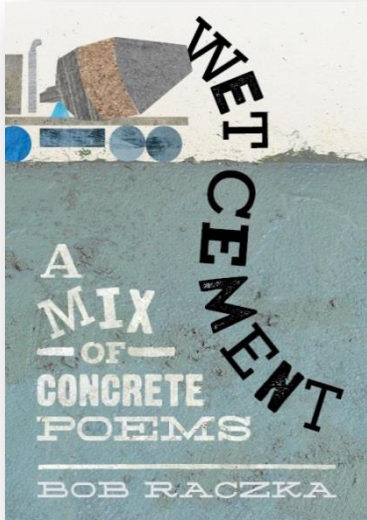


SPOTLIGHT REVIEW



There's a certain school of thought around poetry that insists it is meant to be read aloud and heard, not simply presented in a book. While I am sure that is true of much poetry, concrete poetry works better on the page. The physical shape of the poem is as important as the words (or should be).

Bob Raczka offers up many wonderful examples in *Wet Cement: A Mix of Concrete Poems*. Taking the idea one step further, beyond shaping the words of the poems themselves in a clever way, the letters in the titles are also arranged in a complementary fashion. The *e* in a poem called "Sunset" for instance, is positioned so that only the top half is showing, resembling a sun going down.

Not settling for poetry merely in the shape of objects, Raczka's forms tend to have movement. Just look at the way the cement oozes out sinusoidally on the cover. Or in "Icicles" when the words appear to be melting from the top of the page.

There's also real substance to Raczka's poetry beyond entertaining gimmickry. While aimed at younger audiences, any age should find the poetic charm in the idea of lightning as a "cloud tantrum" or erasers as friends because they forgive all of our "dumb mistakes."

In Raczka's introduction he says that he hopes that the words will inspire others to play with words themselves. I am confident that you will be after reading this magically creative collection.

- John Mutford, Public Services Librarian