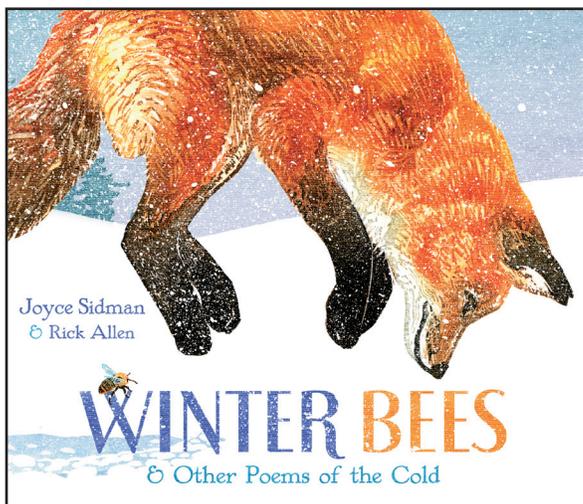


## Winter Bees and Other Poems of the Cold

BY JOYCE SIDMAN ILLUSTRATED BY RICK ALLEN



### About the Book

*Winter Bees and Other Poems of the Cold* summons forth the charms and dictates of winter. Just as Joyce Sidman captured the drama of the pond in *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems* and the night woods in *Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night*, here she captures the drama of the cold.

### About the Author and Illustrator

The Newbery Honor winner **Joyce Sidman** is simply one of the best poets writing for children today. For her body of work, she recently won the Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. She lives in Wayzata, Minnesota, where she has grown to know the cold. [www.joycesidman.com](http://www.joycesidman.com)

**Rick Allen** endures the winter by pressing original linoleum cuts, curious wood engravings, and other printed ephemera in collaboration with his wife and creative partner, Marian Lansky, and their assistant, Janelle Miller. [www.kenspeckleletterpress.com](http://www.kenspeckleletterpress.com)

### Set the Stage

Before exploring this book, talk with students about winter and how they experience this season. Ask these questions: Is it cold where we live? Is there snow or ice? Or is it a warm place with mild weather? What animals and insects do you notice in your communities and neighborhoods, and what do those creatures do during the winter? Explain that in *Winter Bees*, the poet Joyce Sidman explores what winter is like for a dozen plants and animals of the north through poetry and prose paragraphs.

### Poems and Discussion Questions

Read each poem aloud slowly and show students the poem text while reading, if possible.

#### “Dream of the Tundra Swan”

Who is speaking in the poem? How do you know? What is the tundra swan’s dream about?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.3.1]

#### “Snake’s Lullaby”

What is a lullaby? Why might this poem be called a lullaby? Notice how the poet uses rhyme and rhythm to suggest the songlike qualities of a lullaby. Why is it important for snakes to sleep in winter?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.3.1]

#### “Snowflake Wakes”

What do you learn about snowflakes from the poem? From the prose paragraph? Notice how often the poet uses alliteration (the repetition of initial consonants like *w*, *l*, *g*, *s*, *d*, *t*, *cl*) to build the poem and create connections.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.3.1; RI.1.1; RI.2.1; RI.3.1]

#### “Big Brown Moose”

In this persona poem, the poet is writing as if she were the moose. How do you know that? Which lines and words signal that point of view? Notice how she also coins new words (like “slumberous”) to describe the moose. What might “slumberous” mean in this context?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.1.4; RL.2.1; RL.2.6; RL.3.1; RL.3.4; RL.3.5]

#### “Winter Bees”

Why do you think this whole book of poetry is titled after this particular poem? What do you learn about bees in winter here? Why is that so central to this whole book?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.3.1]

#### “Under Ice”

What animals live “under ice” in this poem? Why is the poem not named after them in this case? In this poem, the poet repeats from one stanza to the next. Can you find each repeated line (beginning with “made of ripped chips and thrashing twigs”)? Use the glossary to help you understand the pantoum form, if needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.3.1; RL.3.5]

#### “Brother Raven, Sister Wolf”

Why are there two different animals featured in this poem? And why are they called “brother” and “sister”? Notice how the poet uses plain text and italics to signal which animal’s point of view is which. Read the poem aloud in two groups and decide which lines are for the “raven” group and which are for the “wolf” group.

