

VACATION - School Library Journal - June 2009

HARRISON, David L. **Vacation: We're Going to the Ocean.** illus. by Rob Shepperson. 64p. CIP. Boyds Mills/Wordsong. 2009. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-59078-568-3. LC 2008017718.

**K-Gr 5**—These delightful poems center on a family's trip to the ocean and are told from the perspective of young Sam ("Call me Sam, that's who I am"). He describes packing the car: "My sister/packed/so much junk/there's/no place/I can sit./If we/left/my sister/home,/I bet/her stuff/would/fit." In one poem, when the boy cannot take his pet gerbil, he tells readers he is taking a spider instead. "Oops" relates how it escapes. An amusing pen-and-ink illustration adroitly conveys the ensuing chaos: the boy sticks his head out of the car window, three doors are wide open, and the rest of the family stands in a line, all looking quite perturbed, their discarded personal items lying on the ground between them and the car. "Putting Up the Tent" explains that, "We/helped/Daddy/with the/tent. /It didn't/go/the way/we meant./We don't/know how/the pole/got bent." This book, with its expressive art that expands on the humor in each poem, should have wide appeal.—*Kirsten Cutler, Sonoma County Library, CA*

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### Children's Literature

Sam, his parents, and his sibling are going on vacation. His family's car trip to the beach is chronicled in a series of short poems. Sam is excited to go to the shore; his enthusiasm bubbles and grows. He helps pack for the car trip and secretly includes his pet spider. Once the road trip begins, Sam shares the many events that happen along the way. What a vacation trip this one is from Sam's perspective! They stop at camping grounds, an art museum, and the home of relatives and Sam replays his adventures. Once they arrive at their destination point, the beach, Sam tells about the various activities at the ocean—from sharks to sand and swimsuits to snorkeling. Then the time arrives to go home and that return trip back to home is quick, like many vacations. The illustrations and the verses work together and capture laughable moments that may remind readers of some familiar parts of their own family vacation travel. Reviewer: Carrie Hane Hung

VACATION - Sylvia Vardell's online blog - 7/24/2009

### VACATION - Friday, July 24, 2009

#### [Vacation poems](#)

I'm in San Francisco this week—near the ocean—a perfect moment to mention a new poetry book by David L. Harrison called *Vacation; We're Going to the Ocean*, illustrated by Rob Shepperson (Wordsong/Boyds Mills Press, 2009). It's a fun and engaging summer poem collection, with a strong boy sensibility, and a story framework that bounces from poem to poem, cartoon to cartoon. Its small trim size (5 x 7) adds to its packable portability. My only quibble—a small one—is that the two-column layout of a few of the poems suggests they can be read simultaneously by two voices, but instead it's simply to maximize space on the page. It's a tad confusing in a few instances, but not a deal-breaker.

This small "beach book" packs a wallop of 45 poems from "Hi" to "Home at Last" detailing a family's road trip to the beach and their brief stay there. Each poem adds another moment, all from the perspective

of a young boy named Sam who collects a spider, scorpion, tarantula, and crab along the way. Kids will enjoy the poems about sitting in the car, potty breaks, spending the night with relatives, camping, cookouts, coping with siblings, art museum stops, hiking, hotel overnights, and of course beach time activities. Shepperson's black and white cartoons on every page add a strong dose of storytelling and humor, giving each family member a distinctive personality. (Harrison and Shepperson collaborated previously on *Bugs*, another small-sized, visually and verbally inviting poem collection.)

Here's just a sample, sure to be a familiar topic to anyone who has sat in a car with kids for more than 5 minutes!

**Are We There Yet?**  
by **David L. Harrison**

My foot's  
asleep,

my seat  
is sore.

You said  
"another hour"  
before.

You say  
"an hour"  
every  
time.

Your  
hours  
are much

longer  
than  
mine.

from Harrison, David L. 2009. *Vacation; We're Going to the Ocean*. Illustrated by Rob Shepperson. Honesdale, PA: Wordsong/Boyd's Mills Press, p. 14.

If you can't get to the ocean yourself this summer, here's a virtual vacation, complete with rambunctious kids and sand in your \_\_\_\_\_. Enjoy!

This week, the **Poetry Friday Roundup** is at **A Year of Reading**. See you there!

To view the entire blog on the Web, please visit:

<http://poetryforchildren.blogspot.com/2009/07/vacation-poems.html>

# A PATCHWORK OF BOOKS



AMANDA

Children's librarian by day, book reviewer by night! I love to read all genres and age levels and then share the results with all of you. Books are my passion in life, as are my husband and my sweet dogs.

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2009

## Poetry Friday: Vacation

It's mid-June and seemingly everyone has a vacation planned, happening now, and already done with for the summer. Even I'm taking a "vacation" in a little less than two weeks, driving across the country to our new house in Virginia! I thought today's selection for Poetry Friday was appropriate...and in honor of all you lucky beach goers!



*Vacation: We're Going to the Ocean*, with poems by David L. Harrison and illustrations by Rob Shepperson, is a great intro to summer fun. With poems all about what kids end up doing on vacation, from hiking, to horseback riding, from getting squished in hugs by Aunts to, of course, the beach, the reader gets a nice dose of everything "vacation."

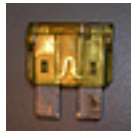
Nice, short poems and easy-to-read text, make this a nice choice for any child from beginner to middle grade. The illustrations are done in black and white pencil drawings, kept simple, and the small size is perfect for sliding into a backpack for your child's own vacation!

To learn more, or to purchase, click on the book cover above to link to Amazon.

