



## Children's Book and Media Review

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Deborah Lee Rose. *Birthday Zoo*. Illustrated by Lynn Munsinger. Albert Whitman and Company, 2002. ISBN 0807507768. \$15.95.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: humorous poetry;

Subject: Zoo animals—Juvenile fiction; Birthdays—Juvenile fiction; Parties—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

A group of zoo animals prepare a birthday party for one lucky little boy ("Who is it for?" inquired the boar/"The kid with the presents," answered the pheasants"). Bears, bats, monkeys, and more unusual animals like the okapi and the tapir all have ideas on how to make the party festive and fun. The end illustration reveals the guest of honor feeding birthday cake to his menagerie of stuffed animals. The simple, rhyming text is kept to a minimum while Lynn Munsinger's energetic, delightful illustrations create scenes of chaos and fun. This is a great book to read aloud.

Teague, Mark. *Dear Mrs. LaRue, Letters from Obedience School*. Illustrated by Mark Teague. Scholastic Press, 2003. ISBN 0439206634. \$15.95.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous Stories;

Subject: Dogs—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Poor Ike the dog. His owner, Mrs. Gertrude LaRue, has sent him to the Igor Brotweiler Canine Academy because he steals food off the table, harasses the neighbor's cats, and is generally mischievous. In an amusing series of letters, an unhappy Ike pleads for her to let him come home. "This is a PRISON, not a school!" he laments. "You should see the other dogs. They are BAD DOGS, Mrs. LaRue. I do not fit in." After ten days in "confinement," Ike finally escapes and arrives home just in time to save Mrs. LaRue from being hit by a car. Ike suddenly goes from being a bag dog to being a hero.

What works so well with this book is the way the illustrations and the text mesh. Color drawings show the academy as it really is--dogs being served gourmet meals on silver platters, and Ike in a cozy room complete with juicer and boom box stereo. Black and white illustrations depict the school as it exists in Ike's vivid imagination--dogs wearing prison stripes, the teachers as prison guards and the school itself as Dr. Frankenstein's castle complete with lightning bolt overhead. The letters are very funny with Ike expressing his homesickness and doing his best to make his owner feel sorry for him.

Any child who has ever felt unjustly punished by a parent will relate to Ike's feelings. Teague's inspiration for the book came from his own dog and his brother's dog.

Marsh, Edward. *The Frog Prince*. Performance Publishing Co., 1973. \$15.00 for 1st performance, and \$10.00 for every subsequent use. 27 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy M. Nelsen

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Fairy Tales; Plays;

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

Theme: Good always conquers over bad, and those who are of good and honest hearts, are happy in the end.

Production Requirements: Simple sets. Scene I takes place in a room in the king's palace; scene II takes place in the forest; scenes III and IV take place in the same room in the king's palace. Costumes would be moderate. Few props are needed.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 25 minutes

Characters: 4M, 5W

Cast: All can be children, or all adults, or 2 adults and 7 children (flexible)

Time Period: Some time ago

Based on the traditional fable of the same name by the Brothers Grimm. Differences include the additions of a few characters including: the unruffled Queen Melissa and worrisome King Marcus, the self-absorbed Prince Frederick and two attendants to the principle character, Princess Julietta. Added to the story is the possible outbreak of war and threat of an unwarranted and undesired marriage.

The play is designed to revolve around the life of Princess Julietta. Additional characters have been added in with the hopes of moving the play along. But these characters are predictable, static, and seemingly without purpose in the plot. Therefore, they inhibit the progression of the play and that of the principle character. She is not given the opportunity to develop or grow based on the situations that come her way because there are too many outside distractions. She changes all too suddenly at the end and the audience is left wondering what happened in the last 30 seconds wherein the play is resolved and all of their problems disappear. The plot doesn't have the opportunity to be developed, as there is so much outside distraction. The relationship between the princess and the frog, as well as the possible triangle of human emotions when Prince Frederick joins the picture is not explored.

