

Educator's Guide for ***A Hatful of Dragons***

And More Than 13.8 Billion Other Funny Poems

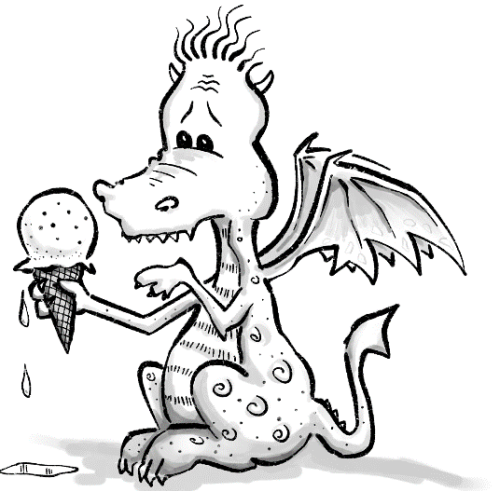
By Vikram Madan

About This Book

Vikram Madan wrote and illustrated **A Hatful of Dragons** to share his lifelong love for rhyming poetry. The award-winning book draws upon numerous influences, features hilarious poems, delicious vocabulary, a wide range of subjects, a variety of teachable poetic forms and techniques, and blends funny poems and drawings into a hilarious, visual experience that kids love, and has been described by readers and reviewers as “*delightful*”, “*fantastic*”, “*inventive*”, “*funny*”, “*gleeful*”, “*rollicking*”, “*zany*”, “*glorious*”, “*witty*”, “*irresistible*”, “*clever*”, and “*fantastic*”.

Honors this book has received:

- Starred Review from Kirkus Reviews
- Prairie Bloom Book Award Finalist
- Bluebonnet Book Award Master List
- A New York Public Library Best Book for Kids
- An Evanston Public Library 101 Great Books for Kids
- A Kirkus Reviews Best Middle-Grade Book of the Year
- A Denver Public Library Best and Brightest Poetry Book
- A Bank Street College of Education Best Book of the Year
- School Library Journal's Fuse #8 Blog - Best Poetry Books
- American Library Association ALSC Summer Reading Pick
- School Library Journal's Fuse #8 Blog - Funniest Books of the Year
- Being adapted for Musical Theater by the University of North Carolina.



Educational use

A HATFUL OF DRAGONS is a very visual book full of humor and versatile poetry forms, and can be used as an educational aid for developing reading, writing, comprehension, vocabulary, discussion, and even drawing skills. The combination of humor, fun illustrations, rhythm, and rhyme will engage even the most reluctant reader and makes the book ideal for introducing kids to poetry. The little cross-connections between poems, as well as subplots featuring recurring characters, will invite kids to read the book over and over again. The content is adaptable for teaching a wide age range (7-12) and kids at different age and reading levels can extract age-appropriate value from the book.



The following are some ideas for educational ways to use this book:

1. READING FOR FUN.

Reading a book just to have fun together is a great way to develop a life-long interest in reading, especially with younger children. Reading fun poetry can also help develop an interest in reading more poetry. Examples of possible reading activities:

- a. Read aloud to (and with) kids in individual, small group, and large group settings.
- b. Have kids take turns reading.
- c. Have pairs of kids read in two voices.
- d. Sing aloud the Dragon's song (see page 28) as a group
- e. Read the tongue-twister poem (see page 50) aloud.
 - i. Take turns to see who can read it fastest without making mistakes.
 - ii. Find other tongue twisters and read them aloud with friends.
- f. Find and read funny poems by other funny poets.
- g. Poetry performance – students select a poem (from this and other books) and read it aloud to the class.

2. READING COMPREHENSION

All the poems in the book can be used to help children develop reading comprehension. For example, asking children to explain the obvious and not so obvious things happening in the poems. Educators can form their own questions based on the reading level of the children they are working with, and answers can be oral or written assignments.