**Vacation: We're Going to the Ocean**  
**David L. Harrison**  
**62 pages**  
**Poetry**  
**Wordsong**  
**9781590785683**  
**May 2009**

POSTED BY AMANDA AT FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2009 

LABELS: [DAVID L. HARRISON](#), [POETRY FRIDAY](#)



[Elizabeth Bird](#)

## Review of the Day - Vacation: We're Going to the Ocean by David L. Harrison

July 31, 2009

[Vacation: We're Going to the Ocean](#)

[By David L. Harrison](#)

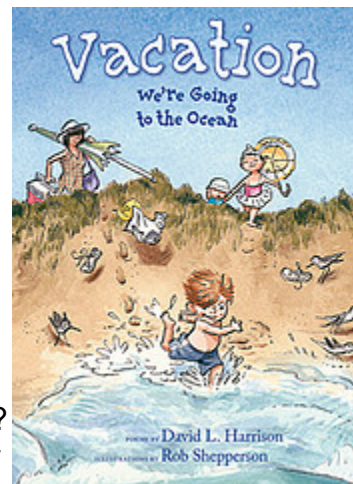
[Illustrated by Rob Shepperson](#)

[Wordsong \(an imprint of Boyd Mills Press\)](#)

[ISBN: 978-1-59078-568-3](#)

[Ages 7-9](#)

[On shelves now.](#)



How do you get a kid to read poetry? That's something you want to do, right? Inundate them with a fine appreciation for a measured verse right from the get-go? So what's the trick? There are plenty of poetry books for kids out there, sure. But maybe your kids aren't too keen on those big 8" X 12" collections. We always talk about how graphic novels can be gateway books from pictures to prose. So why can't poetry books that tell a single story also be considered gateway books, but this time from fiction to poetry? That's sort of where my mind was going when I read by David L. Harrison. It's a simple story at its heart, but with enough humor (and visuals) to lure in children at just the right age and make them poetry keen. It's worth a shot in any case.

Our unnamed hero is going on vacation and he cannot wait. Heck, he's even excited by the prospect of sitting in the backseat for long periods of time with his sister and baby brother. In forty-five little poems, we hear this epic tale. From running out of gas to camping with a snoring dad. From visiting relatives to getting at long last to the ocean to play. Some things may be good and some things may be bad about vacationing with your family, but as the boy says at the end. "Home at last! / I'm glad we're here, / but I can't wait / until next year!"

David L. Harrison prepares you right from the start for the vertical layout of most of his poems. The first one "Hi!" introduces you to Samuel Scott, or just Sam. The poem runs from top to bottom and it may take a couple reads to realize that you have to finish the first line before moving onto the second. Once the reader (whether child or adult) has figured that out, however, it's just a matter of

remembering that for the other poems in the book. Taken as a whole, the poetry here is all about the experience of summer. Kids may be encouraged to write their own family vacation poems after reading the ones they find here. And for the most part they seem to hold together. The only poem that didn't really fit, as far as I could tell, was a rather random one where the family visits a huge fancy museum right after running out of gas. It didn't transition particularly well and was a very odd pairing.

While Harrison is telling one story, the fantastic illustrator Rob Shepperson (whom I have admired for many years) is filling in the gaps with his marvelous illustrations. For example, we haven't much of a sense of the boy's strangely unflappable sister. This is understandable since we're getting all this entirely from the boy's perspective and it wouldn't make a lot of sense for him to suddenly understand the girl's predilection for ballet tutus and tiaras. So it is that Shepperson gives her a fair amount to do visually. This happens when he transitions one poem into another with his pictures. "Shark!" a poem about mistaking a pelican's upturned beak for a watery predator shows the boy pointing out to sea as the girl prepares behind him to douse him with a bucket of water. If you expect that she's successful then the next poem "Hot Pop" may explain why he felt obligated to shake a hot pop and then spew it on her later.

Shepperson also offers a counter-perspective to one poem or another. When Harrison writes the too familiar cry of "I Gotta Go!" it's Shepperson who shows the boy surrounded by about five empty liquid containers. Shepperson also works in a lot of tiny details that parents will appreciate but will sail clean over their children's heads. For example, the poem "Are We There Yet?" shows the boy squirming in his seat in boredom while his sister quietly reads a book, her arm resting on another that appears to be [One Hundred Years of Solitude](#). That title's probably wishful thinking on her part. Later she seems to have [A Year in Provence](#) in her possession. A well read child, no?

The weird thing is that in a lot of ways this book is already a historical document. There aren't any cell phones or electronic devices (the back seat of the car is bereft of handheld games of any sort), just books and toys. Most telling of all, however, is the poem "Taking Pictures" where the boy complains that the gulls are refusing to hold steady and "I'm nearly out of pictures already!" Out of pictures? There will be more than one child who reads this line and shakes their head in confusion. How can you be out of pictures? Do you mean out of memory? Why not delete the pictures that aren't as good? The old film-based camera is bound to become a teachable moment for more than one parent out there.

Maybe the most telling poem in this book is "In the Backseat". As Harrison writes it, the boy is thinking about all the places he'll see from his backseat. But it is Shepperson who has drawn the picture in such a way that you can see a highway stretching far and away into the horizon magically within that back seat.

It's not something you'd necessarily notice on a first read, but that's a lot of the charm of this book. Consider it the perfect read aloud title for those kids vacationing, about to vacation, or having just vacationed. Slight, fun, and a great introduction to the world of free verse.

On shelves now.

**Other Blog Reviews:**

- [Poetry for Children](#)
- [Roundtable Reviews for Kids](#)
- [A Year of Reading](#)

**Professional Reviews:** [School Library Journal](#)

**Misc:**

- Happy Poetry Friday! [Poetry for Children](#) has the round-up.
- Harrison talks a little about his process as it relates to his work in [The Rolla Daily News](#).



Posted by [Elizabeth Bird](#) on July 31, 2009 | [Comments \(1\)](#)