



Playing a Dazzler

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

For this collection of poems for secondary age children Berry draws mainly on his Jamaican background and childhood; although there are memorable poems about his life as a writer meeting young people in urban Britain; and some, like the long 'Today's People Carnival Picked', are about a continuity of experience. Berry's language is like no other: it is lyrical and sensuous, drawing not only on Caribbean idioms but on the pantheon of English literature. Berry's 'ocean crossed' could be Shakespeare's star crossed, and Blake and Dylan Thomas are never far away. Berry has a love of alliteration that is unfashionable among many other modern poets. But he is his own man, sometimes overshooting, but more often making daring and unusual connections: 'new face, Eve, among the leaves' about a child born in autumn, or a new girl child born into Eden. At other times, he can use the simplest line to create a vivid, and uncomfortable, picture. The girl brought down from the mountain after a bad fall had 'pop her leg like a stick'. Some of these poems may take concentration on the reader's part, others are as disarmingly transparent as the proverbs, invocations and songs that they imitate. Berry's is an original and rich voice and his enthusiasm for literature and life is uninhibited and demanding.

Running Order:

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