- a. Example questions for reading comprehension for younger readers:
 - i. Page 6: Why is the neighbor in a rage?
 - ii. Page 11: Why is the narrator not scared of the ghost?
 - iii. Page 13: Why should you not invite the Flippy Floppy Flappers to lunch?
 - iv. Page 15: Can an Octopus be a helpful pet? Why? Why not?
 - v. Page 16: Why are all the dragons a 'prickly lot'?
 - vi. Page 20: What does the Uncle Robot do when he gets overwhelmed?
 - vii. Page 25: Where did the Taxi Driver dump her passengers?
 - viii. Page 27: Why is it not much fun to pull a dragon in your wagon?
 - ix. Page 29: Which sound is the loudest of all? Can you come up with other sounds that are as loud?
 - x. (And other poem-specific questions educators can come up with by themselves)
- b. For more fluent readers: Discuss how some of the poems are interconnected.
 - i. Can you come up with new ways how some of the poems could be additionally interconnected?
- c. For advanced readers:
 - i. List and analyze the layers of meanings, as well as the wordplay, in the poem 'Brouhaha' (Page 31)



3. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

This book features a lot of advanced vocabulary, synonyms, and interesting word choices. Having children look up unfamiliar words in dictionaries and thesauruses can help them gain confidence in improving their reading ability and in tackling more advanced reading material on their own. Some examples of ways to leverage the vocabulary:

- a. Have children pick words from this book that they don't already know and have them look up the meanings in a dictionary
 - i. Have them use the words in their own sentences
- b. Have children pick unfamiliar words and find synonyms for those words using a thesaurus.
 - i. Have them write multiple sentences using the different synonyms
 - ii. Discuss if word and its synonym can be easily interchanged in the sentences they wrote.
 - iii. Discuss why author used a specific word in a particular place in the poem.
 1. Would the poem sound and feel the same if you replaced a word in a poem with a synonym?



4. POETRY WRITING CRAFT

A poet makes many active choices in the process of making a poem. These include choosing the form, the rhyming scheme, the meter, the words and vocabulary, and specific poetic techniques that can amplify the feelings being communicated through the poem. The varied poems in this book can be used as examples to highlight the craft of poetry writing.

- a. **Poetic Forms** – The form of the poem helps defines how it looks on the page – e.g. how long or short it is, how it is divided into stanzas, the way individual lines rhyme with each other (aka rhyme scheme), etc. Many poetic forms are well

known such as haikus and limericks. Following are some examples of the poetry forms used in this book:

- i. **Concrete Poem** (also called shape poem - [info](#)): Page 31 – ‘Brouhaha’
- ii. **Limerick** ([info](#)): Page 38 – ‘Slobbery Slobs’
- iii. **Monorhyme** ([info](#)): Page 20 – ‘Our Favorite Uncle’
- iv. **Narrative poem** ([info](#)): Page 56 – ‘The Band-Aid and the Chewing Gum’
- v. **Nonsense poem**: Page 18 – ‘13,841,287,201 Nonsense Poems in One!’
- vi. **Stanza type**
 1. **Couplet** ([info](#)): Page 25 – ‘Taxi Crab’
 2. **Quatrain** ([info](#)): Page 4 – ‘Panda and Pangolin’, Page 40 – ‘The Neighbor’s Rant’
- vii. **Chant**: Page 55 – ‘Australian Animal Chant’
- viii. **Block Form** ([info](#)): Page 23 – ‘Permanent Guests’

Discussion:

- Why and when does a poet use one particular form over another?
- What is the importance of a form to a poem?

(Do also look up all the different kinds of rhyming schemes).

- b. **Poetic techniques** – Poetic techniques are the ways in which Poets manipulate words to express their ideas, emotions, and feelings with more effect. Since poems are usually brief, and without superfluous language, poets select their words carefully and arrange them in patterns intentionally. A study of poetry should involve discussion of not just the meaning and form of the poem, but also of the intentional ways the poem was constructed. The following is a partial list of some of the poetic techniques used in this book:

- i. **Alliteration**: When we repeat the beginning *sounds* of nearby words. E.g. Page 16 ‘Prickly Lot’ (“sulky, sullen, surly ...”). See also Page 13 ‘Flippy Floppy Flappers’
- ii. **Anaphora**: Emphasizing something by repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of sentences or stanzas. E.g. Page 29 ‘Louder’ – the phrase “Louder than a...” is repeated numerous times.
- iii. **Anthropomorphism**: When an animal, object, or concept has human characteristics and actually behaves in human ways. (Note: Anthropomorphism is a type of Personification) E.g. Page 4 ‘The Panda and the Pangolin’, Page 56 ‘The Band-Aid and the Chewing Gum’
- iv. **Assonance**: When we repeat the same *inner* vowel sounds in nearby words. E.g. Page 34 ‘Unruly Bunch’ (“**o**yster.. **bo**isterous...**ro**istering...”)



