



2002

### The Arkansaw Bear

Rebecca Hixson

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Harris, Aurand. *The Arkansaw Bear*. Anchorage Press, 1980. \$35 first performance, \$30 each additional performance. 38 pp.  
Hixson: *The Arkansaw Bear*

Reviewer: Rebecca Hixson

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Contemporary realistic plays;

Subject: Children and death--Juvenile drama; Compassion (character trait)--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama;

Theme: The answer to the riddle of life is that everyone is a part of what went before them, and will be a part of what is yet to come.

Production Requirements: A large tree and lighting capabilities needed.

Acts: One

Run Time: 40 min.

Characters: 4 female, 5 male

Cast: Can be performed by adults for children, or by children for children

Time Period: Contemporary

*The Arkansaw Bear* relates the wish a little girl makes on a star when she finds out that her grandpa is dying. She wishes to know why he has to die. She receives her answer from the World's Greatest Dancing Bear. She meets him as he is running from death. Through conversing with her about her grandpa, he realizes that a part of her grandpa is will go on living through her. He realizes that the riddle of life is that he was a part of what went before and will be a part of what is yet to come. To make this true, he teaches his dances to Little Bear so he can live through him. From this experience, the little girl is able to understand her grandpa's death and cope with the loss.

This play provides wonderful method of helping children to understand and cope with the death of a loved one. Young children can identify with wishing upon a star, along with creatures such as dancing bears and mimes. The language is simple enough for young audiences to understand, while still full of truth and pearls of wisdom. For example, one of the characters says, "In every ending there is a new beginning."

Through the engaging story created with the characters of the World's Greatest Dancing Bear and the mime, children are not only entertained, but also shown how to understand and cope with death.

The production requires only lighting capabilities, a large tree, and a few sound effects. Bear costumes are not needed, because the little girl sees the bears through a fantasy, and they appear human.