

# WHEN POEMS FALL FROM THE SKY

by Zaro Weil and illustrated by Junli Song

WE ARE FRIENDS .....

don't worry shadow  
I'll be watching you  
whenever I can  
and  
even if you slip under some  
swish-darting fish or  
w a g g l i n g tadpole or hide  
under a lotus-pink lily pad  
I promise to be there  
when you surface again all  
smiles  
close to the water's top  
and  
even if you roll your jiggly spins  
round those tall marshy grasses  
I'll be watching

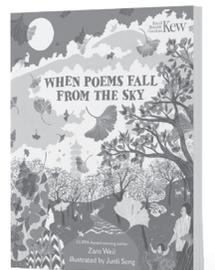
and  
even if you carelessly bob along  
chasing every dragonfly, water strider and pond skater  
  
you don't have to worry about a thing  
I'll still be here when you finish  
because I know  
shadow  
you would never leave me either...

wherever I am  
no matter how  
slippery you are  
  
after all  
  
we are friends



WELBECK  
EDITIONS

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## Read and talk about the poem

Read the poem out loud together and talk about it. *What do you think it is about? How does it make you feel? What makes you feel this way?* Think about the title of the poem; *We Are Friends*. *What do you think it means to be friends? Who are your friends? What makes you friends?* Talk together about the friendship that you read about in the poem. *How do you know the character is friends with the shadow? What words and phrases show you that the character is the shadow's friend? How do they show the shadow that they look out for them and care for them?* Now look at the other perspective. *Why do you think the character has chosen to call the shadow their friend? What do they know about the shadow that is an important quality in a friend?*

## Explore the concepts

Talk and think about how, in a friendship, each of the friends offers something to the other. In the poem, the character watches out for the shadow and promises to be there for it. *What do your friends offer to you? What do you think you offer to your friends?* The friend in this poem is the

shadow. *Do you think you can be friends with a shadow? What do you think the character in the poem gains from being friends with the shadow? What do you think the shadow might gain from the friendship?* Now, go outside with a notebook and pencil and think about elements of nature you could become friends with. *What could it mean to be a friend with nature? What element of the natural world in particular might you be friends with?* Spend some time watching and observing this element of nature. It could be a plant, a creature, an element of the weather, or a natural phenomenon. You might choose to be friends with a sunbeam, a leaf, or a bee buzzing round the garden. As you watch your friend, think about what it looks like, and what it does. You could even try to draw it, to help you look really closely.

## Perform the poem

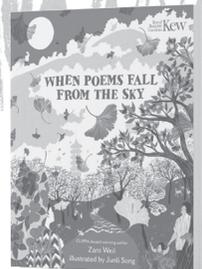
Re-read the poem again, and think about how the character in the poem might speak to their friend, the shadow. *What sense are they trying to give the shadow? How might you bring this out in a performance? What tone might you use in your voice to reassure and comfort a friend? What volume would*

*your voice take?* Look at where the lines in the poem break, and what this might tell you about how it should be performed. *Where might you take a pause? Where might you speed up? How might you use your voice to emphasise the meanings of certain words?* Practice reading the poem through a few times, trying out different ideas and then invite a friend or family member to listen to you perform it. *Did they get a sense of friendship and care from your performance?*

## Activate your imagination

Come back to the natural element you thought you might be able to be friends with. *If you were to speak to it, what would you say?* Take a piece of paper and a pen and write down all your ideas of what you might say to your new friend. *How will you make them see how much you respect them and care for them? How will you show how much you have paid attention to them, to know how they behave and what they do?* When you have some ideas written down, see if you can use these to make your own poem, titled 'We Are Friends' about the element of nature you have chosen. You could also have a go at illustrating your

poem. Look at the illustrations Junli Song has made to accompany the poems in this book for inspiration as well as the sketches you made.



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## TELL ME SHADOW

tell me  
shadow  
how did you  
grow so fast into that  
inky tattoo  
I stepped on  
just  
this afternoon

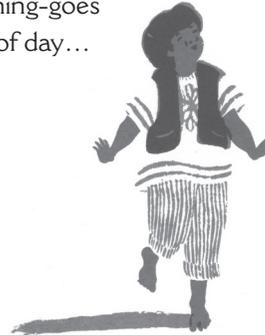
after all  
you were nowhere  
when I woke up  
early this morning

think about it  
shadow  
everything else  
takes such a  
long time  
to grow

apple trees  
mountains  
me

but not you  
my guess is  
you wait  
hovering and sun-silent  
in some black riddle  
of a place

a shape-changing  
bobble-dark creature  
bursting to plant  
yourself into the  
wide-open  
anything-goes  
light of day...



