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MAYL810
Review 3 Poetry Book

Bulion, Leslie. *Spi-ku: A Clutter of Short Verse on Eight Legs*. Illustrated by Robert Meganck. Peachtree, 2021. Grades 2-6.

In this science poetry collection, the world of spiderkind is explored through a delightful web of art, verse, and science. Rather than exploring spiders solely by species, the collection is organized by topic. Each topic includes informational paragraphs, poems starring spiders well suited for each topic, and illustrations of these spiders. For example, “Spiders on the Move” features 3 spider species moving across the pages (12-13). The golden wheel spider kicks up sand as they roll down the page. Each tiny grain is meticulously illustrated, encapsulating the spider’s movement (13).

Robert Meganck’s illustrations bring each spider to life by blending anthropomorphism and realism. The spiders feature human-like eyes, bringing a cartoonish playfulness to the spiders. At the same time, these illustrations realistically emphasize each spider’s most memorable features. The Goliath Bird-Eating Spider takes up an entire page, emphasizing the spider’s size (25). The Tiger-Wandering Spider’s hair is vividly textured, emphasizing how they use their hair to touch-taste their environment (22).

Although the illustrations and the information respectively show and tell the story of a spider, the poetry encapsulates the spirit of a spider. Leslie Bulion utilizes a blend of free verse and closed forms to create concise, playful poems. Concrete poetry demonstrates how a Green Ant-Hunter Spider waves their front legs to scare off predators (21). Two-voice poetry captures a conversation between a Featherlegged Orbweaver and a hummingbird thief (27). Capturing the process of molting, Bulion includes the following cinquain: “comfy / on her silk pad / tarantula bursts her / tight exoskeleton and splits— / all’s swell!” (11). By adding two syllables with each new line, Bulion masterfully builds momentum as the tarantula molts. By dropping down to two syllables in the final line, Bulion celebrates the tarantula breaking free of their molt.

By weaving together poetry, art, and science, *Spi-ku* celebrates the biodiversity of spiderkind. Just as Nic Bishop captures the life of spiders through the art of photography in *Spiders*, Leslie Bulion brings spiders to life through the art of poetry. Whether read on the page or read aloud, it’s as informative as it is delightful.