

MIRROR MIRROR: A BOOK OF REVERSO POEMS BY MARILYN SINGER



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With 6 starred reviews, 8 best of the year lists, and over 20 state award nominations, everyone is raving about Mirror Mirror!

"Remarkable."—The Washington Post

"This mind-bending poetry is accompanied by Masse's equally intelligent, equally amusing art."—Time Out New York for Kids

What's brewing when two favorites—poetry and fairy tales—are turned (literally) on their heads? It's a revolutionary recipe: an infectious new genre of poetry and a lovably modern take on classic stories.

First, read the poems forward (how old-fashioned!), then reverse the lines and read again to give familiar tales, from Sleeping Beauty to that Charming Prince, a delicious new spin. Witty, irreverent, and warm, this gorgeously illustrated and utterly unique offering holds a mirror up to language and fairy tales, and renews the fun and magic of both.

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- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.25" h x .38" w x 10.38" l, .90 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 32 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

Most helpful customer reviews

50 of 51 people found the following review helpful.

Coming and going / Going and coming

By E. R. Bird

I like to think that the world of children's literature has gained a bit more respect in the last decade or so. Folks notice it and reference it more often. And as sales continue to be good and scholars take note of it more often, its sub-genres proliferate and gain acceptance. Graphic novelists of children's fare increase. Non-fiction writers for kids demand more attention. And then there are the poets. Poets like Marilyn Singer who has been doing good steady work for years and years. I'm looking at my watch and I see that it's just about

time that Ms. Singer get her due. How clever of her to make it easy on me by producing a poetry picture book that is not only fun, not only clever, and not only beautiful to look at, but also has a good FIVE stars from five professional review journals. "Mirror Mirror" is everything a person wants in a book for kids. It's enjoyable for children, who will pore over the wordplay for long stretches of time, and it's clever enough for the gatekeepers (librarians, teachers, parents, etc.) who want a poetry book for kids that doesn't take them to Snoresville, USA. "Mirror Mirror", in short, delivers.

Better flip to the back of the book (how appropriate!) if you want an explanation of what's going on here. Says the last page, "We read most poems down a page. But what if we read them up?" Calling such poems "reversos", Singer's concept is simple. Each poem is repeated. The one on the left is read down. Then Singer takes the same words, puts in some slightly different punctuation, and when each line is read backwards it tells an entirely new story. The stories in this book are fairy tales and Singer not only tells the tales frontwards and backwards but gives them new stories too. The ugly duckling, for example, has some doubts of his own potential beauty. In his upbeat poem he says confidently, "Plain to see - / look at me. / A beauty I'll be." Then doubts set in and he sighs, "A beauty I'll be? / Look at me - / plain to see." One of the smartest books out there for kids, young readers will be entranced by Singer's wordplay and Masse's lovely (if not equally clever) illustrations.

When I first heard of a "reverso" I thought it meant a poem where every single word is backwards when it repeats. Fortunately, Singer has no wish to drive herself bonkers. It's not every word that's backwards, but lines. This makes for great wordplay, and some creative solutions. My favorite is the poem that I think also comes across as the cleverest. "In the Hood" is a Little Red Riding Hood take. It's short, so I can write it in full here. On the Little Red side of the equation it reads, "In my hood / skipping through the wood / carrying a basket / picking berries to eat - / juicy and sweet / what a treat! / But a girl / mustn't dawdle. / After all, Grandma's waiting." The wolf replies, "After all, Grandma's waiting, / mustn't dawdle . . . / But a girl! / What a treat - / juicy and sweet, / picking berries to eat, / carrying a basket, / skipping through the wood / in my `hood."

Alas, not every poem is equally strong. I found I was a little baffled by the Rapunzel verses, since I couldn't figure out who was telling each of the two poems. Generally speaking, though, these glitches are the exception rather than the rule. And if you don't care for one poem, you're bound to think another is fantastic.

Most folks will probably look at the pictures here and assume that illustrator Josee Masse utilizes a kind of paint on wood technique similar to the work of Stefano Vitale. Not the case, I assure you. According to her editor, "she painted the pieces of art with acrylic paint on illustration board. She uses an undercoat of acrylic which is what gives the texture Then she builds up colors on top of that". These puppies clearly took serious work to make. What I like about the pictures too is how well she has split the pictures that accompany the poems into two mirror-like images. Their details reflect how well Masse has understood the text too. For example, in the poem "Do You Know My Name?" the girl from the Rumpelstiltskin story laments that even though she's the beloved heroine, no one ever knows her name. On the opposite page we see the little man dancing beside a fire that burns his name into smoke, while on the other side that smoke has turned into golden thread that spells out nothing at all. Extra points to Masse for taking the time to draw a correct bobbin on a spinning wheel too. Most artists of that story don't take the time (Paul Zelinsky being an exception).

I can't help but think that with the success of this book Singer and Masse will simply have to give in to the demands of their fans and do a sequel of sorts. Why, they could take nursery rhymes in the second! Then classic children's books in the third. Then famous women from history, tall tales, presidents, the list goes on and on. For now, though, we can enjoy this single Reverso collection, possibly the first of its kind for kids.

Beautiful both as object and as a way of getting kids interested in poetic forms, this is a must purchase for any library or home collection. One of a kind.

Ages 4-8

28 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating!

By Ulyyf

This is a great concept, and a good book.

Each poem is readable frontwards and backwards, with each line acting as its own unit. (This means some of the lines are quite short, of course.)

And the front and the back version of each poem tells the fairy tale from a different perspective. My favorite? The Hansel and Gretel one:

Fatten up, boy!
Don't you
like prime rib?
Then your hostess, she will roast you
goose.
Have another chocolate.
Eat another piece of gingerbread.
When you hold it out,
your finger
feels like
a bone.
Fatten up.
Don't
keep her waiting...

Keep her waiting.
Don't
fatten up.
A bone
feels like
your finger
when you hold it out.
Eat another piece of gingerbread,
Have another chocolate -
Goose!
Then your hostess, she will roast you
like prime rib.
Don't you
fatten up, boy!

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Can't Praise It High Enough

By Heidi Anne Heiner

This book is unique and wonderful, mostly what I imagined, but done so much better than I anticipated.

Singer and Masse manage to provide both sides of the story from famous fairy tales, using similar imagery--and in Singer's case, the exact same words--to convey differing viewpoints. I've rarely seen this done so well if at all since my memory is failing to produce another example.

Yes, you need this one for your personal library. I've enjoyed it myself as an adult without a child present but also anticipate using it with children in the future.

This one can be enjoyed for mere entertainment alone, but it has so many possible applications for teaching and learning, too. It's a "must own" for any school or public library. I haven't been this excited about a picture book in a while and will be shocked if this one isn't in high contention for a Caldecott and other honors over the coming year.

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