

Sarah Mook Poetry Contest 2017, Grades 3-5 Second place, "The Beach"

Visiting the beach is memorable; it evokes images that lend themselves to description—this thirteen line poem is no exception. The speaker includes beach items ranging from the sand to seashells, from seagulls to the stars. This poet captures the sensory beauty of the beach in this poem.

There is little action in the poem; instead it presents a succinct list of items found at the shore. The poem opens with the two-word line, “Soft sand,” a tactile image of alliteration that immediately puts the reader on the beach. The next line, “seagulls squawking in the distance,” brings another sensory detail, sound, into the poem with the word “squawking.” One can almost hear the seagulls in the distance.

I especially appreciate the next set of lines:

Half an orange sun showing over the bay.
Waves crashing.
My feet numbed from the cold ocean.
A deposit of shells lay uncovered,
To be stuffed into my full sweatshirt pocket.

We have more of this glorious setting in these lines. The speaker gives the time of day, most likely sunset: “with half an orange sun showing over the bay” as waves crash and the speaker’s feet are numb from “the cold ocean”—another telling tactile description. Sea shells are there, “uncovered” and “stuffed in my full sweatshirt pocket”—how familiar a ritual.

In the second half of the poem, the speaker continues listing shore items. The speaker sits “in the rough white lifeguard stand” (“rough” gives another tactile image) to watch the following:

beautiful sunset over the bay
the sky changed into a huge black cloud
looking like a thick blanket.
Stars were the holes in the blanket,
letting bright light through.

The image of “stars” as the “holes in the blanket” of the night sky that let “bright light through” is an original portrayal of the stars as shining holes in the night sky, and gracefully concludes this beach poem.

The well-chosen images that evoke the senses (touch, sound, and sight) make this beach poem memorable.

Thank you for the pleasure of reading your work!

Marie Kane, Final Judge,
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2017
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