A collection of twelve poems describing the activities in a child's life and the changes in the weather as the year moves from January to December.

My Personal Review:
I propose that we invent an entirely new category of children's literature. In my life I've had the pleasure of discovering, usually through complete accident, fabulous picture books that use poetry to convey seasons. Tasha Tudor's, *A Time To Keep* was the first of these and remains a favorite (if only because it is intricately tied into my own childhood). The second such book was Charlotte Zolotow's breathtaking, *Seasons: A Book of Poems*. Words cannot convey how much I enjoyed that book. And now, lo and behold, I've found a third leg to this unlikely triumvirate. And who could have dreamed it would have sprung from the pen of writer extraordinaire John Updike? In *A Child's Calendar*, Updike's 1965 poems have been given a lively update, all thanks to illustrator Trina Schart Hyman. The result is a book that truly embraces diversity, change, and how kids react to the natural ebb and flow of the seasons. It is one of the loveliest books for children I've ever had the pleasure to page through.

The book begins in January, and we meet a family of four. An interracial couple and their two sons live in the country, and sometimes the neighbor kids come by. The cold winter months freeze the earth so that, *The river is/ A frozen place/ Held still beneath/ The trees black lace.* With the arrival of spring, the family is out in the yard (with the toddler sometimes helping by plucking daffodils from the earth, bulbs and all) and *We still wear mittens/ Which we lose.* Summer shows us various idyllic childhood scenes involving ponds to explore, roads to bike down, fireworks, and beachside adventures. Though, as Updike is quick to point out in August, *The trees are bored/With being green/ Some people leave/ The local scene.* So autumn comes and school begins. There are costumes and changing leaves as, *Blue ghosts of smoke/ Float through the town.* And
then winter again and Christmas and a feeling of having gotten through quite an interesting year.

It is difficult not to admire the pictures in this book. Hyman has done an exquisite job. I've adored her work over the years (check out The Fortune Tellers by Lloyd Alexander, if you can) and this book is a great example of what she's capable of. Her watercolors capture the spirit of the outdoors as well as the comfort and coziness of staying within. I loved the pictures that accompanied January's poem. Outside the kids stare, with sleds in hand, at the small town and the momentous grey/pink sky above (as seen on the book's cover). The other picture is from inside the home. You can see where the boots, removed after stomping about outside, lay with semi-melted snow still scattered on the rug. Hyman especially gives a great deal of attention to her lighting. That way, a spring morning looks nothing like a summer evening or the winter holiday season at night. The book makes you want to pack up your things, buy a house in the middle of nowhere (possibly in Michigan), and live with your nearest and dearest with all the beauties of nature about you. Its a book that makes you yearn for a time and place you've never known.

And the poems. Ah, the poems. I don't think Mr. Updike needs me to compliment him any. He's already acquired his fair share of praise. So all I will say is that for those that love him, this book will not disappoint. For those who do not know him (or do not know him well), I'll just quote some lines of his describing November: The stripped and shapely/ Maple grieves/ The loss of her/ Departed leaves. The ground is hard/ As hard as stone/ The year is old/ The birds are flown. And yet the world/ Nevertheless/ Displays a certain/ Loveliness - The beauty of/ The bone. Tall God/ Must see our souls/ This way, and nod.

So there we have it. One of the nicest additions to the world of seasonal poetry books (accompanied by watercolors) for children. Children will find themselves oddly soothed by the poems and pictures. Grown-ups will be mildly surprised to find themselves feeling the same way.

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