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# This is the Blackbird

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

**This is The Blackbird** is John Mole's third collection from Peterloo Poets, following **Boo to a Goose**, 1987, winner of that year's Signal prize, and **The Mad Parrot's Countdown**, 1990. The new book, tenderly and sharply illustrated by Mary Norman, as the first two were, reminds us that as a poet for children John Mole ranks with the finest of his contemporaries: poets such as Causley, Ted Hughes and Christopher Reid.

The world of these poems is continuously a children's place. Many pieces are rooted in children's play, in their theatre and pantomime. 'Mr Punch' is one such: 'Did he have friends / when he was a kid. / Oh no he didn't. / *Oh yes he did.*' And so on, the questioning brilliantly sustained for nine stanzas.

But the poems' world also draws on children's adult, 'serious' intuitions, their grown-up fears and perceptions, as in the wonderful 'The Shoes'. Mole's reader, for whose pleasure he writes 'and never down' is the young person who understands, or 'sometimes' nearly understands.

Serious, yes, but also very funny. In short poems, like this riddle: 'We sparkle when you smile, / We wobble when you cough, / Sometimes a metre seems a mile / When you take us off. (Glasses.) And in longer pieces like 'Learning to be a Ghost' and 'The Sad Story of Terrible Trevor, a would-be Dracula out-Dracula-ed', and the delicious 'The Song of Abner Brown', the cat: 'He *may* look fat, / He *may* look lazy, / But Abner's good / At going crazy.'

There is simply too much good stuff here even to touch on in a brief review. Children will recognise with delight his 'Unsuccessful Conjuror', and the characters in 'At the Pantomime'. They will relish his sketches of 'Miss Lowman-Lang' and 'The Jigsaw Man', and the spy: 'My black gloves are shiny, / My glasses are dark, / I wait on a bench / By a lake in the park.' You can't not read on. Children will love John Mole's poetry, once they 'if they' get enough of it: to hear, speak, read.

Running Order:

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**Links:**

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/this-is-the-blackbird>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/168>

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