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Foon, Dennis. *The Short Tree and the Bird Who Could Not Sing*. Blizzard Publishing, 1998. ISBN 0921368798. \$10.95. 64 pp.

Reviewer: Rebecca Hixson

Reading Level: Toddler; Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Humorous plays;

Subject: Friendship--Juvenile drama; Loneliness--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Anyone can overcome loneliness; they only have to open themselves and reach out to others to find friendship.

Production Requirements: Optional use of puppets; requires many different areas of action on the stage.

Acts: Two

Run Time: 40 min.

Characters: 24 characters--a few people can play many different parts.

Cast: Various theatres have used puppets and live actors to portray the characters to young audiences.

Time Period: Contemporary

A short tree is left all alone when his only companions, the big trees, are cut down. The short tree wallows in his loneliness until he becomes aware there are many creatures around him who would make great companions. He realizes he is only alone because he chooses to lock out the world by clinging to loneliness. Through his experiences with the many different characters in the play, the short tree discovers this, and is finally able to open the door to the universe and invite friends in.

The plot seems quite logical in its context even though the world of the play is not realistic in its style. The play is believable because the characters' decisions involve relationships. Young audiences can relate to these integral choices and identify with fundamental rules of establishing a good relationship with someone. They learn that the key to having a successful relationship is finding the good in others.

Although the play has a simple plot, the staging is challenging. Many different areas of action prove difficult when creating sets. Also, many characters appear for only one line, causing problems with costume changes. It is suggested that puppets be used for minor characters to aid in these staging and costuming difficulties.

Foon uses witty language to draw in the audience's attention, as well as unique characters, who add to the dimensionality of the play. He takes many unusual ideas for characters and integrates them into the story quite well. For example, the short tree not only befriends average animals such as a bird and a squirrel, but also out-of-the-ordinary characters such as balloons, his own shadow, and the wind. Each character has various character traits that accentuate the diversity of the characters in the play. Young audiences gain important insights into the world around them because of this setup. The diversity in the story allows young audiences to recognize the diversity in the world and embrace it.

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.

Adapted by Ferguson, Claudia from the short story by Asbjornsen and Moe. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. Performance Publishing, 1973. \$25 for the first, \$20 for each subsequent performance. 70 pp.

Reviewer: Rebecca Hixson

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Fantasy plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Friendship--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Don't judge a book by its cover; things aren't always what they seem.

Production Requirements: Can be performed in the round, with a few simple representational props against a plain or curtain backdrop.

Acts: Three

Run Time: 55 minutes

Characters: ten female, nine male, and two extras; many of the roles can be doubled.

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

Time Period: In a fantasy time.

A complex plot arises out of the troll queen's evil plan to ensure that a prince she turned into a bear will marry her daughter, the troll princess. The queen sends two humorous trolls to guarantee that the prince will be seen by another human at night, when he is in the form of a man, thus placing him in her power. This occurs through the trolls' trickery when Lara, the protagonist, looks at the prince at night. To save the prince, Lara travels to the land of the trolls, east of the sun and west of the moon, and outwits the trolls.

This play provides entertainment and crucial themes for young audiences: the important messages of "don't judge a book by its cover" and "things aren't always what they seem." The spectacle comes through the characters of the trolls and the winds because they open the audience's imagination and allow them to journey to a fantasy world. The trolls provide the witty language of the play, as well as the slapstick humor. The trolls are the most believable characters because they have many dimensions; the mortals are one-dimensional and stereotypical, displaying only one dominant trait.

The staging is very simple and can be representational. The costuming can be either elaborate or simple. Music plays an important part of this show, as it is integrated to set the mood for certain scenes and to capture the audience's attention.

