get*.

This is a book that should be in every Australian classroom and home.

Raelene Hall, Freelance Writer/Editor/Publisher, WA

This is a great book. The very next day after looking through the book and reading many of the great poems inside, my Grade 5 class were bringing some of the many, varied poems to life, *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes being one which was eagerly snapped up for a piece of readers' theatre.

With a bumper 389 pages and varied contents ranging from sections about, "Crazy Creatures" and "All around Australia", the reader will be entertained in many ways. Each poem serves as a great example of a certain type of poetry, with a great section on limericks, sure to become a favourite.

This book would be a valuable addition to any classroom as the poems cover the whole range of ages teachers might be teaching, from Kindergarten to the higher grades. The poems included give students the opportunity to read, act out, verse speak and enjoy good, wholesome and provoking language at its best.

Whilst the book is called *Big Book of Verse for Aussie Kids*, the reader will find many poems not written by Australians, however many of these poems from mainly European writers are ones that have helped shape and from the Aussie culture and deserve a place in the poetry reading of Aussie kids today.

This is a great book, useful for all ages, and a fun and interesting read.

Francesca Massey, Exeter Primary School, Tas

Australian poets and those connected to this beautiful land are gathered together by Jim Haynes in an amazing collection for kids.

Our family came originally from England and many of these verses have helped us gain a deeper understanding of our adopted culture. We loved the anonymous poem *Melbourne* about the MCG and Circular Quay!

Dog Poo by Tulip Kilbourne was a real hit with my boys, as one had experienced similar during the previous week!

Chapter 14: the "Fun With Words" section really made us laugh out loud. And a verse or two has become ingrained in the boys' brains.

We had recently attended a performance of The Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's *The Man from Snowy River* by AB 'Banjo' Patterson, so to read more of his work had meaning and was the most interesting 'Australian' history lesson we have had of late.

We haven't read every poem in this beautiful collection, preferring to digest it slowly, savouring its delights.

My husband particularly loved *Don Bradman* by Jim Haynes himself.

The boys have illustrated a couple of poems, one being *Daddy Fell into the Pond* by Alfred Noyes. Jim Haynes makes educating kids (spelling, language, history, geography, nature, sport) fun and easy. Why use boring resources when the learning can be enjoyable? Tongue Twisters, Limericks, Epitaphs, Creatures Great and Small: This book has it all – and just that little bit more too...

The Roach Family, home educators, WA

Poetry – boring, boring, boring. Well, maybe not, in this case. So, why pick up this large (388 pages) volume of verse? Because it's great – very readable, lots of fun, with some familiar content, whilst other parts are not, but regardless, well worth dipping into. As Haynes says in his introduction, there are "poems to recite, act out, share and enjoy".

It's helpfully divided into chapters, and the poems or verses reflect this. *Life's a Laugh*, for instance, has works by familiar writers such as C. J. Dennis, Spike Milligan and Colin Thiele, whilst others are not so familiar, such as Bartlett Adamson and Wilbur Howcroft. Nevertheless, you're sure to find something that will amuse. The poems throughout vary in length from a few lines to half a page or more, which makes it easy to find something for any occasion, including bed-time reading!

Works such as this are a valuable addition to any home or school library, as they encourage the enjoyment of the written verse, with none of the boring bits. They make you laugh, especially *Fun With Words*, they make you think, wonder and reflect, but they especially make poetry reading fun, which is always a bonus. Poetry introduced in this way, and this book could be read aloud from an early age, makes it easy to appreciate what is often a dreaded and disliked aspect of the English curriculum – poetry.

No more shuddering at the mere mention of the dreaded word, instead go ahead, open this hefty tract, and relish what is between the pages – you won't regret it!

Margaret Key, Vic

The first poem I read, when I opened this collection was *Memories*, written at Gallipoli in 1915,
I am standing in the trenches with the mud up to my knees,
And I'm thinking of the bushland far away:

On the opposite page was *Smiles* by the famous Anonymous,
No matter how grouchy your feeling,
You'll find the smile more or less healing.
It grows in a wreath
Around the front of the teeth,
Thus preserving the face from congealing.

The joy of this book is in this mixture of the poems that have been selected for inclusion and the broad range of styles and subjects that it covers. Divided into subjects like *Crazy Creatures*, *Limericks*, *Cautionary Verse* and *Tongue Twisters*, there are poems to appeal to all ages. Jim Haynes in his introduction sums up the feel I have for this book:

'The purpose of this collection is to give kids of all ages poems to recite, act out, share and enjoy. The poems here are all rhymed verse and are included because I thought children would enjoy reading, reciting, sharing them, or hearing them read.'

This is a must have inclusion to any school or public library and I have already purchased copies to add to my Christmas box for nephews and nieces. Its only failing is there are no indexes to allow you to search for poems, which may be due to the fact that the book has been compiled to be enjoyed as a reading book rather than a 'have got a copy of this poem' book. An index of first lines or authors would be useful, because of the range of poems in this book it would be a useful tool if you do have someone searching for a particular title.

I am looking forward to sharing many gems from this book with groups in the library during our school holiday activities with titles like *'The Day the Spaceship took Aunt Meg'*, *'The Geebung Polo Club'* (a long held personal favourite) and *'Scotty's Wild Stuff Stew'*. There is much for everyone to enjoy.

Cathy Puzey, Youth Services Librarian, Mandurah Libraries, WA

Jim Haynes has selected and organized 388 pages of verse for Aussie kids, based on his Australian experiences as a teacher, writer and performer, with a preference for humour. Many of the chosen verses, such as *Betty Botter bought some butter*, may still be known in Australian playgrounds. However, this volume may introduce a new generation of our children to the delights of rhyme and verse.