The play does however, present the director with a variety of options in regards to the costumes and set. It can also be done quite simplistically (as there are only two semi-major scene changes) or with an experimental flare of color and fantastic costumes. The play's main qualities are that it is affordable, flexible, and simplistic.

Florian, Douglas. *Autumnblings*. Illustrated by Douglas Florian. Greenwillow, 2003. ISBN 0060092793. \$16.89. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway  
Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;  
Rating: Outstanding;  
Genre: Contemporary realistic poetry;  
Subject: Autumn--Juvenile Poetry;

Wordsmith Florian explores with incisive poems the ups, downs and turn-a-rounds that capture the colorful change of season and those mixed feelings that most people experience as summer is put away and crisp autumn is greeted.

Florian has proved himself a masterful poet, and this companion volume to *Winter Eyes* and *Summersaults* is among his best. A great read-aloud for home, classroom, or library, and a great springboard to encourage young poets to capture their own observations and feelings.

Wilson, Karma. *Bear Snores On*. Illustrated by Jane Chapman. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2002. ISBN 0689831870. \$16.00. Unpaginated.

Reviewer: Vicky M. Turner

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Bears--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Parties--Juvenile fiction;

Bear has settled down for his long winter's nap. He is warm and snug in his cave, but other forest animals are cold and hungry. First Mouse ventures in, starts a small fire and begins to get warm. Hare brings corn for popping, badger brings honey nuts, and so on until the cave is alive with warm friendly animals--and the bear snores on! That is until a small fleck of pepper floats toward his nose. After a loud sneeze, bear is put out that the others are having a party without him, and in the end he is the only one awake in the lair.

Fanciful illustrations add to a delightful cumulative retelling of a tale reminiscent of *The Mitten*.

Raven, Margot Theis. *Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot : A True Story of the Berlin Airlift and the Candy that Dropped from the Sky*. Illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenbuyzen. Sleeping Bear Press, 2002. ISBN 01585360694. \$17.95. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Vicky M. Turner

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Historical Fiction;

Subject: Air pilots, Military--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Girls--Germany--Berlin--Biography--Juvenile literature; Berlin (Germany)--History--Blockade, 1948-1949--Juvenile literature;

Young Mercedes lives in war-torn Berlin after World War II. The city is devastated, her four white chickens are refusing to lay eggs and her mother is threatening to make chicken stew. The noise of the planes overhead is what is scaring the chickens, but the planes are necessary because Berlin is a city under blockade. No one comes, no one goes, no food comes, no water comes, no fuel is available--the people need help. It comes in the form of airplanes flying into Berlin every three minutes from outside the country. Lt. Gail Halvorsen, one of the men flying the planes, realizes that the children of Berlin have needs as well as the adults, and begins to drop them candy. Just before dropping it, he wiggles his wings to let the children know it's him, and becomes known as "Uncle Wiggly Wing". This is the story of how Mercedes survives the war and becomes friends with the man who brings so much joy into the hearts of Berlin's children.

This book contains a wonderful forward that sets up the historical information concerning the story. It also has an epilogue that tells what happened after Colonel Gail Halverson left the airlift program, along with a one page biography and painting of the Colonel.

Base, Graeme. *The Water Hole*. Illustrated by Graeme Base. Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 2001. ISBN 0810945681. \$18.95. Unpaginated.

Reviewer: Vicky M. Turner

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Animals--Juvenile fiction; Rain and rainfall--Juvenile fiction; Water--Juvenile fiction;

Counting from one to ten and back again with lots of adventures on the way is one of the concepts of this wonderful book--that and finding hidden animals and learning about what happens when there is little rain. It also allows the reader to travel around the world. Oh, by the way, was everyone looking for the hidden frogs???

Each page concentrates on the geography, animal life and climate of each of ten areas of the world. Represented are: Africa, India, South America, the Himalayas, North America, China, Europe, the Galapagos Islands and Australia. This book is an extremely detailed account of the earth drying up and then being replenished with a marvelous soaking rain. Don't miss this one.