De Paola, Tomie. *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story*. Illustrated by Tomie De Paola. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2002. ISBN 0399238662. \$16.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fairy tales; Folklore;

Subject: Fairy Tales--Juvenile fiction; Folklore--Mexico--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews; Cinderella-[Legendary character]--Juvenile fiction;

Adelita Mercada, a lovely orphan girl, is the heroine in this Mexican version of the Cinderella story. Esperanza is Adelita's faithful nurse and Adelita's only friend after her parents both die. Adelita's stepmother, Senora Micaela de la Fortuna, banishes Esperanza from the house. Afterwards, the two stepsisters, Valentina and Dulce, make life miserable for Adelita. Having been told in a dream that Adelita needs her help, Esperanza returns and fills the story's Godmother role. Esperanza leads Adelita to the storeroom to find the beautiful old-fashioned white dress, which used to be her mother's, and the accompanying beautiful *rebozo*, a shawl, which Adelita wears to the grand fiesta. Adelita introduces herself as *Cenicienta* (Cinderella) and for Javier, the son for whom the party is being given, it is love at first sight. Frightened that Javier would never love her if he knew she was just a kitchen maid, she leaves the fiesta at midnight. The *rebozo* is the clue that brings the prince to the home of Adelita and reunites the couple.

DePaola's text is interesting, with bright illustrations that are in keeping with the Mexican flavor of the tale. Italicized Spanish words and phrases, followed by their translations, are peppered throughout the text, making it a great read-aloud story for the multi-cultural classroom. ("If you ever need me, *mi'jita* - my little daughter - just call my name and somehow I will hear you," Esperanza told her.) The end of the book has a list of the Spanish phrases, their meanings, and their phonetic pronunciation.

Boiko, Claire. *The Punctuation Proclamation*. Plays, Inc., 1967. ISBN 67-21413. Royalty free. 7 pp.

Reviewer: Lena Wagner

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Folklore; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Folklore--Juvenile drama

Theme: Punctuation is important

Production Requirements: One simple set, easy costumes

Acts: 1

Run Time: 10-15 min.

Characters: 3 males, 2 females, 7 m/f, extras

Cast: Children

Time Period: Contemporary

This story begins in the kingdom of Bosh, with King Pish-Posh who does not know how to read. While his royal tutor is trying to teach the king to read the king becomes frustrated and decides to make a new proclamation. He proclaims that there will no longer be any punctuation. Then his royal storyteller comes in with some courtiers to tell the king his daily story; however, the story is terrible because all of the punctuation has been removed. Afterwards, the royal cook tells the king that the menus look terrible because without punctuation all the foods would be mixed together. In the end King Pish-Posh realizes the importance of punctuation and he reverses his proclamation.

The story is a cute way to teach younger elementary students who are learning to read the importance of punctuation. There really is not anything that would be difficult to do in this play. The set only needs a throne and an easel. The costumes could be everyday clothes, though the king would need something to show he is royalty. This is a play that would be good to do in individual classrooms as the children learn about punctuation.

Zeder, Susan. *Ozma of Oz: A Tale of Time*. Anchorage Press, 1981. \$35 for the first performance, \$30 for the second, and \$25 for each subsequent performance. 68 pp.

Reviewer: Rebecca Hixson

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Fantasy plays;

Subject: Family--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama; Imagination--Juvenile drama; Oz (Imaginary Place)--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Intergenerational caring and understanding.

Production Requirements: Simple set, suggestive of Oz: allow the imagination of the audience to work for you.

Acts: One

Run Time: 45 min.

Characters: Nine female, nine male; many of the roles may be double and triple cast to reduce the size of the company. This show may be done with a minimum of twelve actors to a maximum of eighteen to twenty depending on the number of gnomes.

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

Time Period: Contemporary

Ozma of Oz: A Tale in Time is an adaptation of the story of *Ozma of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. It takes Dorothy (a contemporary teenager) and her elderly Uncle Henry (who is in a wheelchair) on an adventure to Oz. They encounter many disasters, but by working together, they are able to overcome the disasters and save Oz from the evil Roquat of the Rock.

Zeder took the story by L. Frank Baum and added something to it—a theme or central idea that everyone could care deeply about. The theme of intergenerational caring and understanding between Dorothy and Uncle Henry is developed throughout the adventure in Oz. Dorothy and Uncle Henry are believable, and it is easy to relate to them. The characters of Oz are deliberately more absurd to spotlight Dorothy and Uncle Henry. Their relationship is crucial to the play.