## Winter Bees and Other Poems of the Cold

BY JOYCE SIDMAN AND RICK ALLEN

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.1.4; RL.2.1; RL.2.6; RL.3.1]

“Vole in Winter”

What is a vole? Read the prose paragraph first this time and identify the vole in the illustration, too. Whose point of view is featured in the poem? And how does the poet surprise the reader at the end of the poem?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.1.4; RL.1.7; RL.2.1; RL.2.6; RL.2.7; RL.3.1; RL.3.7; RI.1.1; RI.2.1; RI.3.1]

“What Do the Trees Know?”

Why did the poet include this poem about trees instead of featuring another animal? What roles do trees play in the animal world? Why does the poet title this poem with a question? Notice that the poet repeats that title question line twice in the poem. Why do you think she does that?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.3.1]

“Chickadee’s Song”

What do you learn about chickadees from the prose paragraph? From the illustration? From the poem? Identify the words that the poet repeats from the second stanza again in the final stanza. Why do you think those particular words are repeated?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.1.7; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.2.7; RL.3.1; RL.3.4; RL.3.5; RL.3.7; RI.1.1; RI.2.1; RI.3.1]

“The Whole Wide World Is Melting”

What seasonal changes do you notice in this poem? Notice how the poet repeats the title line (“The whole world is melting”) twice within the poem. Why? Other key words are also repeated for emphasis. Which ones and why those?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.3.1; RL.3.4]

“Triolet for Skunk Cabbage”

This is another poem about a plant, and not an animal. Why do you think the poet features the skunk cabbage in particular? (Hint: read the poem and the paragraph.) What do you notice about the triolet form of this poem? What lines are repeated and why do you think they are repeated? Use the glossary to help you understand the triolet form, if needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.2.4; RL.3.1; RL.3.5]

### Wrap up

Which is your favorite animal depicted in this book? Which is your favorite poem? Why? Are these the same (poem + animal) or different? What did you learn about animals in winter that especially surprised you? What do *you* like to do in winter to help you “survive” and thrive during this season?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1; RL.2.1; RL.3.1]

### Activities

#### ART:

Notice that the illustrator Rick Allen has featured the red fox

in nearly all of the illustrations, even when other animals and plants are the focus of the poem. Why? Can you spot the fox? Rick Allen uses prints to create the art for these illustrations, particularly linoleum cuts and wood engravings. Students may enjoy trying their own printmaking with potato prints (carving simple designs into a half potato with adult supervision) or cardboard prints (cutting corrugated cardboard into simple shapes). Or even simpler—try making paper snowflakes with blank white paper folded multiple times and then snipped and shaped with scissors.

#### WRITING:

Students can work with a partner or in a small group to create a “found” poem about a winter animal. They can choose a favorite animal from *Winter Bees*, read the prose paragraph provided, and then choose their favorite words or phrases from the paragraph and rearrange them into a “found” poem of their own. Remind students that poems don’t have to rhyme.

#### RESEARCH:

Make a list of the dozen plants and animals featured in this book. Students can then investigate which of these are found in their own communities and what winter is like for them in their region. Add animals that are unique to your own area and research images of them at sources such as [Animals.NationalGeographic.com](http://Animals.NationalGeographic.com) or videos on YouTube. Challenge students to research and write their own nonfiction prose paragraphs about a selected plant or animal in winter similar to those Sidman provides in *Winter Bees*.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.7; W.2.7; W.3.4]

[Overall: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.10; RL.2.10; RL.3.10; RI.1.10; RI.2.10; RI.3.10; SL.1.2; SL.2.2; SL.3.2]

#### FURTHER READING:

Look for other books by Joyce Sidman that feature animals and plants in different environments, such as:

*Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems*. Ill. by Beckie Prange. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

*Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow*. Ill. by Beth Krommes. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

*Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night*. Ill. by Rick Allen. Houghton Mifflin, 2010.

Guide created by Sylvia Vardell, a professor at Texas Woman’s University and the author of *Poetry Aloud Here!* and the Poetry Friday Anthology series (co-edited with Janet Wong). She blogs at [PoetryForChildren](http://PoetryForChildren) and writes the poetry column for *ALA’s Book Links* magazine.