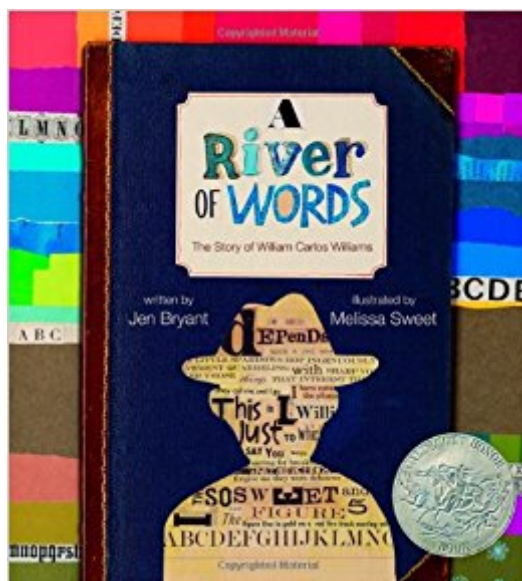


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# A River Of Words: The Story Of William Carlos Williams



## Synopsis

2009 Caldecott Honor Book  
An ALA Notable Book  
A New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book  
A Charlotte Zolotow Honor Book  
NCTE Notable Children's Book

When he wrote poems, he felt as free as the Passaic River as it rushed to the falls. Willie's notebooks filled up, one after another. Willie's words gave him freedom and peace, but he also knew he needed to earn a living. So he went off to medical school and became a doctor -- one of the busiest men in town! Yet he never stopped writing poetry. In this picture book biography of William Carlos Williams, Jen Bryant's engaging prose and Melissa Sweet's stunning mixed-media illustrations celebrate the amazing man who found a way to earn a living and to honor his calling to be a poet.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 820L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 34 pages

Publisher: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers; First Edition edition (July 9, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0802853021

ISBN-13: 978-0802853028

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 0.3 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 23 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #70,585 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #33 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Literary #503 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry #6754 in Books > History

Age Range: 7 - 18 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 3-6 • This stunning picture-book biography combines a lyrical text with wonderfully creative mixed-media illustrations in an impressive and personable homage to an extraordinary and accomplished man. Bryant's poetic writing • "Gurgle, gurgle • swish, swish, swoosh. The water went slipping and sliding over the smooth rocks, then poured in a torrent over the falls, then quieted again below" • describes beautifully how, as a child, Williams would lie peacefully by the Passaic River, listening to the

sounds of the water; he appreciated nature and the ordinary experiences of life. Book pages form a background for some of the illustrations and prescription pads become the paper for the doctor's poetic scribbling. A lovely spread shows a display of constellations while in the foreground, the poet sits framed in the light of an attic window, with one of his poems about a night sky laid out on a book cover. Williams's poems, which appear in the book in a variety of colors and fonts as part of the art, are highlighted in uniform type with standard line breaks on the inside cover pages. A time line of his life juxtaposed with a list of world events, a brief author's note about his significance as a poet, and an illustrator's note that explains how Sweet researched the project are appended.

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Bryant follows *Call Me Marianne* (2006), about Marianne Moore, with another picture-book introduction to a poet. Here, she focuses on William Carlos Williams, and she begins by suggesting that Williams's childhood love of nature inspired the free forms and rhythms he chose for his first adolescent poems. During his adult medical career, Williams "scribbled a few lines . . . wherever he could, composing his enduring, beloved body of work. The free-verse line breaks in Bryant's text sometimes feel arbitrary, but her simple, spare language matches her subject well. Sweet's mixed-media collages will draw varying age groups. Younger children will connect with the childlike drawings of figures, while older kids (and even young-adult art students) will appreciate the artfully layered paper compositions that include lines of Williams's poetry. A comprehensive time line of Williams's life targeted toward older kids (and teachers), suggestions for further reading, and a selection of Williams's poems close this inspiring title that, like Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan's *Action Jackson* (2002), shows that an artist's work begins with deep, quiet observation. Grades 2-5.

--Gillian Engberg

"A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams" is an incredibly engaging book. I bought it for my 10-year-old grandson, and he is impressed with it. The narrative is great, and the illustrations are some of the best I've seen. At the end of the book, there are comments from both the author and the illustrator that give the reader additional perspective on the man and poet that William Carlos Williams was. Several Williams poems are included in the book. I recommend it for any child interested in writing and/or poetry.

A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams

I got this as a supplement to our homeschool 4th grade English learning. I wasn't introduced to William Carlos Williams until my sophomore year of high school. This is a beautiful way to introduce him to children. It is a gorgeous book and I would definitely recommend it. My son read it independently and wrote a short report on Williams. My daughters, aged 4 and 6, listened to it as a read-aloud.

My first sight of *A River of Words* came when I opened the box from and the bright, wordy picture on the cover beckoned me cheerfully in. The next day I carried the book to my two sections of sophomore literature at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, where we were just starting a block on Williams. The students loved it just as much as I did, and I'm sure the pictures helped them get into the poems. For me, especially, it was liberating to see an icon for "The Great Figure" that wasn't the familiar one by Charles Demuth. But I found two errors to correct in the next printing. The illustrator's note runs together the title of Williams's poem, "The Great Figure," and the title of Demuth's painting, "I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold." And the chronology at the back of the book gets the beginning of World War II wrong by nine years.

This is a beautifully written and illustrated book that requires time to appreciate each and every page. The details in the illustrations are worth the time and, of course, the words of William Carlos Williams never disappoints. Using this book in a poetry unit with my third grades.

great condition as described

I love this book and I will use it with my library assistants (high school students). Creative, visually detailed about William Carlos Williams.

Great Read Aloud

I gave this to my nephew as a gift, his mother was thrilled and loved the artwork. She enjoyed the fact that it was a book he could enjoy as he grows as well.

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