



2002

The King of the Golden River

Elizabeth Moss

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Still, James. *The King of the Golden River*. Anchorage Press, 1992. \$35. 45 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Significant Shortcomings

Genre: Plays; Fantasy Plays; Fairy Tale Plays; Adventure Plays;

Subject: Environment--Juvenile drama; Dwarves--Juvenile drama; Fairy tales--Juvenile drama;

Ruskin, John, 1819-1900--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Be a good person and clean up the environment

Production Requirements: Simple to moderate costumes and sets

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30 min.

Characters: 18 male, 1 female

Cast: adults and children (with double casting as little as 6 characters may be used: 3 boys the rest as you will)

Time Period: Long ago and contemporary

This play is bookended by scenes of a tour group looking over an industrialized valley that used to be beautiful farmland. The body of the play consists of the story of a young boy with two mean brothers. The young boy is paid a visit by the King of the Golden River, who tells the boy that he can make the river golden. If three drops of holy water are thrown into the source of the river, the river will turn to gold for him. The boy's brothers find out how to turn the river golden, try, fail, and are turned to stone. The boy tries and succeeds. When he gets home he finds that his home is filled with wheat and treasures.

The bookends of this play have little connection with the rest of the play. They are also overly moralizing and appear preachy. The characters are one-sided and not developed. There are many characters who appear for a few lines, leave abruptly, and do not return. The dialogue is very monotonous, as no character has a distinct vocal pattern and they all sound the same. Though the premise of the plot is good, the story is drawn out with very little action. The cast is huge and I would recommend double casting. The set, though most action occurs in one location (the boy's house), moves up and down the mountainside throughout the play. Some special effects are needed. For example, the roof of the house blows off, and a golden mug is thrown into the fire and turns into the King of the Golden River, a dwarf. This play could be used as part of a "Save the Environment" presentation in an elementary school.