

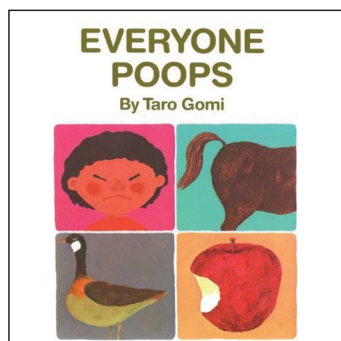


# Book Blog

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## The Search for a Japanese Children's Book Writer

by Emanuel Murdoch



When I first read *Are You an Echo?*, I began thinking about how few Japanese children's books I've seen in my lifetime. Can I even think of any? Can you? And then I realized that I do know of one Japanese author, and he's AWESOME! The author's name is Taro Gomi, and I'm sure you've seen some of his books, too.

Taro Gomi wrote the very funny book *Everyone Poops*, which teaches us how different types of creatures poop—an elephant makes a big poop and a mouse makes a small poop. He doesn't get too specific in his book; after

all, it's meant for little kids. The most important message in the book is that if you eat, you poop—and so does everybody else. Cool, message received, Taro Gomi!

What appealed to me about Taro Gomi is, in part, that his was one of the first Japanese children's books to be sold in America. *Everyone Poops*—which is amazingly still popular today—was first published in 1977. What I also love about Taro Gomi's work is that it's light and funny, unlike Misuzu Kaneko's work, which is deeply thoughtful and serious. Gomi's work appeals to kids of all ages and even to adults!

Like Gomi's work, Misuzu Kaneko's poetry also appeals to both children and adults. But I felt that Kaneko's poetry, like the story of her life, is rather sad—beautiful and thoughtful, but still sad.

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## The Search for a Japanese Children's Book Writer

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After learning about Misuzu Kaneko's life, I was curious to learn about Taro Gomi's life and so I began searching the Internet. I searched high and low, but there's not a whole lot of biographical information on Taro Gomi out there. I found his website, which was temporarily problematic because it's all in Japanese (which I don't speak or read). Problem solved: I found an online translator to help me with that! But it turns out that his website doesn't tell any more about Gomi's life than I could find in English.

Here's what I could find: Taro Gomi was born in 1945, lives in Tokyo, Japan, and is an award-winning author and illustrator. He studied art in the Kuwazawa Design Institute and worked as a designer before getting into picture books. Gomi has produced more than 450 books in his career, more than 50 of which were translated into other languages and sold to different countries across the world.

Taro Gomi's art is very simple and many of his illustrations look like something a kid could've drawn. He uses bright colors and his characters have simple shapes without a lot of detail or shading. I read somewhere that his illustrations are "deceptively simple," which I think means that while they seem simple, he spends more time making them look that way than you might think.

I've seen a few of his other books, like *My Friends* and *Over the Ocean*. They are cute and funny, but none of them are nearly as funny or interesting (or popular) as my favorite title, *Everyone Poops*.

