

This Holiday Season, give the gift of **Literature** to the young people in your life...

## Gift Books for the Holidays

**Wednesday,  
December 5  
6:30-8:00 PM  
Nantucket  
Atheneum  
Great Hall**



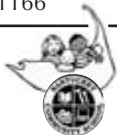
Parents, teachers, book lovers welcome. Free admission.

Book List compiled by the Staff of the Atheneum Weezie Library for Children, & presented by Children's & Young Adult Librarian, Maggie Head

*Books presented will be available for purchase thanks to Mitchell's Book Corner*

To register for free childcare & pizza starting at 6:00PM, call 508-228-7285 x1166

This program is offered by the Nantucket Atheneum and the Community Network for Children.



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS WITH THE BELLE OF AMHERST

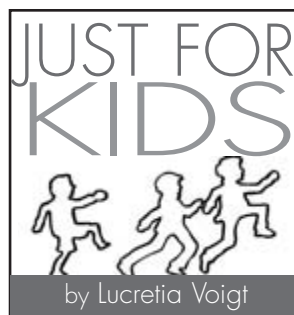
Emily Dickinson has always been a favorite of mine. Her poetry is concise and imagistic, whimsical at times and contemplative. For those of you who are astrology readers, she was a Capricorn, so according to the Vedic system of astrology she should be reddish-brown, handsome and youngish in appearance. Capricorns have great aspirations, are modest, liberal and known for their perseverance and strong-mindedness. They are sympathetic and generous, and their interests lean toward literature and science. Sounds a little like our friend in Amherst, doesn't it?

Emily Dickinson was born on Dec. 10, 1830. She lived her life in Amherst, Mass. in her family home. While we all know her for her poetry, during her life she was revered for her gardening skills. As a teenager she composed a herbarium featuring 424 specimens of pressed flowers, all classified with handwritten labels, which is now housed in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. She was a woman of many interests.

Most of us think about Emily Dickinson's poetry as reading for young adults or college students. However, poetry is a great way to introduce children to literature. Children's book authors have known this for a long time, fashioning their picture books as short poems that tell a story. Dr. Seuss went so far as to make up words to keep a rhyme going! Emily Dickinson's poetry should not be relegated to the pages of high school and college essays — much of it is perfect for young minds.

Introduce Dickinson to your child through a good book or two. "The Mouse of Amherst" written by Elizabeth Spires and illustrated by Claire A. Nivola tells the story of Emmaline the mouse who lives in the walls of the 19th-century home of Emily Dickinson. A gust of air blows one of Dickinson's poems into the mouse's hole, and an exchange of thoughts begins, with Emmaline answering Dickinson's poems with poems of her own. Dickinson's cat, maybe jealous of Emmaline's talent, tries to help Emmaline relocate to a nice warm spot in his belly. Don't worry — he is not successful. Readers are introduced to Dickinson through her own words and are left feeling they know her well. This is not a picture book and was written for eight-year olds to read on their own. You can enjoy it with younger children by reading it to them.

A picture book for the younger set is "Emily" written by Michael Bedard and illustrated by Barbara Cooney. A young girl new to the Dickinson's neighborhood narrates the story. She visits the Dickinson's house with her mother, bringing a gift of lily bulbs for Emily. Emily returns the favor with a poem. The young girl is never named, and her understanding of



Emily is typical of a child who does not try to analyze but only to understand and accept. It is a wonderful introduction for anyone, child or adult, into the life of this remarkable lady, Emily Dickinson.

After your child is enamored with our friend from Amherst, you can introduce him to a few of Dickinson's poems. Since winter is approaching,

you can start with "Snowflakes. / I counted till they danced so / Their slippers leaped the town, / And then I took a pencil / To note the rebels down. / And then they grew so jolly / I did resign the prig, / And ten of my once stately toes / Are marshaled for a jig!" In case you're wondering, according to Dictionary.com a prig is "a person who displays or demands of others pointlessly precise conformity, fussiness about trivialities, or exaggerated propriety, esp. in a self-righteous or irritating manner." We would use the word "prude," but prude doesn't rhyme with jig, so thank heavens Dickinson had a command of the English language that included seldom used words.

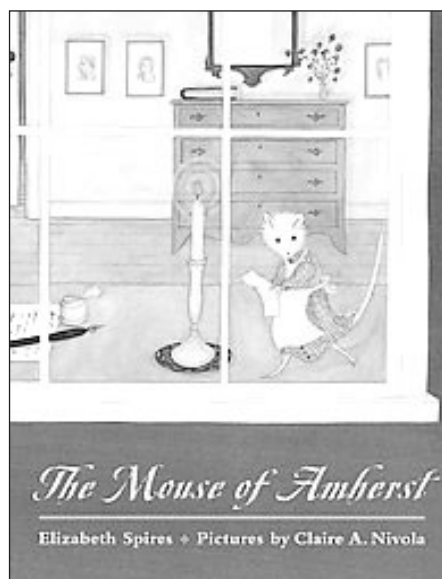
"Snowflakes" invites the reader to relish in the recklessness of the snowflakes that cause a smile to spread on the face of everyone including the town curmudgeon. It is evident that Dickinson did not have to shovel her own sidewalk!

Let your child make a picture book of their own based on Dickinson's poem. You will need card stock paper, yarn, drawing and coloring tools, and a hole punch. Your child can use either a page for each line, or double them up. Let them draw their own illustrations, then punch holes on the left side of

the pages. Tie them together with the yarn and your child will have a picture book of their own creation!

To bolster a child's self-confidence, try "What I can do — I will — / Though it be little as a Daffodil — / That I cannot — must be / Unknown to possibility —." It is a good mantra to remind our little ones that there is nothing holding them back. Of course, be sure to remind them that as parents we are allowed to hold them back when they approach the road, or when they are running amok, or when we need to have five minutes of peace.

One of Dickinson's most famous poems is "I'm Nobody! Who are you? / Are you — Nobody — Too? / Then there's a pair of us! / Don't tell! They'd advertise — you know! / How dreary — to be — Somebody! / How public — like a Frog — / To tell one's name — the livelong June — / To an admiring Bog!" This poem will endear your child to Dickinson as he feels camaraderie with her and her quest for understanding and acceptance of herself. Make sure to keep his interest going by planning a trip this Spring to Amherst to visit the Dickinson house which is now a museum. You can go this winter, but memorize the "Snowflakes" poem prior to embarking to remind yourself that snowflakes can be fun even as you are digging your stuck car out of a snowdrift. ■





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## Nantucket Atheneum FAMILY NIGHT

**John Porcino**

in

## Celebrations of Light

a patchwork quilt of beloved tales and songs to celebrate the holiday season



**Friday, December 7th  
at 7:00pm  
Nantucket Atheneum  
Great Hall**

Free tickets for limited seating available at the Weezie Library  
\*\*\*\* All Ages welcome\*\*\*\*

\*\*\* Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Al Forster \*\*\*

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