

*Thirteen Ways of Looking  
at Books*

Poetry Written for Children

*Palanca Awards 2024*

## **1. A BOOK IS A ROCKET SHIP**

A book is a rocket ship.  
You open its covers  
And ready or not, you are  
Launched into space –  
Page by page, mile by mile  
Until you touch the stars  
And examine the rings  
Of Saturn, the moons  
Of Jupiter, the magic  
Of the sky and the heavenly  
Bodies that give beauty  
To the mystery of night.

## 2. BOOKS ARE STRANGE PLANTS

Books are strange plants  
Deeply rooted in their titles.  
They have stems called spines  
That hold together the lovely  
Leaves – pages filled with words,  
Phrases and sentences that bloom  
Into various fragrant flowers  
In their reader's colorful mind.

### 3. A BOOK IS A CHAIR WITHOUT LEGS

A book is a chair without legs  
A bicycle without wheels  
A mighty ship without mighty sails  
An airplane without wings.

It holds you and transports you  
To places far, familiar and new.  
In an instant, you are in a desert,  
In a palace, in an ocean, in mid-air,  
In space, or in the lower stratosphere!

Without as much as walking, you explore  
Jungles and forests, ice caps and ice sheets  
Of the pole Arctic and the pole Antarctic.

## 4. A BOOK IS A NEATLY BOUND WORLD

A book is a neatly bound world –  
Closed and compact, it is  
Comforting and whole;  
Open and wide, its pages staring  
Back at you, it is magical  
With monsters, villains, and people  
Like you – heroes – who want  
Good to triumph over Evil.

A book can teach you about Justice  
Duty, Happiness, Love, and Pain;  
The page can hold your hands  
And say things you cannot easily  
Express in the best order of words.

Because books are generous and kind,  
You can borrow ideas from a book,  
You can make them your own;  
A book can be your tutor, your soulmate  
Your mentor, your friend.

## 5. A BOOK IS LIKE A SONG

A book is like a song –  
Each page is a note  
One note after another  
Page after page.  
You read them notes  
You flip them pages  
You turn them until  
Melody is composed  
Music is created  
In your heart  
In your mind  
In your soul.

Like your favorite song  
You read again and again  
You open a favorite book  
And you listen to it sing  
Again and again  
Page after page  
Note after note.  
Oh, familiar music!  
Oh, beloved melody!  
Oh, what comfort  
Like home!

## 6. A BOOK IS A CHARMING COUNTRY

A book is a charming country  
Sometimes familiar  
Sometimes strange  
But always magical and new.

There are valleys and rivers  
Mountains and hills, cities and plains  
Palaces, *nipa* huts and bungalows  
Cats, carabaos, dogs and tamaraws

People like you and people  
Who are nothing like you;  
People that you like  
And people you don't like;  
And they all can live together  
In charming book country.

You read their cultures  
You discover their secrets;  
And when you come back to earth  
From your charmed vacation trip  
Why, you become the very epitome  
Of charm yourself!

## 7. A BOOK IS A PERFECT TIME MACHINE

A book is a perfect time machine  
That can take you back to the age  
Of giant sauropods and mastodons  
Woolly mammoths and pterodactyls;  
Or it can hurl you forward to the future  
Of teleports, holograms, space ships  
Trips to Mars and explorations of Pluto.

A book can s-l-o-w... t-i-m-e... or stop it!  
And introduce you to Magellan, Lapu-lapu  
And the warriors in the Battle of Mactan;  
Or a book can present to you Bonifacio  
The Katipunan and the Revolution of 1898!  
A book can show you how life was  
Before iPads and tablets, iPhones and texting.

A book lets you travel through time and space  
You open a page and quickly step into  
The world of story, history, and imagination.  
But have no fear: You will never be stuck  
With a terrifying *T. rex*, or caught in battles  
Fought with swords, guns, and light sabers;  
Because honestly, a book closes more neatly  
Than any time machine.

## 8. A BOOK IS A METAPHORICAL PLANT

A book is a metaphorical plant  
With leaves that speak  
Through pictures and words  
And tell the most amazing stories.

And though it looks stationary  
Like a table or a building,  
A book travels far and wide  
By the wild adventures it paints.

A book is a strange little poetry  
Delightful and sublime like a plant  
As it grows in its readers'  
Heart, and imagination.

## 9. CLOSED BOOKS ARE TINY SEEDS

Closed books are tiny seeds  
Waiting to be cracked open  
So they can grow leaves and stems  
And expand their roots in your heart.

Read and loved, books bloom  
Like glorious flowers in your imagination  
Giving you new eyes to see  
A brighter world, a bigger rainbow  
Full of hope and possibilities.

With their branches thickly spread  
And expanding in your mind,  
Great books help you bear fruits –  
Sweet as Joy, light as Hope, nurturing  
Like Charity, nourishing like Love.

## **10. A BOOK IS A DOOR TO A WONDROUS WORLD**

A book is a door to a wondrous world  
Where mysteries and adventures unfold:  
Strange peoples, animals and birds –  
They fly, they leap, they jump  
From every page and everywhere.

A book is pages, pictures and words  
A gateway to another universe;  
And then, a book is also a friendly zoo  
With familiar peoples, birds and beasts  
Like tigers, kangaroos, and pandas sweet.

## ***11.* UNOPENED BOOKS ARE FISTS**

Unopened, books are fists that keep  
Small secrets like grains of sand  
Slipping through the fingers.  
Closed books are songs unheard  
Prayers unuttered, potential magic  
Still undiscovered.

But when the pages are turned  
Spread open and unrolled  
Books become magic carpets that fly  
Across time and space, through jungles  
And palaces, deserts and oceans  
And all of the seven seas!

## 12. A BOOK IS A FRIEND I'D LIKE TO KNOW

A book is a friend I'd like to know.

Does he like adventures?

Or does she speak in rhymes?

What secrets does he keep?

What stories does she tell?

A book is a friend I'd like to know

For hours, for days, for years.

A book is a friend I'd like to take

Wherever in the planet I go.

She may tell me fables and tales

He may teach me stuff to do

She may hint things from long ago

He may give me visions of tomorrow.

A book is a friend I'd like to keep

To discover, to know, to cherish

For hours, for days, for years!

### 13. A FRIEND WHO CANNOT SPEAK

I have a friend who cannot speak.  
She's silent and mute, but smart –  
So wise in thoughts and feelings is she  
That though she can't say the words,  
She shows them all right, and  
Boy, she can spell everything right!

I have a friend I do not fight with –  
No quarrels, no arguments  
No saying sorry, no tearful apologies;  
She understands when I'm busy  
But day or night, when I need her  
Girl, she always has time for me!

My friend who cannot speak  
Has no mouth, but she has plenty of pages;  
And though she has great covers  
They actually reveal her even more  
My friend has many names or titles  
But, look! For me, she's quite simply a book!

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