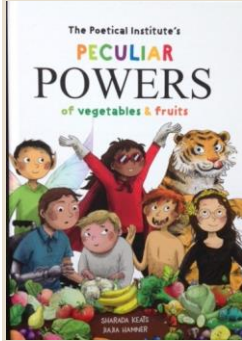


THE LETTERPRESS PROJECT

Inspiring Young Readers



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***The Poetical Institute's Peculiar Powers of Vegetables and Fruit* by Sharada Keats, illustrated by JiaJia Hamner**

If you know a child who loathes leeks, hates haricot beans, finds radishes revolting or is sickened by swedes, this may well be the book you need to get them. This beautifully illustrated hardback by Sharada Keats is a fabulously tongue-in-cheek homage to the power of fruit and vegetables.

You'll find [The Poetical Institute](#) on this website and their mission statement is admirably clear:

"Children are surrounded by advertisements, promotions, and enticing marketing for junk foods: we want to generate some positive propaganda around fruits and vegetables!"

What we get here are a series of poems split into seven differently themed sections, with each poem ascribing an interesting, daring or even an unworldly identity to some of our favourite fruit and veg.

The whole book is an unabashed plea for the 5-a-day:

"For powers beyond your wildest dreams

Forget about sorcery, steroids, or creams..

Just crunch your vegetable or fruit:

Hey Presto! You'll be cuddly cute,

A dance sensation, super-brave..

Whatever scrummy skill you crave."

It's probably just as well that we're given a very clear disclaimer right at the outset.. everything in here is true except for those bits that aren't. Fair enough – especially as the author and illustrator tell us:

“We have a watertight defence:

It's called poetic license.”

It's worth bearing this in mind when you read the list of glowing celebrity endorsements (!) as well.

And, frankly, who cares how much of this is true when you're having such good fun. I'm even prepared to turn a blind eye to some of my own mortal enemies – like guacamole, zucchini and cauliflower.

What really sets this collection alight is the positively sumptuous illustration by JiaJia Hamner – glowing colours, full and half page that bring the poems to life. I should also make mention of the way diversity gets represented here – it's great to see disability, for example, being incorporated here as a normal and everyday characteristic.

The great thing about this collection is that everyone will have different favourites and, at the moment, I'm especially keen on the section called *'Weird & Wonderful'* and *'Supernatural Food-nomena'* but I bet I change my mind the next time I read them.

The book comes to us curtesy of Tiny Tree books and I have to say that they've made an absolutely splendid job of the design and production. The size, the glossy paper and the colours make this a special production that will sit proudly on anyone's bookshelf.

Terry Potter

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