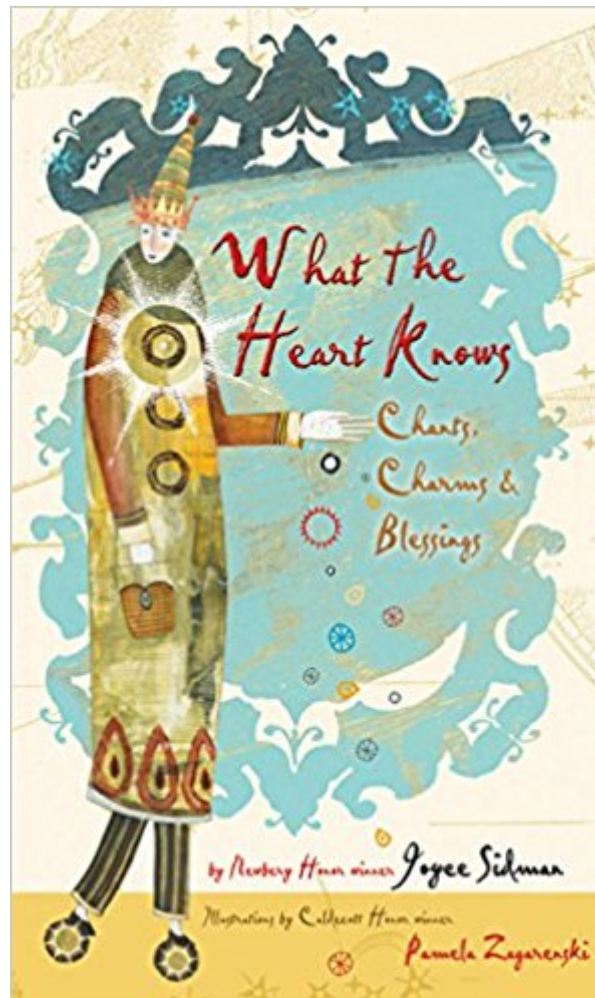


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What The Heart Knows: Chants, Charms, And Blessings



Synopsis

What the Heart Knows: Chants, Charms, and Blessings is a collection of poems to provide comfort, courage, and humor at difficult or daunting moments in life. It conjures forth laments, spells, invocations, chants, blessings, promises, songs, and charms. Here are pleas on how to repair a friendship, wishes to transform one's life or to slow down time, charms to face the shame of a disapproving crowd, invocations to ask for forgiveness, to understand the mysteries of happiness, and to bravely face a dark and different world. These words help us remember or grieve; they bolster courage and guard against evil; they help us celebrate and give thanks. This elegant gift book also includes a red ribbon for readers to mark their favorite poems. Poet extraordinaire Joyce Sidman won the Newbery Honor Medal for *Dark Emperor* and *Other Poems of the Night* and continues to write poetry for children that has been called "fresh," "inspiring," and "accessible" to her young audience. She is intrigued by the idea of "words of power"—chants and charms that were once believed to have real influence in everyday life. Caldecott Honor-winning Pamela Zagarenski's beautiful art captures a world of emotion and the essence of Sidman's words.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review Newbery Honor winner Sidman and Caldecott Honor winner Zagarenski once again join together to create a beautiful and meaningful book. Sidman tells readers in her

introduction that chanting, blessing, lamenting, and cursing are as old as human history. Her poetic offerings will touch today's readers, whose feelings and fears are remarkably similar to those of our ancestors. This slim volume is divided into four parts: "Chants and Charms" (to bolster courage and guard against evil) uses repetition in both a chant about repairing a friendship and a charm against the dark. "Spells and Invocations" (to cause something to happen) ranges from the practical—finding lost items—to the improbable—asking time to speed up or slow down. The sadder "Laments and Remembrances" (to remember, regret, or grieve) brings readers close to the bone with ruminations about illness, death, and loss. "Praise Songs and Blessings" (to celebrate, thank, or express love) ends the book on a high note. And while not every celebration might seem of the highest order—for instance, "Blessing on the Curl of a Cat"—the words make you see things differently. If pictures can be poetic, then Zagarenski's surely are. Her signature stylized mixed-media pictures can be intricately designed, but some are spare: a teddy bear and a crown hugging the bottom of a tall page. An evocative book that pulls readers to a special place—their hearts. Grades 7-12. --Ilene Cooper

