



Poetry for You: the best new poetry books, recommended by leading editors of children's poetry

[Poetry Special](#) [1]

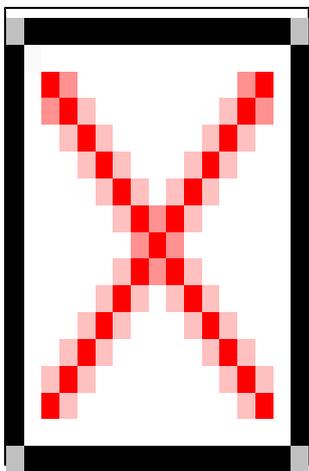
Byline:

The books that are exciting the UK's poetry editors

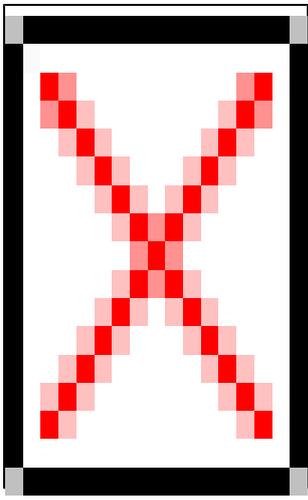
2020 for all its challenges has been a year of poetry, something that has really cheered all of us at **Books for Keeps**. As everyone enjoys the celebrations for **National Poetry Day**, we asked the poetry editors who are behind the upsurge in children's poetry to tell us about the new collections coming this autumn and into spring 2021.

Gaby Morgan, editorial director, Macmillan Children's Books

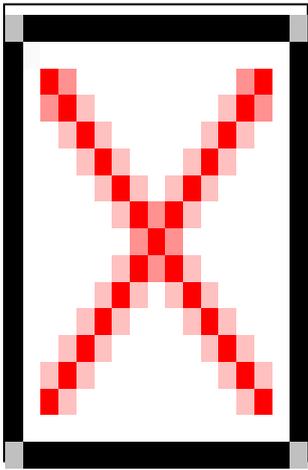
We are living in interesting times and poetry has been a source of great comfort and support to so many people ? I have never seen so much poetry shared on social media and so many poems going viral. I was working on **Poems to Save the World** with Chris Riddell ? the third of his exquisitely illustrated gift anthologies - as lockdown began, and the book evolved to fit the moment. It is filled with poems of hope and consolation and poems that speak of unity and togetherness from poets as varied as William Blake, Neil Gaiman, Roger McGough, Maggie Smith, Fiona Benson and Anne Sexton.



Ana Sampson delivered the manuscript for **She Will Soar: Bright, brave poems of freedom by women**, a sister collection for the wonderful and much praised **She Is Fierce: Brave, bold and beautiful poems by women**, at the start of the year. We had no idea just how relevant an uplifting collection of poems about freedom, wanderlust and escape written by women would be this autumn. It includes poems from over 100 poets from the ancient world right up to the present day including Carol Ann Duffy, Nikita Gill, Salena Godden, Christina Rossetti, Emily Dickinson and Grace Nichols. This beautiful book includes a biography of each poet at the back.



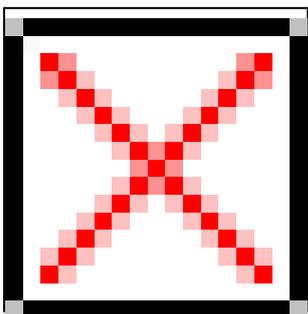
Allie Esiri has selected poems from her bestselling anthologies ? **A Poem for Every Night of the Year** and **A Poem for Every Day of the Year** - to make four seasonal paperback volumes. They are beautiful and perfectly portable so that you can have exactly the right poem for any given day to hand. **A Poem for Every Autumn Day** published in August and **A Poem for Every Winter Day** publishes on the 29th of October.



Another highlight this year is **Slam! You?re Gonna Wanna Hear This** edited by Nikita Gill. This is a joyful celebration of the ground-breaking poets making their voices heard in the spoken word scene. With poets such as Raymond Antrobus, Sophia Thakur and Dean Atta guest starring alongside up-and-coming poets, this is the perfect introduction to the world of modern poetry for teens and up and there is a fantastic audio book too.