The set should be simple, allowing the audience to use their imagination. This play tends to invite over-production. The temptation to pull out all the stops should be resisted. The staging and costumes should show the world of Oz as a wild and dazzling place, but overdoing the theatricality of these elements could obscure the focus on Dorothy and her personal voyage to discover her equally dazzling uncle.

Bennet, Alan and Jeremy Sams. *Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows*. Samuel French, 1991. ISBN 0573019304. Contact publisher regarding price. 68 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary; Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Fairy tales; Adventure plays

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Animals--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama; Grahame, Kenneth (1859-1932)--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Friendship

Production Requirements: Moderate to elaborate sets and costumes. There are many characters and many sets.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 100 min.

Characters: 35+ characters, gender flexible, doubling possible

Cast: Adults

Time Period: Turn of the century

Mole and Rat become friends and play along the river. They soon meet up with their other friends Toad and Badger. Together, the four have all sorts of adventures in the Wild Wood and even in the Wide Wood while trying to cure Toad of his automobile woes.

This is a delightful adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's classic story. The characters are well developed and endearing in both their actions and speech. The adventures that the characters go through are exciting and fun without being too tense or suspenseful. Like the novel, the play is more a series of vignettes rather than a continuous rising action ending with a climax and denouement. In the latter half of the play when Toad ends up in prison for car theft, the play starts building in a rising action and a continuous plot begins to emerge out of the various scenes. The play moves from location to location in a quick manner which keeps the pace and tempo of the play moving but might require some fanciful tricks with sets and lighting. This is an outstanding play that brings to life the characters of a well-loved and treasured book.

Asher, Sandra Fenichel. *The Insulting Princess*. Encore Performance Publishing, 1988. Contact publisher regarding price. 23 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fairy Tales; Plays; Folklore;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Princesses—Juvenile drama;

Theme: Be nice and be yourself.

Production Requirements: Simple sets and costumes.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 60 min.

Characters: 2 females, 7 males

Cast: Adults

Time Period: Long ago

Princess Greta insults all of her suitors using rhymes. The King and Queen do not know what to do with their daughter. They decide to issue a proclamation giving half the kingdom to anyone who can cure Princess Greta of her insulting rhymes. Alfred, the baker, succeeds, winning the kingdom as well as the heart of Greta.

The premise of the plot is clichéd and does not, inherently, suggest too much action. The play can be rather slow at times as not a lot happens on stage. The characters, however, add some sparks of entertainment. The King and Queen jokingly banter with each other throughout the play. This can be delightful, though it can seem at times too child-like and unsuitable to a king and a queen. The language of the play can also be engaging and witty, though at times, it comes off as kindergarten slang rather than real words. There is a dance movement between Princess Greta and Baker Alfred where they insult each other going through the letters of the alphabet that could be enjoyable. The play has several moments that could be fun and engaging. However, the challenge would come in making the moments of fun make up for the lack of action and plot.

Darrow, Sharon. *Through the Tempests Dark and Wild: A Story of Mary Shelley, Creator of Frankenstein*. Illustrated by Angela Barrett. Candlewick Press, 2002. ISBN 0763608351. \$16.99. 33 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Non-fiction; Biographies;

Subject: Authors, English--19th century--Biography--Juvenile literature; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, 1797-1851--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

In an interesting choice for a children's picture book biography, Sharon Darrow explores the life of Mary Shelley, author of the Gothic novel *Frankenstein*. The daughter of a radical British philosopher and a feminist author, Mary's mother died when she was only eleven days old. When her father remarried, Mary's stepmother was determined that Mary would not be exposed to her late mother's shocking way of thinking. The fourteen-year-old girl was sent to Scotland to live with family friends, the Baxters. Darrow incorporates fact and fiction to imagine how the loss of her mother and her life in Scotland helped shape Mary and her writings. Darrow begins with a brief, one-page biography of Mary Shelley and ends with a select biography of works for further reading.

The text is very engaging. There are stories within stories that draw the reader in and keep the reader's attention. Many of Angela Barrett's watercolor illustrations have a Gothic quality to them that nicely complements the text. The text and illustrations manage to combine readability with an air of mystery that seems appropriate to the subject.

