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Spinning Through the Universe: A Novel in Poems from Room 214

Helen Frost

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Helen Frost : Spinning Through the Universe: A Novel in Poems from Room 214 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spinning Through the Universe: A Novel in Poems from Room 214:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A little jewel from Helen Frost By Super Librarian I remember yesterday, while reading Half a Chance by Cynthia Lord, the main character mentioning that her photographer dad would say "what you choose to cut out of the frame is as important as what you leave in". Well, I thought exactly the same thing as I finished this little book today. What Helen Frost chose to leave out is for us to fill in. She beautifully crafted poems that let us see just enough of who each character was and the "hand" he or she was dealt in their lives as fifth graders. While some readers might think she went overboard in the amount of problems these students had, I say wake up to this day and age! I've known fifth graders with worst problems than the ones presented in this book. The teacher character opens the story and closes it, there is very little known about her between those two poems. Perfect!

Once you read the book, go back and compare those two poems. This year I read *Because of Mr. Terrupt* by Rob Buyea as a read aloud to fifth graders in our library, and many of the students identified with this character or that one. I wish I had known of *Spinning Through the Universe* then, I can just imagine the fifth graders making comparisons with the characters in one book or another. As for the poetry... that was dessert! Isn't that a way to get some kids interested in writing verse? Loved, loved, the secret message in the acrostics. I can't believe I didn't see that when I first read the book. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. *Everything Works!* By Donald N. Mager. Everything works! The level of language, the teasing complexities, the discovery of personalities and little plot situations, the balance of affirmations which also acknowledge life complexities at the 5th grade level--all of it works and is audience appropriate. I also like the challenge of the forms and the occasional "strategic" placement of a metaphor that a young reader might have to chew in order to figure out. Naomi is a stroke of brilliance. In an age of kid-bashing and especially teacher-bashing, this book is such a powerful affirmation. It does not talk down to readers, and I can imagine a good teacher generating a whole sequence of discussions, assignments and projects from it. Even though aimed at 5th graders, I could (and would love to have the opportunity to) teach a college intro. creative writing class from this book! It is an eloquent demonstration why form matters, and what form can achieve. Without pretentiousness, each poem's achievement affirms that "emoting on paper" and the alleged sacredness of one's first inspiration/ draft (typical student writer assumptions) is all a bunch of bunk. Whether one is a 5th grader or not, teacher or not, if good poetry is in your diet, this book will nourish and feed you well. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good job! By A Customer. *Spinning Through the Universe* is a great book. It shows readers that not everyone has a perfect life. It shows different personalities from different points of view. We are 5th graders. We know what 5th graders are like. We think this is a great book for us to read. It is interesting, and it is beautiful. We like the poetry directions in the back.

Engrossing tales from the fifth grade Every child is like A little world with ever-changing weather, Nights and mornings. And somehow, here we are, Spinning through the universe together. Unforgettable students in this fifth-grade classroom reveal their private feelings about birth and death, a missing bicycle and a first kiss, as well as their thoughts about recess, report cards, fitting in, and family. Using a rich array of traditional poetic forms, such as sonnets, sestinas, and acrostics, Helen Frost interweaves the stories of the kids in Room 214 and their teacher. A final section giving detailed analyses of the twenty-two forms will be of special interest.

From School Library Journal Grade 4-8-Mrs. Williams's fifth-grade students are studying explorers, but there is a lot more going on in their complicated young lives. The teacher observes: "Every child is like/A little world with ever-changing weather,/Nights and mornings. And somehow, here we are,/Spinning through the universe together." In fact, Sam and his family are sleeping in his uncle's car, Andrew has trouble paying attention in class but can make a bike out of parts, Richard's dog has died, and Laura's mom has breast cancer. In this short novel written in verse, each student speaks in a unique poetic voice whose form is explained in detail in a "Notes on Forms" section. Jaquanna, for example, is represented in pantoum; Jon, with blank verse; and Shawna, Kate, Rosa, Natalie, Crystal, Monique, and Asha in a crown of sonnets. All of the poems in the second part are acrostics, except for Naomi's haiku, and readers will enjoy decoding them to reveal an additional thought about each character. Interwoven dramatic stories and interesting poetic patterns give this book extra appeal. A boon for poetry classes. -Lee Bock, Glenbrook Elementary School, Pulaski, WI Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Gr. 5-7. In a series of poems, first a fifth-grade teacher and then the students in her classroom talk about their lives at school and at home. A long final section analyzes the 22 poetic forms Frost has used, from sonnets and haiku to the lesser-known pantoum, tanka, and tercelle, with intricate details about their rhyme, meter, and repetition patterns. Most readers, however, will be more interested in the stories the poetry tells. The vignettes aren't as closely connected as they were in Frost's *Keesha's House*, a 2004 Printz Honor Book. Here the poems provide a glimpse of a greater diversity of characters. Richard mourns for his dog ("My ears are empty from the / Noises Pepperoni doesn't make"). Jack attacks stereotypes about his Indian people ("Pinch me. I'm not / extinct, like a dinosaur"). Some pieces are connected, as in the series of sonnets "It's Hard to Fit In," and some voices come back and surprise the reader, as when the bully Natalie reveals her humanity. In the best pieces, the rigorous form intensifies the feelings. Hazel Rochman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. Appropriate, original imagery and understated, natural voices make these poems sensitive and insightful...The notes on how the form in each poem works are of particular value to teachers eager to guide students in their own poetry writing. Starred, Kirkus sPoignantly conveyed...Readers may be surprised at the complexity of the rules governing the writing, so naturally does the author seem to capture the poetic essence of the children's voices - she makes it look like so much fun that readers may want to try some of the forms themselves. Starred, Publishers Weekly Written in verse, each student speaks in a unique poetic voice whose form is explained in detail in a 'Notes on Forms' section...Interwoven dramatic stories and interesting poetic patterns give this book extra appeal. A boon for poetry classes. School Library Journal Frost presents realistic problems in young people's lives in a gentle, almost tender fashion. Her poems truly capture the essence and

pathos of a classroom full of unique young people. Many readers will find someone that they know here.
VOYAFascinating. SIGNAL