Paul Cookson?s latest collection **Football 4 Every 1 fantastically funny poems for all footy fans!** is illustrated by Martin Chatterton and includes 92 brilliant poems ? one for every minute of the match plus one for half-time and one for extra time. This highly illustrated paperback book captures *all* of the emotions involved in following the beautiful game.

Next Spring I am really looking forward to publishing a beautiful paperback edition of **Poems to Fall in Love With**, poems about all kinds of love selected and illustrated by Chris Riddell.



In February we have **Shaping the World 40 Historical Heroes in Verse** compiled by Liz Brownlee. This is a gorgeous,

quirky gift hardback anthology of shape poems in the shape of world shapers! Each poem has a biography, quote and fascinating fact on the facing page. There are poems about Socrates, Shakespeare, Beethoven, Greta Thunberg, Nelson Mandela, Emmeline Pankhurst and Rosa Parks to name but a few.

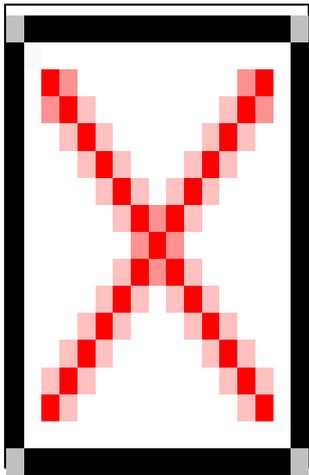
Finally, don't miss **The Best Ever Book of Funny Poems** chosen by Brian Moses coming in March and perfect for readers of 7+. This wonderfully funny anthology includes poems about pets, funny creatures, school, family, fantasy and fairy-tales, dinosaurs and dragons, space, and just plain silly poems.

Janetta Otter-Barry, Otter-Barry Books

2020 has been a year of brilliant poetry for all ages from **Otter-Barry Books**.

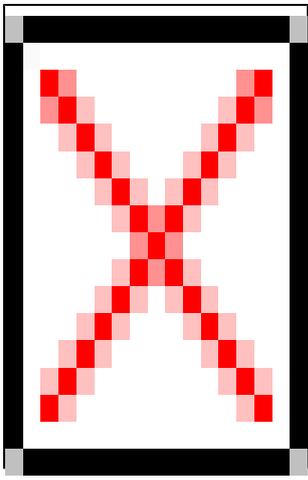
We started the year with Paul Cookson's captivating [There's a Crocodile in the House \[2\]](#). Paul pitched this collection to a KS1 audience though, like all poetry, it works for a wide age range. I love the mischief and jokes that mingle with the quieter poems and a special feature is the 'performance tips' so teachers/librarians/parents can make the most of this highly interactive collection.

Another fantastic book with instructions for adult participation is **Big Green Crocodile**, by preschool practitioner Jane Newberry and Carolina Rabei. It's a picture book of play rhymes and I love that these rhymes are completely original, yet tried and tested by the author, and that it's easy to act them out with babies and toddlers. There are beautiful colour illustrations too.



I admire the diversity and inclusion of Justin Coe's **The Magic of Mums**. There's empathy and sensitivity in these poems about 46 different kinds of mum. Laughter and fun are hugely important and the mainly rhyming verse makes the poems very accessible, but there's also a serious exploration of what it means to be a mother.

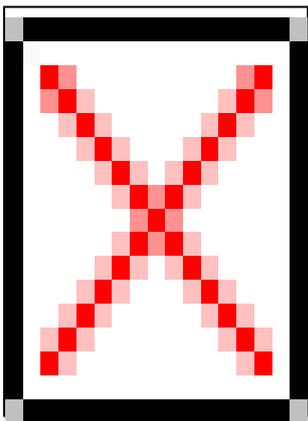
We are thrilled to publish **Belonging Street** by Mandy Coe. These are poems with a big heart. I love the way Mandy's eye for detail picks out the comedy and quirks of family life, while her love of nature and concern for the environment shine through, helping the reader see the world afresh. Puzzles, riddles and wordplay provide an extra dimension. This is poetry of immense craft and skill, a joy to share.



