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The Emperor's New Clothes

Anne Jacobs

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Umansky, Kaye. *The Emperor's New Clothes*. A & C Black Publishers, 1997. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Anne Jacobs;
Reading Level: Intermediate;
Rating: Dependable;
Genre:
Subject:

Two escaped convicts try to swindle a vain and shallow emperor into buying “Polyfabuloso” clothes—clothes that supposedly cannot be seen by stupid people. Of course, the cloth itself does not exist, and the emperor finds himself in front of his townspeople in nothing but a tie and his boxers.

The play’s humorous story line is appropriate for young children and requires a very broad physical style that, when performed with practice, could be delightful to select audiences. However, despite the story line’s capacity to teach lessons about one’s character, this play fails to make a connection between the story and what one could learn from it. The director would have to work hard to make connections to the moral lessons embedded within the script.

The script provides detailed production notes and tips on how to create costumes, scenery, and props with little or no budget, and also on how to conduct the auditions. It includes pictures and ideas for each of the characters and the costumes, as well as ideas for dancing and music. Older children could easily produce the play with relatively little help from adults.

The play has twelve characters—nine male and three female plus extras, and some of the roles can be gender neutral. The staging can be as simple or elaborate as one desires.