or maybe  
into the high-pitched  
quiet of  
moonlight  
where I've seen you  
tangle up tall trees  
fatten up lampposts  
stretch passing  
silhouettes

way

tell me  
do you wait  
lingering  
raring to go  
inside absolutely  
e v e r y t h i n g



up

if so shadow  
I have to ask  
does that include

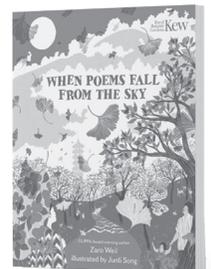
walls

me



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## Read and talk about the poem

Read the poem out loud together and discuss your initial impressions. *What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What made you feel this way?*

Read it again, looking at how it is laid out on the page and what this might tell us about how to read it aloud. Think about the language that sticks in your mind. *What words, phrases and parts of the poem are most memorable? Why do you think this is? Is it the way the words sound? The images they create in your mind?* Talk together about the adjective phrases used to describe the shadow: *inky tattoo, a shape-changing / bobble-dark creature* as well as the verb phrases which describe how it behaves: *you wait / hovering and sun-silent / in some black riddle / of a place, bursting to plant / yourself into the / wide-open / anything-goes / light of day... , tangle up tall trees / fatten up lampposts / stretch passing / silhouettes / way / up / walls, lingering / raring to go / inside absolutely / e v e r y t h i n g*. *What do you already know about shadows? How do these descriptions fit with your experience? What do these phrases make you think or feel about the shadow? How do you think*

*the 'I' character in the poem feels about the shadow? How do the illustrations add to your understanding of this?*



## Explore the concepts

Whenever the sun shines brightly, you can see the strong shadows it casts. Go outside on a sunny day, early in the morning, at noon and later in the afternoon. Stand in the same spot (ideally on a pavement or paving slabs), and find and see what happens to your shadow as time passes. If you have some, use chalk to draw around your shadow at different times of the day, marking the time at which each record was made. The chalk will wash away next time it rains and won't damage the ground! Describe the shape and size of the shadow you see at different times and talk together about how the shadow changes at different times of the day. Look at the shadows cast when other objects block the sun's light and talk about their size, shape and position. Get a piece of paper and pencil and draw some of the objects you see and the shadows they cast. Now draw you. And your shadow. Everyone's shadow will be totally different and totally unique and

wonderful. *How do the things you have seen and discussed link to the words and ideas you explored in the poem?* Re-read the poem together, talking about this in more detail.

## Perform the poem

After you have observed and talked about shadows, and imagination read the poem again. This time, think about how you can perform it to enhance the meaning of the poem for someone else who is watching. *How will you use your voice in different ways to take on the intrigue of the 'I' character, questioning and painting a picture of the behaviours of the shadow?* Consider how to use your facial expressions and body movements to add to the storytelling, making sure these add too, but don't detract from the meaning of the words and the emotions evoked by the poem. You could record yourself performing and watch this back to consider the effect you have created and the impact of your performance as you watch.

## Activate your imagination

Think about what elements of the natural world excite you, in the way the shadow

does for the character in the poem. You might be in awe of a particular plant, insect or natural element. Take some time to gather all the ideas you have about this element on a blank sheet of paper; or get an adult to write these for you. This should be completely free writing and doesn't have to be neat. Empty your head of all the thoughts, ideas and questions you have, then look through your ideas and think about what might be good to work up into a poem of your own.

Come back to the poem on the page to look at how it has been shaped. Look at it, like a picture on the page. *Does the way it is set out remind you of anything? Does it relate to the subject matter?* Look at how the lines and verses are broken and consider the effect this has on how it is read. Have a go at drafting a poem of your own, thinking both about the words that you'll use and how they are set out.



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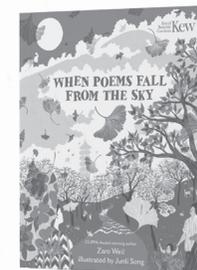
I SPY .....

if I look deep  
wide  
far  
I spy a million colours  
sprinkling a billion shades  
over the garden like  
each had parachuted to earth  
after this morning's big cloud shake or  
popped out from the misty arch of  
that surprise lunchtime rainbow or  
sprung from the grass-glisten like  
a trillion crayon dots  
during this afternoon's noisy  
sunbeam parade

but there's more

if I just wait till  
wind scatters its blaze of  
sunset-confetti over the garden  
then . . .