Whatley, Bruce. *Wait! No Paint!* Illustrated by Bruce Whatley. HarperCollins, 2001. ISBN 0060282703. \$15.95. 31 pp.

Reviewer: Vicky M. Turner

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Fairy tales;

Subject: Pigs--Juvenile fiction; Wolves--Juvenile fiction; Illustrators--Juvenile fiction;

Once upon a time, the three little pigs lived in a house at the top of the hill with seventy-three other little pigs, so they decided to go wandering through the world and build themselves houses of their own. Well, you know the story, at least until the illustrator starts to run out of paint and changes the attitudes, habits and possibilities for the three little pigs--and the big bad wolf too!

Just what this world needs and can never have too many of: another three little pig story--one that has an extremely wacky ending.

Chatterjee, Manini and Anita Roy. *India. DK Eyewitness Books*. Dorling-Kindersley, 2002. ISBN 0789489716. \$15.99. 64 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Non-fiction;

Subject: India;

This addition to the Dorling-Kindersley Eyewitness series focuses on the culture of India. The authors offer a brief introduction to history, religion, arts and crafts, literature, and dance. The book follows the usual Eyewitness format of plentiful color photographs and maps with captions and information in sidebars. Overall, this is an outstanding introduction.

Glossop, Jennifer. *The Kids Book of World Religions*. Illustrated by John Mantha. Kids Can Press, Ltd., 2003. ISBN 1550749595. \$15.95. 64 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Non-fiction;

Subject: World Religions—Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

This is an excellent overview of some of the world's dominant religions. Glossop begins by discussing how religion answers questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Her text is thereafter divided into four categories: religions from India, religions from the Middle East, religions from East Asia, and religions from other continents. Each category is subdivided into religions which developed in that area, such as Hinduism in India and Christianity and Islam in the Middle East. Each section gives a brief explanation of basic beliefs and teachings, scriptures, and how each religion celebrates special events like birth and marriage. Each also contains a Quick Facts sidebar with such information as number of adherents and where they live, major branches, and what each calls their places of worship. A color-coded world map and glossary round out the text.

My only complaint is that the sections devoted to the indigenous religions of Africa, Australia, and North America are so short that one wonders why they were even included. Overall, this is a good starting place for children who wish to learn more about the religions of the world.

Warhola, James. *Uncle Andy's*. Illustrated by James Warhola. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003. ISBN 0399238697. \$16.99.

Rating: Excellent

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Modern artists--Juvenile literature; Andy Warhol, 1928--Juvenile literature; Modern art--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

In this delightful picture book, author James Warhola recalls a family trip to New York City to visit his uncle, pop artist Andy Warhol. It is August 1962 and Warhol is preparing for his first big exhibition. His nieces and nephews are enthralled by the unusual and interesting objects in his home, including large paintings of Campbell soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles. What the children, especially James, learn is that art is everywhere and in everything. Warhola portrays his uncle as warm and affectionate with his nieces and nephews; although a bit eccentric (he had 28 cats all named Sam and a collection of wigs for every occasion).

Warhola's illustrations are energetic, colorful, and full of such interesting objects as carousel horses, cookie jars, and ventriloquist dummies. He includes a one-page introduction to Andy Warhol at the beginning of the text. Warhola credits his uncle with encouraging him to develop his own artistic talents. While young children might not know who Andy Warhol is, they will still understand the message of finding the artist within.

Smith, Jeremy. *The Last Emperor*. Illustrated by Anthony Lewis. McGraw Hill, 2003. ISBN 1577685547. \$14.95. 31 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: nonfiction; picture book;

Subject: China -- Kings and rulers -- Biography -- Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

This engaging little biography recounts the life of the Chinese child emperor, PuYi. PuYi was born in 1906, destined to be the next emperor. He ascended to the throne when he was only 3. For two years as he reigned as emperor he was surrounded by hundreds of servants that catered to his every whim. Even after he was deposed by the new Republic he was allowed to live in the Palace. His luck changed when the Japanese invaded China and he became their puppet ruler. During WWII PuYi was captured and put in a Russian prison camp. He was released in 1959 and lived the rest of his life as a private citizen.

