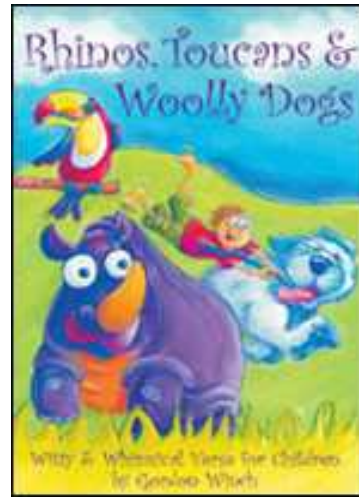


## Teaching Notes

*Rhinos, Toucans and Woolly Dogs: Witty and Whimsical Verse for Children*  
by Gordon Winch

Illustrated by Dee Texidor



*Rhinos, Toucans and Woolly Dogs* is a collection of humorous verse by Gordon Winch. It contains old favourites and many new poems that will delight children. The book is given a special dimension by the hilarious, full colour illustrations of Dee Texidor.

Gordon's poems enter the comic space of the young. There are echoes of playground rhymes, with their naughty edges; there are chirpy limericks and poems full of Milligan-like wit; there are echoes of C. J. Dennis, A. A. Milne and Max Fatchen.

Above all, the poems reflect the author's skill with words. Children (and adults) will love this book. It lets 'happiness out'.

### Before Reading

- Talk about comic poems: what makes them funny (comic situations; comic people; comic words.)
- Discuss what's 'witty'? (amusing, humorous in a clever way, often in a surprise ending) and
- What's 'whimsical'? (quaint humour that's a bit odd)
- Tell the students that the best test of comic verse is it makes us laugh, chuckle or grin.
- Ask what other poets the students know who write or wrote comic verse? (Milne, Milligan, Dennis, Nash, Silverstein, Fatchen ...)

### Reading the Poems

- The collection contains poems at different levels. Pick a few that you know would tickle the funny bones of your class. Share them with the children.
- Read as many of the poems as you can in a sitting. Whet the comic appetites of your class.
- Pick a group (limericks on pages 15, 16, 17); (I'd like to be...poems on pages 12 and 13); (poems that play with words, *Birds* P.7, *Me-Moving* P.11, *Mrs Hough* P.29, *Do You Know What I Saw?* P.29).
- Share a good earthy poem or two (*What a Party!* P.26 — a favourite with kids); *Skipping Rhyme* P.32 or *Sandy's Smelly Sneakers* P.9).
- Let the students read the poems themselves, particularly during independent reading.
- Have the class pick their favourites.

- Have the class try writing comic verse themselves.
- Use the longer poems with older students. (*Camping, Travel, Great Artists, My Pet*).
- Have the class learn and recite their favourites.

### **After Reading**

- Find comic poems by other authors.
- Make a collection of comic verse for kids. Allow the students to illustrate it.
- What other forms of poetry are there? (Lyric, Narrative...)
- Encourage your class to dip into poetry and enjoy it. Comic verse, in particular, is there to burst your sides or just produce a gentle chuckle. It is a special and important form of poetry.