Bolt, Robert. *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1966. ISBN 435234006. Contact publisher regarding price. 93 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fairy tale plays; Plays; Adventure plays; Fantasy plays

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Knights and knighthood--Juvenile drama; Dragons--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Inner goodness overcomes all

Production Requirements: Simple sets, moderate to elaborate costumes

Acts: 2

Run Time: 90 min.

Characters: 15+ male

Cast: Adults

Time Period: Long ago

The Duke needs to send a knight to the North to restore justice and order, rebuild a church, and destroy an evil knight. Oblong Fitz Oblong is the kind-hearted knight who is chosen, and soon sets off on his mission. Oblong quickly encounters the Baron in the North, Bolligrew (accompanied by his squire, Blackheart), who is determined to prevent Oblong from accomplishing his mission. While trying to complete his tasks, Oblong makes friends with Mike Magpie and Obadiah the egg-painter. Meanwhile Bolligrew hires a magician, who casts a spell on Oblong. Nevertheless, all is righted and bad hearts turn good in the end.

This is a marvelous play. Robert Bolt, best known for his adult drama, *A Man for All Seasons*, is able to craft this children's play with much skill. This play is, above all, a moral play. Oblong is nearly a saint in his actions. He never does anything that could be considered wicked until his actions come under the control of the evil magician. Oblong has a high moral code, which he lives by continually. It is by the end of the play that he is able to share his goodness with the Baron and others to help them reform their evil ways. The dialogue in this play is astounding and the intelligence behind the lines is evident. The flow of speech is smooth and delightful. The characters themselves are also fascinating and engaging throughout the play. The action is well set up and complements both the characters and dialogue. This is a wonderfully well-written play and can be enjoyed by countless audiences of both children and adults.

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.

Carlisle, Barbara. *The Crane Wife*. Anchorage Press, 1994. \$40. 34 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Fairy Tales;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Folklore--Japan--Juvenile drama; Weaving--Japan--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Learn what is most important in life. Family, not money, leads to happiness.

Production Requirements: Simple sets and costumes, Japanese in style.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 min.

Characters: 1 female, 3 males, 5+ m/f

Cast: Adults

Time Period: Long ago

Based on the Japanese folktale, this is the story of a simple but honest peasant named Kokuro. Kokuro saves the life of a crane and in return, the crane, unbeknownst to Kokuro, turns into a beautiful woman and becomes Kokuro's wife. The Crane wife weaves exquisite cloth for Kokuro, but she will not do it often and Kokuro is commanded never to watch her weave. Kokuro asks his wife to weave the cloth three times. During the third time, Kokuro looks at his wife and discovers that she is a crane who has been plucking out her feathers to use as she weaves. The crane wife flies away, and Kokuro is left rich but unhappy.

This play is told with four characters and then a chorus, dancers, and narrators. As such, most of the action that occurs during the stage is told by the narrators and chorus rather than visually told, except for a few scenes. This tends to slow the pace of the play down. However, if it is done in an authentic Japanese style, it could be an interesting exploration of culture. The Japanese language is interwoven into the script with all definitions defined by context. The characters are stock characters but they are more symbolic than stock, in fitting with the culture. There is a violent image of the crane wife who, with her beak, plucks out her feathers one by one until her body is naked and bleeding. Though not seen on stage, the action is described by the narrators, it is a powerful image nonetheless but might be too violent. This piece would be a good exploration into Japanese theatre.

Holbrook, Sara. *Wham, It's a Poetry Jam*. Wordsong, Boyd Mills Press, 2002. ISBN 1563979985. \$14.95. 55 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Non-fiction;

Subject: Children's poetry; Performing arts in literature; Books—Reviews;

Any teacher who has thought about putting on a children's poetry performance will be interested in this new offering by Sara Holbrook. In each of the 17 sections Holbrook introduces a style of performance poetry, gives suggestions of activities to prepare young people to perform the poems, and then includes one or more poems in that style. Much of the subject matter of the poems is geared toward pre-teens: relationships with parents, friends moving, baseball, and others. Some are more universal in theme, such as loneliness, cooperation, and imagination. At the end, Holbrook includes instructions for organizers of poetry performance competitions with suggestions on how to score, how to choose judges, etc.

