

Barry Wallenstein, *ROLLER COASTER KID And Other Poems*
Kirkus Reviews

Wallenstein's 24 poems are a good deal more interesting than the usual bland verse still widely recommended for children. In fact, these weren't all created for children; and though they are simple enough, they don't always move on a child's wavelength. Young readers will have no trouble, however, relating to the title poem, in which a roller-coaster operator reveals his own paranoia in his comments on a boy who has been "up there" (on the ride) for five straight days.

That strong, impelling opener might be worth the book. Another entry, on chopping wood, could serve as a model of what makes a poem—and this use of the selection is suggested by Wallenstein's appended notes on how and why he created each one as he did. If some of the completed poems seem thin, there are parts and passages worth stopping for in many. The notes could help some young readers to feel more comfortable with poetry, though at times they make the poems seem less interesting than they might, or just reveal that there isn't much there to explain. ("Everything else in [the poem] is filler," he says at one point; and, at another, "the meaning here is relatively unimportant.") Lady McCrady's scratchy New Wave illustrations, a departure for her, lend energy and style to the collection and bring out the poems' vital elements.