



A Place to Start a Family
Poems About Creatures That Build
David L Harrison
Charlesbridge Publishing
Boston, MS. January 6, 2018
The buzz:

Editorial Reviews

From School Library Journal

K-Gr 4—Narrative poems describe how 13 creatures construct homes for their families, building intricate and oftentimes beautiful creations from materials such as thread, glue, and paper. An introduction in prose explains how animals, including people, build before the book delves into verse. Each subsequent section includes three poems about living things who build in that particular environment: builders underground, on land, in water, and in the air. A bonus poem about a different kind of builder, sun coral, completes the collection. The use of alliteration, rhyme, and onomatopoeia adds an inquisitive nature to the poems as it presents information regarding each animal's habitat. The 3-D cut-paper collage illustrations exquisitely render insight into the architecture and daily life of each being. In "European Paper Wasp," the microscopic world of this minute insect is vibrantly realized. Eggs glow golden within their cells and "Winged warriors/warn with spear" in brilliant yellows and blacks. Harrison details how their nest is formed with paper and Laroche's stunning technique of layering hand-painted papers renders this image to startling effect. As with their previous work on *Now You See Them, Now You Don't: Poems About Creatures That Hide*, this is an exceptional example of collaboration. Some other animals included in this collection are star-nosed mole, king cobra, and beaver. Notes at the end provide Latin names of all creatures, further information, and titles to learn more. VERDICT This is a great selection for science and poetry enthusiasts.—Rachel Zuffa, Racine Public Library, WI

Review

Twelve poems present a variety of animal homes and mate-attracting constructions. Arachnids (trapdoor spider, garden spider), birds (red ovenbird, white stork), fish (stickleback, pufferfish), insects (termite, paper wasp), mammals (star-nosed mole, beaver, prairie dog), and a reptile (the king cobra) are each introduced by way of a double-page spread and a simple two-to-eight stanza poem. In four sections—building underground, on land, in the water, and in the air—animals are shown building webs, nests, food traps, and tunneled homes, along with their mates, eggs, or young. Laroche's layered, cut-paper illustrations are clear and intriguingly detailed, handsomely supporting the informational content of each poem. Rich colors and varied textures allow this 3-D original artwork to work well in two dimensions. Harrison's poems employ varied voices, rhythms, and formats; all are memorable and easy to understand. Some are humorous: a busy stickleback male appeals to a potential mother of his family: "The best nest / that's ever been! / Please, / Ms. Stickleback, / swim in." Backmatter gives each animal an explanatory paragraph and, for several, a suggestion of books for further exploration. The author's and illustrator's own sources are not indicated. A bonus poem and terrific illustration on the last page describe "A different kind of builder," sun coral, which creates coral reefs by congregating together. A fine synthesis of poetry and science.

— *Kirkus Reviews*

In 12 playful rhyming poems, Harrison explores the architectural feats of animals that build homes for themselves on land, in the water, and up in buildings and trees. A white-spotted pufferfish attempts to impress a potential mate ("Tiny sculptor/ thinks grand,/ builds a nest/ out of sand/ forty times/ his own size/ trying to/ attract a prize"), while a red ovenbird spends months creating a domelike dwelling ("How do you know/ to weave/ like that?/ With grass and hair/ and leaves/ like that?"). Laroche's cut-paper illustrations, created with handpainted papers, lend a real sense of depth and dimension to the creatures' layered homes of grass, leaves, and other

organic material; closing notes discuss each animal in greater detail, and a bonus poem looks at the growth of coral reefs. An inviting introduction to a dozen industrious creatures.

— *Publishers Weekly*

Lively rhymes and arresting cut-paper collage illustrations are an appealing combination in this introduction to a variety of animals that build homes. The animals are grouped by where they build homes; for example, paper wasps and storks build homes “in air,” while sticklebacks and puffer fish build homes underwater. The poems vary nicely in structure, and while some are more successful than others, they are, overall, approachable and gently informative.

Complementing the text, Laroche’s superb collage illustrations offer additional views of the homes described in the poems and are rich with detail, from the meticulous scales on the king cobra to the multicolored, individually cut branches and logs making up the beaver’s den. A cutaway section of a termite’s nest, revealing the cast network of tunnels within, is particularly engrossing. For readers looking for even more information, the back matter provides additional commentary about each creature and the way it builds its home. A natural for classroom use, with eye-catching art that will lure little ones in.

— *Booklist*