This book is fun waiting to happen. The instructions are up beat and entertaining. The activities Holbrook suggests are age appropriate, but not trivial. The poems have rhyme and youthful bounce. The only illustrations are scattered, multicolored, geometric shapes that fill white space. The suggestions for organizing competitions show long experience. Holbrook has organized poetry jams across the country and has written other poetry books for children. Her enthusiasm for performance poetry is contagious. This is a good choice for parents or teachers who want to foster that enthusiasm in their students, or for children who are just looking for a great poem to perform in a talent show or story telling festival.

Greenblatt, Miriam. *Suleyman the Magnificent and the Ottoman Empire*. Benchmark Books, 2002. ISBN 176141891. \$28.50. 80 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: nonfiction;

Subject: Rulers—Juvenile literature; Turkey—History—Juvenile literature; Turkey--History--Süleyman I, 1520-1566--Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

There are few biographies for children about historical Muslim figures. This biography of one of the greatest Ottoman Sultans is a great choice to balance a collection. The book is divided into three sections. The first, "Lord of the Age" is a succinct chronological biography of Suleyman himself. It contains short sections on his childhood, his various military and political achievements, and his final demise. The second section explains aspects of "Everyday Life in the Ottoman Empire." It covers topics such as religious beliefs, housing, and food. Part three, "The Ottoman Turks in Their Own Words," contains translated excerpts from primary sources. Greenblatt finishes off the volume with a glossary, further reading, bibliography, endnotes, and an index.

Greenblatt writes this engaging biography with clear and fluid prose. The text is enhanced with colorful photographs of artwork roughly contemporary to the Ottoman time period. The choices of topics within the second and third sections are likely to interest children. The study aids at the end of the volume are a little weak. For instance, there are only three books listed under the "Further Reading" heading and the "Notes" refer back to specific pages, but to no particular part of the text on that page. Despite these minor shortcomings, this is an excellent introduction to the underrepresented topic of the Ottoman Empire.

Kornhauser, Barry. *This is Not a Pipe Dream*. Anchorage Press, 1992. ISBN 0876023162. \$50 for the first performance, and \$35 for each performance thereafter. 38 pp.

Reviewer: Rebecca Hixson

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Historical plays;

Subject: Determination (Character trait)--Juvenile drama; Dreams--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama; Magritte, René, 1898-1967--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Always follow your dreams.

Production Requirements: Elaborate set design: backdrop needed to represent a canvas with four to six panels. A large box (that hides the bottom central panel of the backdrop) has a lid for its top, and a false back so that entrances and exits can be made from there through the backdrop. The only other set piece at the top of the show is an easel holding a canvas. A projector is needed to project the images of paintings and photos so intimately related to the text.

Acts: 1 act, 20 scenes

Run Time: 30-35 min.

Characters: 1 female, 2 male. They each take different roles. Also, the stage manager is present on stage.

Cast: Performed by adults for children and young adults.

Time Period: Time of artist René Magritte.

This is Not a Pipe Dream is based both on the early life of the artist René Magritte and on the large body of his work. The play serves as a translation of his work from the language of paint on canvas to that of the stage. The play takes examples from René's life and parallels them to a certain painting. For example, during René's first kiss he is nervous, so he covers Georgette's head with a cloth as well as his own. After he does this, the projection of his painting of two people with cloth covering their heads is shown. The plot goes from René's discovery of his passion for painting to his fulfillment of his dream.

This is Not a Pipe Dream is a cornucopia of wordplays, wisecracks, and slapstick repetitions. Its style is theatrical. It has Brechtian elements, such as a narrator who interacts with the characters. The characters serve as "models" of real people. The play clearly distinguishes between theatre and real life.

One of the purposes of this play is to negate the traditional theatrical illusion of reality. The masking of the set is intended to heighten effect, not to conceal the workings of the piece. Thus, the character of the stage manager and his equipment are placed in clear sight of the audience.

Music underscores certain scenes. A sound that is clearly synthesized best serves the play. The scenes generally speak for themselves. Specific reference is made in only in a few special cases to the ambient mood the scoring must convey, and there are places where the music of vaudeville shows, silent film comedies, and carnivals is clearly appropriate.

