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Let in the Stars: New Poetry for Children

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off

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This anthology is compiled from entries submitted to the **Manchester Writing for Children Poetry Competition** and is illustrated by students from the **Manchester School of Art**. It includes poets who are already widely published and many that are not, but it is a collection of consistently high quality. Its range is wide both in content and approach. There are poems that rely on sound, story poems, observational poems and reflective poems; poems that play with language, poems that deal with school life and pets, and poems that recall fairy tale and nursery rhyme. Carol Ann Duffy, apart from being Poet Laureate is also Creative Director of the Manchester Writing School, and, in an introductory quote, she says that this is a collection that, 'sends an important message that poetry written for children must be taken seriously.'? And, while there are humorous poems, you shouldn't expect the kind of all out for laughs performance poetry that has in the past characterised a lot of work for children. Nor should you expect the familiar stuff about horrible brothers and sisters or the eternal battle of children with parents and teachers. These poems are more thoughtful and, possibly, more challenging: poems, as Philip Gross, one of judges of the competition says, that affirm that 'each child is a unique variation on the human?'. They tend to express individual sensibilities, and this, curiously, given that the poems are drawn from across the (admittedly mostly western) world, tends to flatten out any cultural or social identities, drawing the poems into a special somewhat cerebral poetic world. As far as the book's production goes, it would have been good to have some sort of introduction about the competition itself and some short notes about each of the contributors, especially as there are poets here that readers may not recognise.

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