I can spy more colours  
in more shades  
than anyone could ever  
sprinkle  
scatter  
or count



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## Read and talk about the poem

Read the poem out loud together and talk about it. *What do you think is it about? How does it make you feel? What makes you feel this way?* Look at the start of the poem together: *if I look deep / wide / far...* Look at the way the words are set out, how it slows down our reading to mirror how the 'I' in the poem is slowing down and looking more deeply. Consider the imagery in the poem. *What might this morning's big cloud shake represent? What do you picture when the poet talks about this afternoon's noisy / sunbeam parade? What might the blaze of sunset confetti, which the wind scatters over the garden be? What ideas do these things give you about the time of year? What season do you think it is? What makes you think this?*

## Explore the concepts

Talk together about the differences between colours, tints, shades and tones. A tint is where an artist adds a colour to white to create a lighter version of the colour. A shade is where an artist adds black to a colour to darken it down. A tone is where an artist adds grey to a colour. If

you have some at home, gather together some paints – poster, watercolour or acrylic – as well as some brushes and water, and explore and experiment with creating tints, shades and tones of different colours. Take the base colour, then add differing amounts of white to create lighter and lighter tints. Now, take the starting base colour and add differing amounts of black to create darker and darker shades. Now take black as a base colour and add white in differing quantities to create different tints of grey, then mix the greys with the starting base colour to create light and dark tones. Look at the range of tints, shades and tones you have created. Now, go out into the garden with your paints and try to capture the colours that you see. Use black, white and greys to create the really specific tints, shades and tones.

## Perform the poem

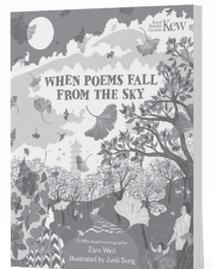
Re-read the poem again. Discuss the feelings that the poem evokes in you. *How does it make you feel as you read? How does this compare with other poems like Bug Parade and My Shadow? Do you think you would perform it in the same way as those*

*poems? How might it be different? Do you think this is a loud poem or a quiet poem; or does it vary? What makes you think this?* Re-read the poem and think about how you might use your voice, facial expressions and body language to create the feelings you felt while reading it for someone listening to you perform it. Practice a few times to perfect this. Consider how to use your facial expressions and body movements to add to the storytelling, making sure these add to, but don't detract from the meaning of the words and the emotions evoked by the poem. You could record yourself performing and watch this back to consider the effect you have created and the impact of your performance as you watch.

## Activate your imagination

Take a notebook and pen or pencil and go outside. Take some time to observe and take in your surroundings. Consider what it means to look *deep, wide* and *far*, as it says in the poem. *As you look deeper, wider and further, what really captures your attention? What are the things you notice?* Note these things down in your notebook. Look for small details like in the poem.

*What is the weather like, or what has it been like recently? How can you tell? What small details can you note in the environment? How do things move? What is happening with the light? Keep adding to your notes, taking in more and more the longer you look. Come back to your notes and look at the things you've written down. Can you think of some imaginative and playful ways to describe these things, like the morning's big cloud shake to describe the rainfall and the wind scatters its blaze of sunset-confetti over the garden to describe the leaves blowing in the breeze?*





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## BUG PARADE

When the bugs decided  
to have a parade  
ten quintillion came  
who can guess what they weighed

They whizzed by all zipping  
glittering then flittering  
diving and gliding  
whoops sometimes colliding

What a loud babbling fuss  
a bug rumpus and more  
a million species spinning  
a deafening uproar

Mosquitoes and Netwings  
Owlflies Planthoppers  
swooped about singing  
every bug-tune showstopper

All bugs at last arrived  
parading endless rows  
when ten quintillion roared at once

Wings and antennae  
went trembling a-shiver  
while mini-legs scuffled  
all directions a-quiver

Advancing while dancing  
speeding receding  
straying sashaying  
wild buggy horseplaying

At last they agreed  
that the ants would proceed  
with Bumblebees busily  
following their lead

The Question Mark Butterflies  
all orange and brown dots  
claimed a row to themselves  
joking *we deserve some good spots*

## NOW WHERE DOES WE GOES?

It was just twilight time  
not quite moon not quite sun  
that cockeyed mad moment  
beasties love to have fun

Teetering and skeetering  
meetering and greetering  
creepering and crawling  
a great insect ballering

*Our turn next* chirped the Crickets  
in an ear-splitting blast  
*no us* snapped Dragonflies  
as Earwigs crept past

Rice Weevils and Stink Bugs  
laughed as they twined  
whooping *we love a parade*  
as Termites crept behind



Off they went furrowing  
jumping and burrowing  
scampering scurrying  
teeny specks hurrying

But most bugs hate lines  
there were ten quintillion whines  
as they acted their worst  
pouting, *I must go first*

Fireflies spun overhead  
in a ring of bright lights  
while Grasshoppers and Horseflies  
high-hopped in delight

