

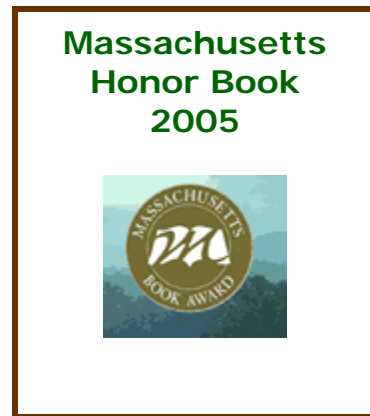
***Fine Feathered Friends:  
Poems for Young People***

by Jane Yolen  
Photographs by Jason Stemple

Wordsong. (Boyd's Mills Press, Inc.)

**A Reading and Discussion Guide**

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Millbury Public Library, Millbury, MA



**SUMMARY:**

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Stemple and Yolen have once again pooled their significant talents. Each spread consists of a large, clear full-color photo of a single bird in the wild and a poem that describes its appearance, habits, or eccentricities. Many of the birds are pictured at close enough range to show details of coloring and behavior (the rigidly alert posture of the pileated woodpecker climbing a tree trunk; the puffed-out feathers of a roadrunner in chilled air). Yolen has successfully used a variety of poetic styles. Her words are carefully chosen; her phrases often create clever images. Tidbits of information tell enough about each bird to add understanding to the poem and, perhaps, to whet the appetite for more. This lovely collection can be used to spur creativity or to provide a multisensory experience. Grades 3-6 - *Susan Scheps, Shaker Heights Public Library, OH*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Look again at the red cardinal (p.13). What do you think of when you see this bird? Then read aloud "Fireworks." How many words about fire can you find in the poem? How many words can you think of for your image of the cardinal?
2. Read "Mute Swan: a Haiku" (p.10). Identify the "s" sounds in the poem. Why do you think the author chose these sounds? Can you think of other words she may have used?

## ACTIVITIES:

1. Take a bird watching trip at a park or through the woods. What will you take with you? What times of the day are you likely to see the most birds? Check out a guide to bird watching for helpful hints before you start.
2. Hang up a winter birdfeeder at your house or near your library. Check the feeder at least once a week for the winter season to make sure the birds have enough food (more often if they are really hungry!). You may also enjoy the following activities:
  - Make a note card for each different bird you see. Using just your eyes, note the color of the bird, its feeding habits, and the way it flies. You may think of other notes to take as you observe the bird.
  - Check out a bird-identification book at the library to find the names of the birds for your note cards.

### Website resources:

- Dinner? It's for the Birds! From Outdoor Sports Web  
<http://www.osweb.com/kidzkorner/activity.htm>
3. Jane Yolen includes two Haiku poems in *Fine Feathered Friends* (pages 10 and 30). Choose your favorite bird, either from the story or from your own birdwatching activities, and write a haiku about it. Draw a picture of the bird to accompany your poem.

### Website resources:

- Teaching Haiku Poetry: Links, Resources, Ideas :  
<http://www.gardendigest.com/poetry/haiku4.htm>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Jane Yolen was born in New York City in 1939. She graduated from Smith College where she studied writing and music. She got a job as an editor and would write on her breaks and time off. She considered herself a poet and a journalist/nonfiction writer but found she did well writing children's books. She won a Caldecott award for her children's book *Owl Moon*. She has written many books on a wide variety of topics and for every age group from young child to adults. Today Jane and her husband spend time in Western Massachusetts and Scotland.

## HELPFUL LINKS:

To learn more about the author visit: <http://www.janeyolen.com>

### **Birdwatching sites you may enjoy:**

*Reprinted from Surfing the Net with Kids* by Barbara J. Feldman:

<http://www.surfnetkids.com/birds.htm>

[http://www.wbu.com/feederCam\\_home.htm](http://www.wbu.com/feederCam_home.htm)

If there aren't any birds to watch from your own window, visit this feeding station in a backyard in Indianapolis, Indiana. Bird FeederCam sends a new a snapshot to the Net every forty-five seconds from dawn till dusk. Use your browser reload button to refresh your view, or click on the picture to open an auto-updating window. Today I watched and waited patiently without any visitors at first. And then magically, two birds arrived at the feeder. If you run out of patience before your first bird arrives, enjoy the best of past images that include owls, woodpeckers, and hummingbirds.

<http://www.math.sunysb.edu/~tony/birds/>

Where would we be without the sounds of birds singing? Tony Phillips of State University of New York has recorded more than a hundred bird songs from sixty five different species, and paired them with the beautiful drawings of Chester Reed. This delightful site is simple to navigate, and the sound files (chirp chirp) are worth the small wait.

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/birds/Birdwatching.html>

For early readers this kid-sized introduction to bird watching can stand alone. But the rest of us will want to follow the inline hyperlinks for more depth. There you'll find treasures such as a chart of bird seed preferences, a complete list of field marks used to identify birds, and a multi-page guide to building bird houses. This two-tiered approach makes this site a great place to start your own birding adventures.



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