Hanley, Victoria. *The Healer's Keep*. Holiday House, 2002. ISBN 0823417603. \$17.95. 364 pp.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Healers--Juvenile fiction; Dreams--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

The Healer's Keep weaves the story of two couples as they struggle to save their world from being destroyed by the minions of the Shadow King. The slave girl Maeve has inherited the powers of her father, a Dreamwen, to walk in dreams. But her power has attracted the attention of the evil Lord Morlen. She executes a courageous escape with fellow slave Evan.

At the same time, Princess Saravelda, the daughter of Torina and Landan (from the companion book *The Seer and the Sword*), comes to the Healer's Keep where she hopes to be trained. But before long, trouble erupts. Sara and fellow student Dorjan, also a Dreamwen, are accused of causing the trouble and they are forced to escape into the night.

Soon Dorjan and Maeve meet in a dream and discover that they share the same father. As all four companions come together they discover the evil plot to drain off magic from objects so the boundary of the Shadow World will be destroyed, giving the Shadow King ultimate power. As the tension increases it is up to the four companions to seal the boundary, save the Healer's Keep, defeat Lord Morlen, and save Sara's parents from being killed.

The Healer's Keep is an exceptional novel full of fast paced, exciting action. While the plot line is complex, Victoria Hanley expertly weaves all the different stories together and brings them to a smashing conclusion. Much improved from the *Seer and the Sword*, the magical setting is believable and well defined. While fans may find that Torina and Landan have lost some of their luster, the new characters more than make up for the lack. Maeve is especially well drawn, a courageous and determined young woman. Sadly, in this fine work the relationship between Dorjan and Sara is ill defined and lacks conclusion. Especially disappointing is Dorjan's declaration of love the lack of reciprocation from Sara...or does this mean a sequel?

Zephaniah, Benjamin. *Refugee Boy*. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2001. ISBN 1582347638. \$15.95. 291 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Historical fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction

Subject: Eritrean-Ethiopian War, 1998- --Juvenile fiction; Refugees--England--Juvenile fiction; Asylum, Right of--England--Juvenile fiction; Foster home care--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

London seems like a wonderful 4-day vacation place for Alem Kelo and his father, natives of Ethiopia. Alem, who is interested in architecture, is fascinated with the huge buildings, the variety of food available in restaurants, and the mystifying absence of sounds he is used to. "Can you hear the nothing, Father? There are no animal noises – no birds, no donkeys, no hyenas, nothing" (p. 26). On the third day of this trip, however, Alem wakes to find his father is gone. He soon finds out his father has returned to Ethiopia to try to find his wife, who is Eritrean. It has been over two years since the countries of Ethiopia and Eritrea have been involved in a harsh border dispute where mixed families like Alem's are persecuted and not wanted by either country. Alem's father wants his son to have a chance to grow up in a country that is not at war—to be educated and not be fearful for his life. This is an account of Alem's struggles to understand his father's motives, and to understand this new country's beliefs about refugees. The Refugee Council helps Alem obtain asylum and he begins living with the caring Fitzgerald foster family. Alem goes to school, makes friends, and eventually is reunited with his father, but he continues to be challenged by the British government's laws about granting refugees asylum.

The book has a very captivating beginning, but the rest of the book doesn't have the same flair. The poet author uses wordy sentences and British word spelling; some British expressions were confusing. However, the book emphasizes important messages: courage to stand for what is right, patience amidst turmoil, compassion of friends and family, love of learning, the love of freedom, and the place of peaceful demonstrations to bring about change. There is much ethnic turmoil in the world today. This story brings the complicated nature of these situations down to the personal level and was quite an eye-opener to the kind of challenges refugees face.

Gantos, Jack. *Hole In My Life*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002. ISBN 0374399883. \$16.00. 199 pp.

Reviewer: Peggy Robertson

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic non-fiction;

Subject: Gantos, Jack – Juvenile literature; Ex-convicts—United States—Biography—Juvenile literature;

Criminals—Juvenile literature; Authorship—Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

As a wayward 20-year-old in the early 1970's, Jack Gantos agreed to help sail a yacht filled with hashish from the Virgin Islands to New York City. Upon arrival in New York, Jack and his partners were captured and Jack was sentenced to serve up to 6 years in prison. This is an autobiographical account of his non-traditional teenage years, including his substance abuse and desperate need for money, that eventually led him to agree to such a foolhardy task.