"Poems of bravery, love, heartbreak, justice, and peace unite to offer readers of all ages solace, inspiration, and strength." Publishers Weekly, starred review "Profound, lushly illustrated poems explore some of life's more trying moments. . . . A winning combination of word and image sure to challenge readers both to contemplate big subjects and to act." Kirkus, starred review "An evocative book that pulls readers to a special place--their hearts." Booklist, starred review "Readers just edging toward adult poetry and those filling their notebooks with their own lyrics will find this elegant little title perfect for poetic dreams." The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books "Poetry fans will savor the wordplay and whimsy, as teachers appreciate both its craft and wide appeal. Poetry fans will savor the wordplay and whimsy, as teachers appreciate both its craft and wide appeal." School Library Journal "Each poem speaks directly from Sidman's heart to the reader's, addressing subjects of deep importance . . . Zagarenski's illustrations beautifully extend the poems with her dreamy style and deft use of white space, symbolism, and images from Sidman's text." The Horn Book Magazine, starred review

"We may no longer believe that words can make crops grow, prevent illness, or keep rivers from

flooding. But we still believe in the power of words themselves. Why else would we pray, sing, or write? Finding phrases to match the emotion inside us still brings an explosive, soaring joy."There have been many titles I have considered posting. And, then. . . yesterday morning, a book dropped on my front porch. I had been waiting for it with great expectation. And I was moved beyond consideration of posting about this book. I was compelled to. . . And this is that share. Joyce Sidman has given us a number of collections to celebrate in the past ten years. Whether it has been the wonder of the meadow (BUTTERFLY EYES), the world found in a pond (SONG OF THE WATERBOATMAN), or the "who" of creativity and innovation (EURKEKA! POEMS ABOUT INVENTORS), Sidman is a go-to poet for younger readers for her special treatment of non-fiction subjects. One begins to sense how special WHAT THE HEART KNOWS with just a quick glance of the cover art. Pamela Zagerenski is the 2013 Caldecott Award winner for her work in SLEEP LIKE A TIGER. Zagerenski early or otherworldly figures walk on wheels and keep their hands tucked inside of buckets rendered like hearts for the sprinklings of wonder and magic. They shine in their heart places. They reach out to other figures in companionship. They hold up bowls to catch a single drop of rain. They ride upon roosters and they protect the sanctity of special boxes that must contain all of the secrets of a world of wonder until they are ready to be opened. Each illustration is wonderfully-paired with the piece it accompanies. And each illustration is an invitation to write in the place of good company. But it is Sidman's verse that we celebrate. In her Note to Readers, Sidman reminds us: "We speak to send messages to the world. We chant for what we want, bless what we like, lament what we have lost. We angry we curse; when in love, we sing." Here, Sidman not only gives younger readers a lesson in language and how it is used, her invitation to the collection is a language and composition instructor's dream for an excerpt and mentor text. Sidman separates the different approaches to poetry in four distinct categories: Chants & Charms (to bolster courage and guard against evil) Spells and Invocations (to cause something to happen) Laments and Remembrances (to remember, regret, or grieve) and Praise Songs & Blessings (to celebrate, thank, or express love) At first glance, one might look at the categories and begin to sense an immediate challenge from a potentially-sensitive reading community. And this would be regrettable in the case of Sidman's new collection because none of the pieces within the collection point to the dark notions associated with spiritual or spirited writing. And who could make an argument against reading and writing for the purposes of remembering, celebrating, thanking, or giving love? It is hard to select a favorite piece from each category. What I will attempt to do instead is to point to a piece that serves to invite us to rethink our definition of the forms via Sidman's treatment of them. Chants & Charms begins with a triolet, "Chant to Repair a Friendship": Come, friend, forgive the past; I was wrong and

