



2003

### The Empty Chair

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#### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Nelsen, Mindy M. (2003) "The Empty Chair," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 24 : Iss. 1 , Article 36.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss1/36>

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Kelly, Tim. *The Empty Chair*. Pioneer Drama Services, Inc., 1990. Contact publisher regarding price.  
9 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy M. Nelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Play;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Substance abuse--Juvenile drama; Grief--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Drugs ruin lives, and lives are worth living.

Production Requirements: Very simplistic, 9 chairs on a bare set.

Run Time: 20 minutes

Characters: 8

Cast: All characters can be male or female, It is helpful is the group leader is older than the others.

Time Period: Present

Seven teenagers and a group leader meet for their weekly recovery meeting. They are all substance abusers. And in this particular meeting, they discuss their problems and the recent overdose and subsequent death of one of the group members, Robert. They come to the conclusion that their lives were better because of Robert and they make new resolutions to keep trying to straighten out their lives.

The play is obviously intended as a teaching tool and, in that respect, it succeeds. The audience encounters typical teenage characters who, like everyone, have doubts, fears, and inadequacies, as well as hope, dreams, and love. The characters are identifiable but at the same time, static. The purpose of the play is undermined with this slight flaw because there is no real change in the behaviors of these desperate teenagers or their lives at the end of the play, just a determination to keep going on. Breakthroughs are attempted, but predictable, and therefore, they never quite reach their climactic goal, and the theme of the play is weakened. A big positive point for the play is that the set is extremely simplistic and this production would be easy to travel with. This is a flexible script with opportunities to expand and an important lesson to teach.