We have one exciting debut collection this year, Laura Mucha's fabulous **Dear Ugly Sisters**. Funny, edgy, very contemporary and often surprising, these poems have a distinctive voice, often in the first person, incorporating shape poems, visual surprises on the page and endings with a twist. Laura captures moments of questioning, explores feelings, fairy tale, science and nature. This is a wide-ranging collection from a poet to watch.

And so to the publication of [The Girl Who Became a Tree \[3\]](#) by Joseph Coelho. It's the first time we've published a YA verse novel and it's been an empowering journey, working closely with the poet. From first manuscript we knew we had something truly original and special and the finished book, with darkly evocative pictures by Kate Milner, shows the power of a story told in poems. Using a variety of different forms, the poet unpeels the outer layers of Daphne's grief over the loss of her father, switching between the contemporary girl and the Daphne of Greek myth. With a mix of fantasy and real life and unforgettable characters, including the forest itself, Daphne journeys towards understanding, hope and renewal. This book shows a poet reaching new heights with his verse.

And finally, heading towards Christmas, two wonderful treasures of poetry and illustration. In **Crocodile Tears**, publishing 8 October, poetry legend Roger McGough presents a deceptively simple yet profound picture book, with animator Greg McLeod, about the crocodile who leaves the jungle for the bright lights of London but soon longs for home. Witty, dark, funny and touching, the story is told in rhyming four line verses and poems in the form of letters to Mother. Brilliant!



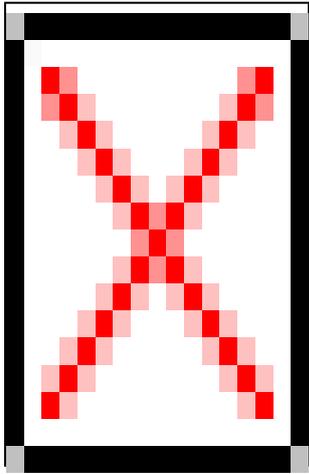
And lastly, those gems of early childhood, nursery rhymes. The **Jackie Morris Book of Classic Nursery Rhymes** contains 40 familiar and lesser known rhymes brought to beautiful life through the amazing pictures of Jackie Morris. This is poetry for everyone, 0-90, and Jackie's mission is to help these precious rhymes become known and loved by families today, to be passed on through the generations.

Thank you to all our fantastic poets and illustrators for the magic that happens when poetry and readers connect.

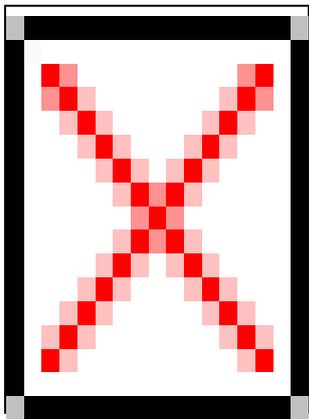
Hannah Rolls, editorial director Bloomsbury Children's Books

2020 has been a brilliant year of poetry for us here at Bloomsbury. We started with **Welcome to My Crazy Life** by [Joshua Seigal](#)

[4] in January, which features poems on every topic from demon cats, to coffee monsters, to why you should NEVER forget your trousers. This is a must-have new collection from the winner of the [2020 Laugh Out Loud \[5\]](#) awards. Aimed at children aged 8+, this is perfect for anyone who still thinks poetry is boring. A word of warning: find a hankie before you attempt to read *Barney*, the last poem in this collection about a much-loved family dog. Watching Joshua reduce about half the Bloomsbury staff to tears at our last in-person sales presentation before lockdown was a personal highlight this year ? a reminder of how powerful the books we publish can be.