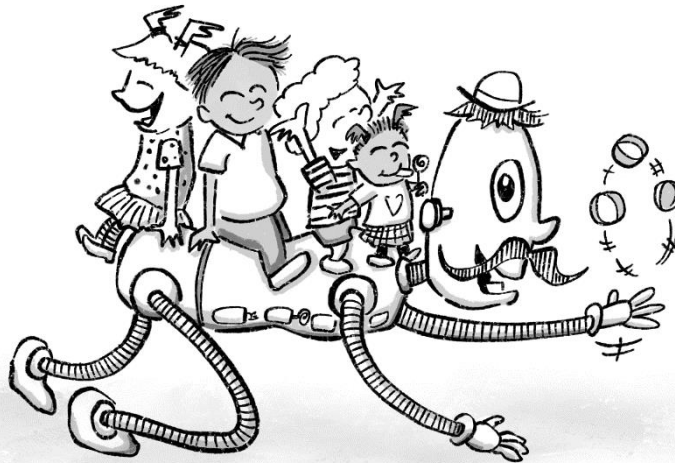
- v. **Consonance**: When we repeat the same ending or inner consonant sounds in nearby words. E.g. Page 13 'Flippy Floppy Flappers' ("... flop and flip and flap")
- vi. **Hyperbole**: When we exaggerate more than normal. E.g. Page 52 'Roller Coaster', first stanza.
- vii. **Inference**: When something is not said directly but has to be inferred. E.g. Page 15 'Helpful Pet' - Why is it not clever to ask your octopus to help?
- viii. **Internal rhymes**: When there are rhyming words inside the same line. Page 50 ("..thin twin's tin.."), Page 35 "endlessly, wendlessly", Page 25 ("crabbiness...grabbiness")
- ix. **Meter**: Meter is way the stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem create a predictable, rhythmic pattern. To determine the pattern, it helps to read the poem aloud and pay attention to which sounds are stressed and which are unstressed. All poems in this book have a distinct meter. For more advanced study of meter look up '*Feet*' (e.g. iamb, trochee, spondee, dactyl, anapest, etc.), '*Line Length*' (e.g. monometer, dimeter, pentameter, etc.) and other **prosody** concepts.
- x. **Onomatopoeia**: When words imitate the sound of what they refer too. E.g. Page 32 'Tu-Baa-Baa' ("...tu-baa-baa....oom-pah-pah...blaarp...paarp...")
- xi. **Point of View**: The perspective from which a poem is written.
 1. *First Person* - "I" poem: E.g Page 9 'Bamboozled'
 2. *Third Person* - "he/she/they" poem: E.g. Page 4 'The Panda and the Pangolin'
- xii. **Puns**: When we derive humor from the multiple meanings of words or words that sound alike but have different meanings. E.g. Page 31 'Brouhaha' "...the weight of words..."
- xiii. **Refrain**: Refrains are lines or phrases that are repeated in a poem. Page 41 'A Hatful of Dragons' – the repeated phrase 'A hatful of...' is a refrain.
- xiv. **Rhyme**: Words with the same ending sound are called rhyming words. All poems in this book are rhyming poems. In the rare case when the words almost rhyme, they are called 'near rhymes' – e.g. (heart/starts)
- xv. **Rhythm**: While 'Meter' is the pattern of sound, rhythm is how the sound flows. Prose and free verse can also have rhythm, but usually only rhyming poetry has meter.
- xvi. **Simile**: When one thing is compared to another thing using words like 'like' and 'as'. E.g. Page 20 Our Favorite Uncle ("...like a lion's roar"), Page 13 ("...like an imminent earthquake")



- xvii. **Title Choices:** The titles of poems can add an additional dimension of information to the poem. Some titles are simple, but some titles help set context or tell us things that are not in the poem itself.
- xviii. **Word play:** Poetry is 'making art with words' and poets often use words in interesting ways. In addition to synonyms, puns, onomatopoeia, phrase construction, and internal rhymes, also look for completely made up words in the poems.