Although Haynes emphasises 'Australian history and heritage' with his inclusion of classic verses by some well known Australians (eg. *The man from Snowy River*, Banjo Patterson, p. 126-29; *The ballad of the drover*, Henry Lawson, p. 132-33) it is important to note that not all the authors are Australian. Some anonymous additions are famously Australian (eg. *The wild colonial boy*, p. 152). I also particularly enjoyed Haynes own writing (eg. *Remember the waltzing*, p. 108) which showed how Australian history had influenced his writing. This particular verse is about an old lady reflecting on previously happy times with her soldier who does not return from the Kokoda Track. Examples such as this could be useful models for classroom writing sessions.

This is a great classroom bookshelf volume for teachers wanting to add more poetry to their teaching. I suggest that the inclusion of non-Australian writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson (eg. *Escape at bedtime*, p.103), Rudyard Kipling (eg. *A smuggler's song*, p. 144) adds to the versatility of this text in Australian classrooms.

However, this lengthy volume could be made more user friendly by the addition of an index of authors or an index of first lines. The contents page is arranged in themes such as *Creatures great and small, Life lessons and advice*. Given that this book appeals as one to be flicked through for enjoyment (rather than being read from front-to-back) some items have been hard to find. I will continue to use, share and enjoy this book whilst still hoping to find that *Bernard the bikie* and other indigenous favourites are included somewhere!

Dr Carmel Bochenek, Perth, WA

The *Big Book of Verse for Aussie Kids* is a useful tool for exploring poetry with children of all ages. Jim Haynes has selected poems by Australian poets such as AB 'Banjo' Paterson, CJ Dennis, and Max Fatchen, as well as non-Australian poets such as Christina Rossetti, Edward Lear, and the extremely funny Spike Milligan. Haynes, a talented poet himself, has also included some of his work, as well as many traditional poems, and poems created by the infamous 'Anonymous'! My only criticism is that he hasn't included any of Steven Herrick's fantastic poems which are so entertaining when performed well. The vast array of 'proud to be an Aussie' type poems are wonderful; there's everything from crazy limericks about gnus at Taronga Park Zoo, to tributes to firefighters battling fires in the Australian bush. There are also many poems which don't specifically relate to Australia, but are just as entertaining for children.

I am currently working at an international school in Japan with children from all around the world, and they have really enjoyed listening to and reading many of the poems from this collection. Some of the longer poems about the Australian bush are a little overwhelming for younger children, though *The Man from Snowy River* is always a winner if it is performed/recited well.

Overall, Jim Haynes has presented a terrific collection of poetry which brings joy to both Aussie and non-Aussie children and adults. The *Big Book of Verse for Aussie Kids* is worthy of a spot in every school library and on every classroom's bookshelf.

Rose Hoger, St Mary's International School, Japan

What a fantastic book. I am really looking forward to using this book in my 4/5/6 classroom this year. There are poems that can be implemented into different themes throughout the whole year. It is a very

intelligent collection of poems ranging from short, witty poems to the more detailed recounts of Australian History such as *The Man from Snowy River*.

I especially like that Jim Haynes not only compiled this collection of poetry but he has also included a selection of his own work as well.

It is definitely a welcome addition to the classroom bookshelf and I'm hoping that the school will be purchasing extra copies for the library.

Kay Borg, NSW

The Big Book of Verse for Aussie Kids is a wonderfully comprehensive collection of over 600 poems selected especially for Aussie kids. Carefully selected by Jim Haynes, it is, in my opinion, one of the most comprehensive Australia has to offer.

Australian poets from C J Dennis, Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson to name a few, leap from the pages into the homes and school rooms of Australian children. Children will read, laugh and recite verse from poets around the world.

This book is both an educational and cultural gift for children, teachers and parents. A variety of poetry styles including limericks, tongue twisters, Australian and nonsense verse are included to suit a wide audience. Poems by famous authors such as Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, Edward Lear and Robert Louis Stevenson grace these pages.

I love the collection and shall treasure my copy. My only suggestion would be to include an index.

Unfortunately there is no way to look for a particular poem or author at a glance. It would be a valuable addition to future publications.

Julie Huntley, Qld

Let's face it, sometimes teaching poetry can be a bit hard going. Many students seemed to be already pre-disposed to disliking poetry and it can be hard work to turn them onto the beauty of poetry. This diverse poetry anthology, however, brings out the absolute fun in poetry. It is probably most suitable for upper primary and junior high school, but some of the poems used could also be used for senior high school as well. The table of contents aptly gives you a clue of this type of anthology covering; crazy creatures; life's a laugh; mood and feelings; epitaphs; adventure, mystery and romance; tall stories; limericks; chants and games; life lessons and advice; fun with words; nonsense; tongue twisters; alphabets and so on. The poems range from classical to modern, longer poems to the very short (two lines) and comical to the nonsense.

The anthology utilises an impressive array of authors, many of whom are Australian. Authors range from the good old classics like Banjo Patterson to less well known poets such as Wilbur Howcroft and Stephen Whiteside. Not all of the authors are Australian, writers such as Rudyard Kipling and Spike Milligan who are also utilised because of their influence within Australia. The uses of this anthology for a Junior High School class are endless. The poems could be used as part of a larger unit on poetry or as one off's at the end of a lesson (ie the epitaphs and limericks). Students would have fun reciting aloud and trying to pick up on the often comical rhythm. Further development could include representation activities such as playacting, creative activities and so on. Of course, students can have lots of fun with these poems but they can also learn valuable skills in analysing poetic structure and language. This is a highly recommended book to any school library and/or English faculty.

Gersha Shteyman, Kesser Torah College, NSW