



2002

Bring the Children Home

Elizabeth Moss

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Rendon, Marcie R. *Bring the Children Home*. Child's Play Theater in collaboration with Pillsbury Theater, 1996. Contact publisher regarding price. 38 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Folklore; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Indian philosophy--North America--Juvenile drama; Indians of North America--Juvenile drama; Old age--Juvenile drama;

Theme: The old take care of the young and help them find out who they are

Production Requirements: Several sets; most costumes simple but a few costumes for animal spirits are elaborate

Acts: 3

Run Time: 30 min.

Characters: 2 female, 2 male, 8 m/f

Cast: 4+ adults, 4+ children

Time Period: Contemporary

Mindiway is an old grandmother who is sick of answering questions. One day she leaves her house and goes into the forest where she encounters a child who does not know his name. The spirits tell Mindiway to take the child, find his home, and give him a name. The two set out in a search for the child's identity and home.

This play begins with a wonderful scene introducing the spirits of the crow, the eagle and death. They speak in rhythmic chants and songs as they perform dances from the Native American culture. Unfortunately these characters are rarely seen again and the play transforms itself from a cultural event to a contemporary play. The modern characters are not as enticing as the ancient spirits were since their language is more modern and ordinary. The play has a beautiful moral message behind it, the need to know who you are and the responsibility to help others discover who they are, yet it is stated in such a way as to make it over obvious with characters restating this theme over and over again. This keeps interrupting the action of the play and makes the action appear stilted. In addition to the spirits at the beginning of the play, the child has two spirits of his own that only Mindiway can see. These spirits have good character quirks, yet their purpose in the play is unclear. The play does contain one scene with a drunken man. The setting of the play changes from woods to a lower-class home to a gas station and to the backyard of another house. The costumes are, for the most part, contemporary; however, the spirits ought to have costumes to set them apart. This would be a good production for those looking for a contemporary play based on Native American folklore that does not require too many production requirements.