Bright Bursts of Colour by Matt Goodfellow published in February and is his first book for Bloomsbury. There's plenty of comedy to enjoy here (a slug who dresses up as a badger for instance) but Matt also has an outstanding ability to focus in on the things that really affect children: what it's like to live half the week with Mum and half with Dad, or how it feels when a friend moves away, for example. With engaging illustrations from Aleksei Bitskoff, this is a collection to treasure.



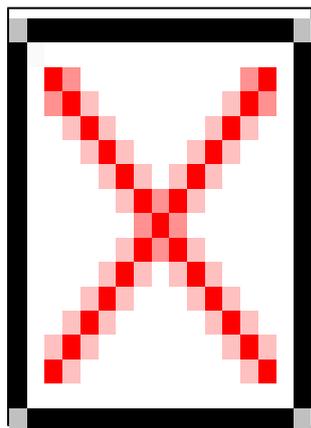
The arrival of **National Poetry Day** in October always results some poetry gems and this year is no different. In September we published two books which I think will become future classics. The first of these is **The Book of Not Entirely Useful Advice** by the inimitable A.F. Harrold, illustrated by picture book star Mini Grey. This is a riotous celebration of words and a modern take on cautionary tales ? featuring advice on parrots, gravy, mathematics, castles (bouncy), spiders, vegetables (various), breakfast, cakes, and removing ducks from soup. Mini's artwork compliments the silly fun perfectly, making this a collection that will delight readers of all ages.

Our other poetry book this autumn is an anthology: **Fire Burn, Cauldron Bubble** edited by Paul Cookson. This is a selection of poems on the theme of magic and includes work by a range of poets old and new ? everyone from Shakespeare, Lewis Carroll and Tennyson to John Agard, Valerie Bloom and Benjamin Zephaniah. Dragons, wizards, wands, unicorns, magic carpets? you'll find every kind of magic in this gorgeous hardback along with stunning illustrations by Eilidh Muldoon.

Martin West, director, Troika Books

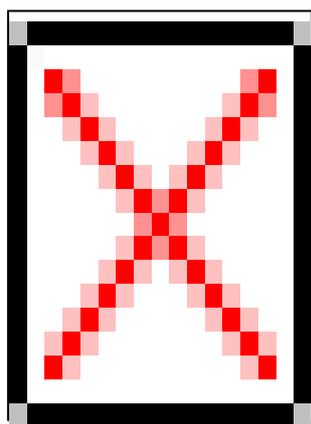
In the past two years Troika has been working towards making our poetry books more eclectic, more challenging, and

more sumptuous for the reader to enjoy. We think poetry is a literary gift and that the whole book should reflect this in cover presentation and interior design and format and production. So in our illustrated collections we've striven to find the right illustrator to suit the tone, nuance and imagination of the poet's work.



In 2020 we published Dom Conlon's quirky collection celebrating the mysterious and magical moon, **This Rock, That Rock**, illustrated by Viviane Schwarz who captures Dom's lunar delight and infatuation perfectly.

Dreamlike, inventive, and magical, Sue Hardy Dawson's **If I were Other than Myself**, was published in April. It is beautifully illustrated by Sue herself, the soft gentle but always surprising images reflecting the language in Sue's inimitable imagination.



Coral Rumble's brilliant new collection, **Riding a Lion**, was published in August. Coral's writing reflects on our ever changing moods capturing a rich collage of experiences, emotions and thoughts and Emily Ford's illustrations perfectly match the poetic exuberance and moods with their lightness, flightiness and unexpected imagery.

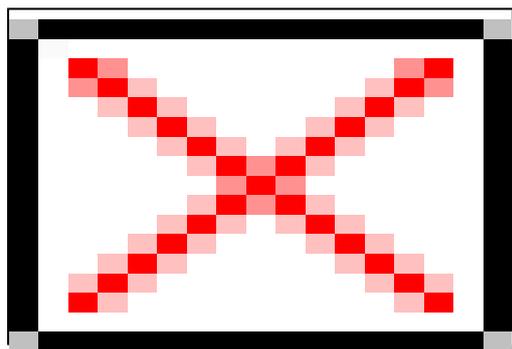
Shauna Darling Robertson's first collection for children, **Saturdays at the Imaginarium**, was published in September. Shauna's work celebrates creative thinking and encourages curiosity and revels in the pleasure of looking at things from a new perspective. Jude Wisdom's illustrations evoke the characters and the worlds Shauna so inventively creates and adds an extra layer of pure imagination and surrealism to it all.

