

Dragons and Dinosaurs Underfoot and On the Tongue

Almost every five year old on the planet is in love with dinosaurs and dragons, and they seldom distinguish between them. Kenneth Grahame, author of **Wind In The Willows** said that he felt every honest person, "in the back kitchen of his mind believed more in dragons than dinosaurs". Whether we believe or not, the five-year old's passion for large scaly critters with pointy sharp teeth persists. Lucky for us there are some fabulous new dinosaur books every year, as well as a treasure-trove of older and well loved titles to fill this need for a vicarious encounter in the Jurassic.

Dinosaur Dinner: Favorite Poems by Dennis Lee (with a slice of alligator pie) (\$17, Knopf) has rambunctious verses selected by Jack Prelutsky (pronounced 'pree-LUT-skee'), whose masterful collections like **New Kid On the Block**, **Something Big Has Been Here** and **A Pizza the Size of the Sun** (\$17, Greenwillow) have become favorites for kids who have outgrown Shel Silverstein. Dennis Lee's flair for memorable chantable poems is handsomely augmented by Debbie Tilley's playfully goofy watercolor illustrations. Dennis Lee, you may recall, wrote most of the songs for "Fraggle Rock" and has contributed some songs to the "Barney" show as well. Throughout this lively collection are poems of dinosaurs, alligators and other creatures. some of them human.

Just Another Ordinary Day by Rod Clement (\$14.95, Harpercollins) is by the illustrator of **Counting on Frank**, a well-loved book that incorporates math into story, to the delight of all teachers and kids lucky enough to share the exploits of Frank. In this wacky adventure, Amanda wakes up early, goes to school, has dinner, snuggles with her cat, in a deadpan straightforward text. The pictures, however, are another matter. Kids will howl with laughter at the ironic twists in the highly detailed, uproariously funny graphics that amplify each page of boring every-day things Amanda does, including catching a ride to school with Mrs. Ellsworth who just happens to be a didactic T-Rex in pearls and a lovely bonnet.

Toad (\$14.99, Dutton) by Ruth Brown, begins with endplates depicting toad eggs, proceeds through a day in the swamp with toad "oozing foul and filthy and dripping with venomous fluid", catching bugs, eating slugs, and finally being gobbled up by a Kimodo dragon, who discovers that

toads definitely do NOT taste good, then ends with toad eggs. The easy rolling text, full of deliciously difficult words that beginning readers will treasure being able to pronounce, plus the wondrously funny illustrations will make this a favorite read-aloud until kids can memorize it and read it to you.

There are literally hundreds of great dinosaur and dragon books for fives to love. Discover them at your local library and bookstore!

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