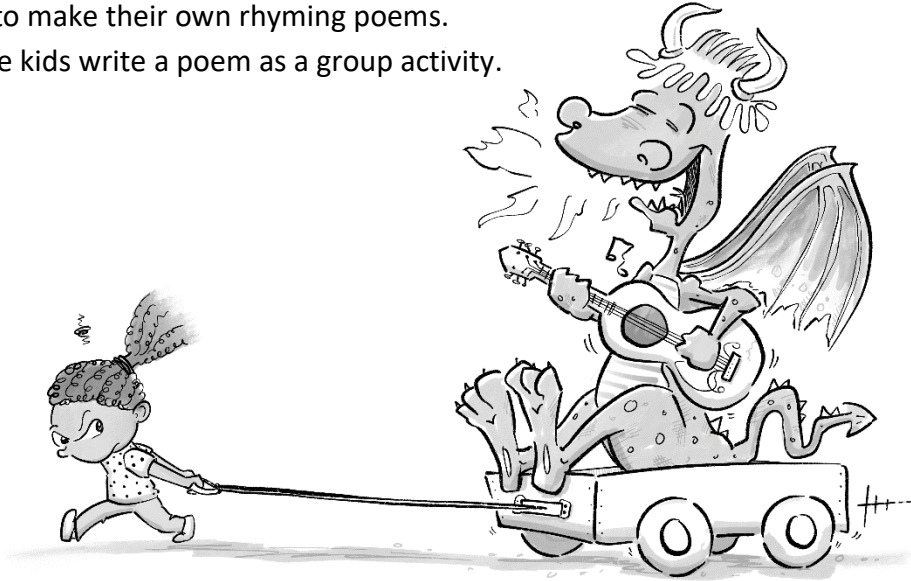
Discussion:

- a. How do poetic techniques create a more compelling reading experience?
- b. How do poets decide which technique to use when?



5. **WRITING EXERCISES** – Hopefully this book will show kids that poems and poetry can be a fun way to express ideas and inspire them to make their own poems. Here are some suggested exercises for individuals and groups:
- a. Have kids create their own poem using the nonsense-poem template on Page 18.
 - i. Have kids pick a partner and read each others poems
 - ii. Have kids read their poems aloud to the class
 - iii. In a class setting, did anyone write the exact same poem as someone else? Discuss why not?
 - b. Have kids write their own poem from scratch.
 - i. Their own poem does not need to rhyme, but if they want help rhyming they can refer to a rhyming dictionary (available online).
 - ii. For kids who need help getting started, look online for 'poetry starters' or 'poetry writing prompts'.

- c. Have kids try to write a tongue-twister.
- d. Have kids pick a character from one of the poems and write a short imaginary biography for that character.
- e. Have kids pick a favorite poem and then have them write a short paragraph or story about what might have happened next, after the poem ended.
- f. Have kids compile a list of rhyming words from the book and have them use this list to make their own rhyming poems.
- g. Have kids write a poem as a group activity.

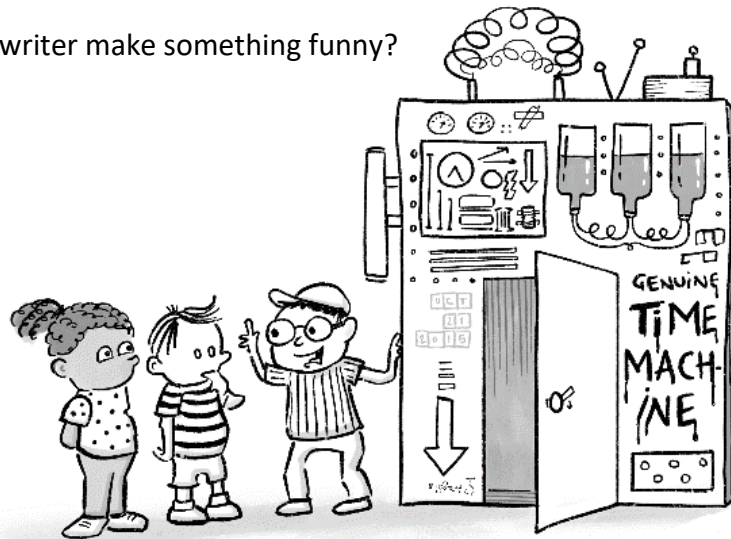


6. DRAWING EXERCISES – The visual connection to literacy is very important at the elementary age. Hopefully the combination of words and images in this book will inspire some creativity amongst readers. The drawing exercises can be combined with the writing exercises to create a fun, creative experience. Some suggested exercises:

- a. Have kids draw dragons.
 - i. Have kids draw dragons trying to eat something
- b. Have kids copy drawings from the book.
 - i. (Copying drawings is a great way to develop hand-eye coordination and many artists learn by first copying drawings of other artists)
- c. Have kids imagine some new kinds of 'hatfuls' and have them draw what such 'hatfuls' might look like.
- d. Have kids write a small poem and draw a drawing to illustrate the poem.
- e. Have kids illustrate each other's poems.
 - i. Have kids write a poem about each other's illustrations.
- f. Have kids select a favorite poem from the book and make their own illustration for the poem.
- g. Have kids find (or assign to kids) poems by other authors and have them draw an illustration for those poems.

7. SCIENCE AND MATH TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – This book provides opportunity to have some science and math discussions. For example:

- a. Are there really more than 13.8 Billion poems in this book? How does the math on page 18 work?
 - i. This can introduce kids to the topics of permutations and combinations.
- b. Page 52 – what are the physics of rollercoasters? What would make one rollercoaster more 'awesome' than another rollercoaster?
- c. Page 48 – is it possible to build a time machine, or time travel?
 - i. You can research this topic online in detail. In theoretical physics the answer is 'yes', but doing this practically has many challenges.
- d. Page 62 – what kinds of science or things would the Professor need to build a 'page machine'? (This can just be a fun theoretical discussion).
- e. Page 20 – what would it take to build a robot uncle that can do all the things in the poem?
- f. Page 9 – can you really hatch dragons and dinosaurs from eggs? Why or why not?
- g. How does a writer make something funny?



8. UNDERSTANDING HUMOR – Humor is a very subjective topic. What one person finds funny may not amuse another person. This book of funny poems provides an opportunity to discuss not only humorous writing, but also humor itself. Example discussion questions:

- a. What makes something funny?
- b. How does a writer make something funny?
- c. Why do we find some things funnier than other things?
- d. Why does one person find something funny, but another person does not find the same thing funny?

- e. Is surprise important to making something funny?
- f. Examples of techniques used to create humor in this book:
 - i. Surprise endings and unexpected outcomes
 - ii. Wordplay, puns, and made-up words
 - iii. Misdirection
 - iv. Exaggeration
 - v. Ridiculous situations and characters
 - vi. Parody
 - vii. Puns
 - viii. Using funny words (e.g. see the book 'ABSURD WORDS' by Tara Lazar)
 - ix. A combination of the above
- g. Brainstorm ideas for funny poems and then write a poem
 - i. Select a topic and brainstorm "what could be funny about this topic?".



- 9. BOOK DISCUSSION** – Finally, discussing this book can help kids develop their critical thinking and analysis skills. Example discussion topics:
- a. Did you like this book? Why? Why not?
 - b. Would you recommend this book to others? Why? Why not?
 - c. Did this book make you think poetry can be fun?
 - d. Which poem is your favorite? Why?
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Selected Quotes:

★ "A loopily meta collection of silly, interactive poetry [that] will encourage several giggle-filled read-throughs!" — **Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review**

"Silly wordplays, letters all over the place, fill-in-the-blanks, and funky pictures make this poetry collection a delight!" — **New York Public Library Best Books**

"These poems are fantastic! So inventive and funny!" — **School Library Journal, Fuse 8 Blog, Best Poetry Books**

"For kids who have not yet found poetry that speaks to them, try this gleeful tour of various poetic forms, accompanied by silly cartoon illustrations... A HATFUL OF DRAGONS lets readers know that poetry can be seriously fun through rollicking rhymes and hybrid comic book styling." — **Denver Public Library Best and Brightest Books**