As a youth Gantos kept a diary, feeling a compulsion to write. He admits, though, that he lacked the self-confidence and discipline to ever develop his skill. In prison Gantos continued his journaling by writing notes between the lines and in the margins of the prison's copy of *The Brothers Karamazov*. He recorded his own story as well as the stories of other prisoners, sparing no detail. In an effort to move beyond prison and push the events of his incarceration back in his mind, he remembered the joys of his youth and the need for children to have the freedom and spontaneity. Thus his desire to write for children was born.

This autobiography is a difficult read. The difficulty lies in the emotional journey the reader takes with the author. His desperation and aimlessness is felt on every page. Only in the last two chapters does the reader feel hope and possibility. Gantos suggests that the more interesting part of a "redemption story" is in the downfall, and he stays true to his desire to explore that as deeply as possible.

There are graphic scenes describing drug use and prison violence that are not suitable for young readers. The reader should be advised that this story, although not as graphic as could be, is indeed filled with pain, heartbreak and cynicism. Yet throughout, Gantos tells his story complete with personal triumphs, tragedies and foibles, and with the benefit of 20 years of hindsight.

Paterson, Katherine. *The Same Stuff as Stars*. Clarion Books, 2002. ISBN 0618247440. \$15.00. 242 pp.

Reviewer: Tom Wright

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Problem families; Worry in Children; Self-Reliance;

Katherine Paterson writes insightfully and compassionately about families and the modern plagues that beset them. She has the ability to describe abandonment in all its agonizing poignancy while offering the reader hope in the human spirit and the resiliency of youth.

Eleven-year-old Angel Morgan and seven-year-old Bernie are abandoned by their mother to the care of their frail and destitute grandmother. Angel's father is in prison, coming from a family pedigree of incarceration. Lest this sound too dismal an introduction, it is clear from the beginning that Angel and Bernie have spirit and hope. Angel must assume the mother's role, caring for both her younger brother and her aging grandmother. Great emotional energy is spent in an effort to create a stable façade to prevent the authorities from separating this family group. In these circumstances, a strange man who appears at night with a telescope introduces Angel to the stars. This begins a thread that continues throughout the story and is ultimately what gives Angel hope and strength. She is fascinated in the cosmos, and the immensity of space and man's place in it. As events seem to conspire against her, Angel thinks about Polaris, the North Star:

That was what she needed—a Polaris, a North Star, something steady so that she could always find her way. This story invites the reader to contemplate how many children find themselves in similar situations. It is a tragic state of affairs but Paterson weaves in a measure of human kindness that offers hope that there are "angels" among us that can intervene to care for those in need. Angel's fate is not clear but readers may trust that her spirit will break the cycle of despair. This is a moving piece of literature.

McCormick, Kimberly A.. *The Way I See It: Fifty values-oriented monologs for teens*. Meriwether Publishing Ltd., 2001. ISBN 156608072x. 113 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Moss

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary Plays; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Conduct of life--Study and teaching--juvenile drama;

Theme: Think about difficult issues in life

Production Requirements: NA

Acts: NA

Run Time: 2 min. per monolog

Characters: 1 actor/actress per monolog

Cast: Teen

Time Period: Contemporary

These monologs are 50 2-minute monologs that deal with contemporary issues that face students today.

The monologs included encourage the students to think about themselves and the world around them. There are follow-up questions for each monolog asking the students to identify what they feel about the issue that was addressed in the monolog. Most of the monologs leave the subject open-ended, which means that they do not condone bad behavior or encourage good behavior, rather they advocate thinking about your own life and your own choices. These monologs could be useful as a starting point to discuss difficult issues, but the students might learn more from writing their own monologs that deal with these subjects. The monologs are not very objective-driven. They are mostly in the form of a narrative or stream-of-consciousness. The language is rather rough and unpolished with grammatical errors common in the vernacular of today's youth.