Underwings and Vine Borers  
began to slow down  
*hurry up* buzzed the Wasps  
those *Xylodromumses* are around

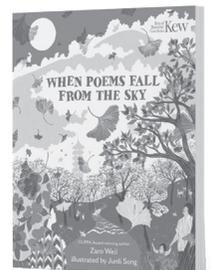
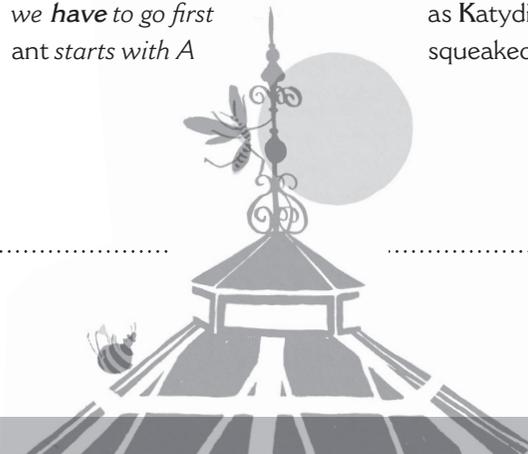


They whirred slid and squirmed  
swam buzzed and turned  
playing hooraying  
batty bug holidaying

*Us us us* called the Ants  
*we know the way*  
*we have to go first*  
ant *starts with A*

Inchworms and June bugs  
kept checking the time  
as Katydids and Lacewings  
squeaked *this row is mine*

At last came Yellow Mealworms  
striped Zebra Butterflies  
swarming wispy whirls  
as moonbeams lit the sky



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## Read and talk about the poem

Read the poem out loud together and discuss your initial impressions. *What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What were you picturing in your mind as you heard the words? What words painted these pictures for you?* Think about all the words that describe the movements of the bugs, like *furrowing, jumping, burrowing, scampering, scurrying, whirred, slid, squirmed*. Try acting out some of these out, discussing the similarities, nuances and differences in meaning of the words as you explore them through movement. Now, come back to look at the alphabetic list of bugs together. *Which bugs do you know? Which ones are new to you?* Use an encyclopedia or child-friendly search engine like Kiddle or Kidtopia to find images of the bugs and talk about these together. *What do you learn about them from the poem? What more can you find out about them from your own investigations? What do they look like? How do they move? What do they sound like? How do they behave?* Think about the way the bugs are introduced in alphabetical order. *Can you think of any alternative bugs for any of the letters? How would you*

*describe these bugs if you were writing about them? What words would you choose and use to describe the way they look, move, sound and behave?*

## Explore the concepts

Collect a notebook and a pencil and take a trip outside to a garden, park or woodland and hunt for bugs yourself. If you have a magnifying glass at home, take this with you too! If bugs aren't immediately visible, try lifting up rocks or logs, peer into cracks in tree bark, and look in long grass and on leaves. You could also take a piece of white cloth, such as an old sheet or pillow case, under a tree or bush and gently shake the branches. You'll be surprised how many tiny creatures fall out! Observe any bugs you find closely. Talk about whether you can identify and name the creatures you find, and how they look, move and behave. Listen carefully to hear if they make any sounds. Draw a sketch of them in your notebook, capturing their unique features and parts. If you don't know the name of them, use the sketches you make to see if you can match these in a bug guide in print or online to find out their names. *Did you*

*find any of the bugs from the poem? Did they match with the thoughts you had about them when you read the poem?*

## Perform the poem

As this is a long poem, choose your favourite part to perform. It might be the first part of the poem – building up the anticipation for the parade and moving into the different movements of the bugs, it might be the second part – naming and describing the behaviours of the specific bugs. Re-read the part you want to perform again, and think about how you might use your voice, your facial expressions and actions to bring the poem to life for an audience. Invite a friend or family member to watch you perform and watch their reactions as they listen to you.

## Activate your imagination

Imagine you are an entomologist – this is a person who studies insects – and have discovered a brand new bug that has never been seen before! Close your eyes and picture your new discovery, thinking about all the features you observed in the bugs you found. *How big is it? What colour is it?*

*Is it patterned? What features does it have? How many legs does it have? Does it have wings? Does its body have different segments? Does it have antennae? When you have a clear picture, start to think about how it might behave. How does it move? Does it creep, crawl, squirm or fly? Does it make a sound? Where might you find it?* Now, take whatever art materials you have to hand and create a representation of your bug. You could draw, paint or make a collage of it, you could use recycled materials, specific craft materials or clay to craft a model of it. When you have created your bug, see if you can write a verse or poem about it, describing the bug and its behaviours, as you saw in the original poem. Display your art and writing together for your friends and family to enjoy!