"Hilarity abounds in this wild and wacky conglomeration of unique (and goofy) poems! Expect 13.8 billion laughs!" — **Evanston Public Library 101 Great Books for Kids**

"A HATFUL of DRAGONS is a fun, rhythmic, and sometimes interactive collection of illustrated poems, many of which beg to be read aloud. .. A nice complement to the classic, illustrated, poetry of [Shel] Silverstein, [Jack] Prelutsky, and [Roald] Dahl." — **Richie Partington, Richies Picks**

"... It's really, really funny ... really fun to read aloud ... should really appeal to kids ... poem after poem with that sense of joy and fun and ridiculousness... what everyone needs right now ... " — **Kirkus Reviews Children's Editor, Kirkus Book Picks Podcast**

"The word that best describes this book rhymes with 'bilarious.'" — **Adam Rex, NYT Bestselling author-artist of *Frankenstein Makes a Sandwich***

"With rigorous rhythm and rollicking rhyme, Vikram Madan's *A Hatful of Dragons* delivers a vatful of laughs!" — **Douglas Florian, author-artist of *Friends and Foes: Poems About Us All* and dozens other poetry books**

"A FUN and ZANY collection for young readers!" — **Professor Sylvia Vardell, Author/Editor of the *Poetry Friday Anthology Series***

"A fun, fresh poetry book to use with your students or kids... The book is filled with rhyming poems... poetry styles ... sophisticated language ... figurative language... With humor, zany adventures, this book will surely be a hit with any poet!" — **StoryMamas Book Reviews**

"Vikram Madan's collection of poems is deliciously daft... It's pretty near impossible to pick favorites ... It's just the kind of book that even those who claim not to like poetry might well change their minds after hearing a couple from Vikram Madan's' gloriously gigglesome gallimaufry." — **Red Reading Hub Blog**

"Wickedly wacky poetry... I can imagine my students falling into this book of poetry. I love books that help us see poetry as something fun, fun to read, and fun to write. Vikram Madan plays with language in unique ways. Kids will have a blast with this." — **Elementary School Teacher**

"Thought you didn't like poetry? Think again!" — **Elementary School Librarian**

"The illustrations accent the poetry perfectly. The poems are full of rhyme, rhythm, repetition, alliterations and other poetic elements. I especially like how the poet used several related words in poems. What a great discussion piece as children are introduced to some fantastic language." — **Online Reader Review**

"Madcap and filled with zany and interesting ways to look at poetry and writing, this funny poem book is a fantastic addition to any funny poetry collection. Witty, quirky, and smart, don't sleep on this poetry collection, or you'll miss a dragon-sized hatful of laughs!" — **ImaginationSoup.Net**

An entire poem written with no words. None. Nada. Zilch.

The crankiest Dragons you've ever met. But why are they so cranky??!?

Slobberly Slobs. So slobberly. Such slobs. Shudder.

A professor whose invention is ruining this book. Literally.

Guy going from page to page searching for peace and quiet - will he ever find it?

A Hatful of Aunties. Hint: don't let them pinch your cheeks!

Ghost that really, really, really wants to haunt me!

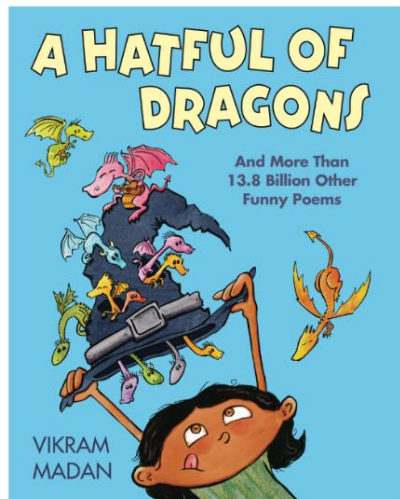
Animals who can't carry a tune but... WILL. NOT. STOP!!!!!!!

Just in! Fresh Robot Uncles at the Robot Uncle Store!

Your friendly neighborhood OOM-PAH-PAH Tuba band with an offer you can't resist.

A Mummy on the run from it's very worst enemy!

A mosquito insisting on a duel! Who will win?



Bank Street College Best Books 2021