We are delighted to be releasing the first paperback edition of the widely praised and much lauded **Firecrackers** by Zaro Weil, illustrated by Jo Riddell. In October our **Poetry Guide, A handbook for teachers and librarians**, written by Bernard Young and Trevor Millum, will support the incredible efforts of school librarians, teachers and public librarians to teach and promote poetry to children.

Looking forward to spring 2021 we are very excited to be publishing, **Little Light**, a poetic novel by Coral Rumble. This is an inventive and evocative story of a young girl called Ava facing daily challenges in her life and how she overcomes them. In a seamless poetic narrative Coral creates a world peppered with utterly believable characters and feelings and highlights very sensitively the dilemmas and challenges some young people face as they grow up.

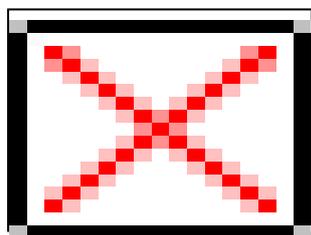
Emma Wright of Birmingham based independent The Emma Press, is excited about Bicki-Books.

We published **Bicki-Books** at the start of 2020. The **Bicki-Books** are a really unique series, with almost too many interesting things about them to describe.



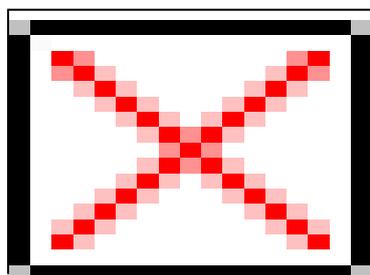
At first glance, they are little picture-books, about the size of a postcard. Each one contains a poem, spread out across pages and put into a picture-book format by the illustrator. But also, each one has a different illustrator, working in a very different style, from papercuts to colouring pencils to embroidery to digital collage. And they're translated from Latvian!

So: they're miniature, translated, beautifully-illustrated, poetry picture-books, and there are currently twelve of them (in Latvia there are 101, but we're not quite there yet ? The Emma Press published six last year and six this year). As a fun bit of background, they are the brainchild of R?ta Briede, a lecturer at the Art Academy of Latvia, as a way of sharing the classic poems of her childhood with her daughter. Many of the original books had gone out of print, so the Bicki-Books were a way of bringing these poems to a new generation of children ? and now they are available to children in the UK too.



Everyone falls in love with the **Bicki-Books** when they see them and hold them in their hands ? they're an adorable size, and little children love sorting through them and poring over the detailed illustrations. They're suitable for children aged 3+ because of the size and the artwork, but the poems themselves are pitched at slightly older children, so they work as gifts for 6+ too.

The **Bicki-Books** we published this year (numbers 7-12) feature translations by Kate Wakeling, author of **CLiPPA**-winning **Moon Juice**, ?anete V?vere Pasqualini and Kaija Straumanis, and the poems are wonderfully lively. For example, in *Secret* by J?zeps Osmani? illustrated by Ingr?da Pi?uk?ne and by Kate and ?anete ? a boy takes a long time to swear his mother to secrecy but ends up forgetting the big secret, and the illustrator has hidden a riddle throughout the illustrations.



A lot of people's favourite is **I want a little puppy dog** by Ilm?rs ?l?pins, illustrated by D?rta Stafecka and translated

by Kaija Straumanis. It stars a man who is desperate for a puppy and willing to go to any lengths to get one, including kidnapping, but in the end there's a twist: he's allergic. The poem is delightful, and the illustrations are extraordinary ? incredibly intricate embroidery which was photographed for the book. It's completely lovely.

You can buy them individually or in sets of six from [The Emma Press website](#) [6] ? these chunky packets make a lovely gift for friends with children and are perfect stocking-fillers.

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