I am grieving. Tell me that this break won't last--Take my hand, forgive the past. A beautiful invitation to reconciliation that speaks with brevity the state of a friend's grieving heart to a friend's ear. The Chants & Charms section of the book became my immediate favorite. With pieces that invite happiness, help the reader to notice the places where poetry may be, and a list of things that set us all free, the collection opens with an immediate invitation to rethink how we might feel about writing in the spiritual places. Spells & Invocations might call to mind for the reader the weird sisters of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or the Barbadoan musings of Tituba in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Sidman offers a definition of each before launching into wonderfully-whimsical pieces like "Invitation to Lost Things." "Come out, come out from your hiding places, hair clips, homework, phones. Come, show yourselves, mittens, earrings, socks. Come play your part. Come find your mates, come cleave together. There is a place you belong. For we, careless giants, don't know your dainty paths, can't read the maps you follow. Who among us might not read this poem before the dryer? Or through our overcoats? Under the bed? Within this section of pieces, Sidman's "Starting Now" would work so nicely along-side of driving rock songs like Van Halen's "Right Now" or Chris Daughtry's "What about Now?" The agelessness of Sidman's work here is part of its overall magic. WHAT THE HEART KNOWS is instantly more than a collection. It is an invitation to consider. As one who has taught Tuesdays with Morrie (via having read it aloud some fifty-four times at the time of this posting), I really appreciated Sidman's "Illness: A Conversation" and saw within the piece a natural ladder between the poetry and the prose. With illness at the center of both works, both are an invitation to consider and to converse. I won't offer the piece here (I want you to go out and get this collection). But, if you are teaching Tuesdays with Morrie or The Last Lecture, you will definitely want this piece to share with your readers. Laments & Remembrances is an invitation for readers young and old to consider the literary form of Lamentations found in the bible. How these moments of pause to remember via eulogy can be powerful in the moment. For younger readers, this may be an opportunity to say goodbye to a cherished belonging which Sidman models in her "Lament for Teddy." Older readers might enjoy (if this is the right word) visiting the eulogies given for notable figures in Cyrus M. Copeland's *FAREWELL, GODSPEED: THE GREATEST EULOGIES OF OUR TIME*. Praise Songs & Blessings includes the celebration of teachers and teaching, offers a "Silly Love Song" (how a lead learner would not bring in the Paul McCartney and Wings song here would be . . . lamentable). And the collection ends with "I Find Peace" which offers an invitation to consider the listing approach to writing poetry as much as it invites the reader--young and old--to consider in their busy worlds where they do--indeed--find peace. For the reader--young and old--WHAT THE HEART KNOWS serves as a wonderful reminder to stop and to consider what the heart wants to

repair, to remember, and to revisit via blessings and praise. It is a simple pleasure to share Joyce Sidman's newest collection with you here. Our readers--young and old--still need the poetic form to put words to their emotions. Sidman models. Sidman mentors. Sidman--in WHAT THE HEART REMEMBERS--amazes.

This precious poetry collection is a treasure to have and keep close. The book itself is beautiful, with patterned end papers, a satiny red ribbon bookmark, and rich, thick pages. The poetry speaks to the soul, asking the reader to be more self-aware, and touches on issues of sadness, wonderment, gratitude, forgiveness and delight in the moment. The illustrations offer a sweet repose for poetic contemplation. It is deeply meaningful, yet simple and direct enough for the very young. I have purchased this book for children, teens, and adult friends, and one sits on my own shelf at home.

Joyce Sidman writes poetry for children? Yes, and I have several of her books. So, I must also be a child, at least, in my heart because I am entering my 7th decade and this book of poetry is for me. I just bought two more copies to give as gifts to friends who are also 'children at heart'. I hope she will be inspired to give us more of this to share.

I love this book. The poems are terrific, the illustrations beautiful. I have turned to this book in tough moments for help, comfort, and peace. Kids may be the target audience, but I see this book as appropriate for adults, as well. I have given this book as a gift twice; both recipients love it.

Beautiful little book with equally beautiful illustrations!

This is a collection of thoughtful, brief poems beautifully illustrated. The author has articulated common hopes, dreams and fears in words that match feelings. A great gift book and one to be consulted during many of life's transitions.

A precious book that will touch your heart and soul with its poetry and illustrations!

Beautiful book. Pamela Zagarenski is a gifted artist. This is a wonderful book to share with family.

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