Smith emphasizes the opulence of PuYi's early life in contrast to his poor state after the Communist Revolution. He includes side boxes on every page that tell interesting facts about 20th century China. Some have fictionalized thoughts of the Emperor or his family and these are clearly marked as such. Smith also includes time lines, maps, a useful glossary and a serviceable index.

Smith's clear writing is engaging and accessible to middle grade readers. Lewis' water-color illustrations are bright and cartoon-like. The architecture and clothing portrayed are reasonably true to the time period. This book is a good choice for reluctant readers. It is also a good introduction to the history of China in the 20th century.

Kelly, Tim. *Gypsy Robe*. Pioneer Drama Service, 1988. Contact publisher regarding price. 9 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary realistic plays; Occult Plays; Folklore;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Magic--Juvenile drama; Show business--Juvenile drama; Love--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Sometimes love is all the magic you need.

Production Requirements: The set is very easy. You can pantomime most of the props if needed.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 18 min

Characters: 7 F

Cast: Some characters may be changed to make for a mixed cast.

Time Period: Present

It is opening night of a new show and the actresses are getting ready to perform. As they are getting ready, they talk about past performances and their experiences as actresses. Then Penny, a girl from another show comes in wearing the Gypsy Robe. This leads to a discussion of the tradition of the Gypsy Robe. One actress, Melody, does not believe in any theater magic or the Gypsy Robe. When it comes time for Penny to hand the Robe down to the 'debuting' actress, she gives the robe to Amy. Amy decides to give the Robe to Melody instead. Melody, once persuaded to put the robe on, goes through a transformation of becoming more interested in the magic and following the tradition. Her heart softens as she finds the love of others for her.

There is a lot of chatter about theater and its history and superstitions. The dialogue therefore is not too interesting unless you understand a lot about the theater. There is a mix of character types. Amy is a new dancer who is debuting her first Broadway performance while others have more experience in the theater. Each character is very different and has their own styles and ways of doing things. Melody is the type to get everything done and not dilly dally over anything but the current project underway. Penny is very fluttery and she likes to show off a bit but she is a little bit dumb. She has to write down a four line speech to give when she hands down the Robe to Amy and she even forgets who she is giving it too. The play is so short it doesn't allow for any true character development to take place. The show is a little unrealistic in the time of things like how quickly Melody changes her attitude and mind when she puts on the Gypsy Robe. Melody's change happens so quickly that the audience is left wondering what exactly happened. This play may not be intended for all audiences. It may be a good play to do for a class project in high school.

Rumford, James. *There's A Monster in the Alphabet*. Illustrated by James Rumford. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002. ISBN 0618221409. \$16.00. 30 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Cadmus (Greek mythology)--Juvenile fiction; Alphabet--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

James Rumford presents the story of the Phoenician prince, Cadmus, who brought the alphabet to Greece. Cadmus was a young prince from Phoenicia who sailed to Greece to seek his fortune. From the beginning, fortune sought out Cadmus. The gods of Greece helped Cadmus with special messages as well as helped him to defeat the serpent's angry army, so that he could build the world famous city of Thebes.

Rumford's picture book is a unique alphabet book. The idea is a terrific one that would fascinate children with a love for Greek mythology or linguistics. Rumford includes a chart in the very back that shows the Phoenician alphabet and all of its descendants (which includes English), there are even messages written by the author on every page using the Phoenician alphabet. This would be a great resource to use in a unit on Greek mythology. The content is too heavy for younger children, so steer away from this book as a learning-the-alphabet-book. For a child to read this book and understand it, there would have to be background knowledge about Greece and the other ancient societies that are mentioned in the book.

Lawrence, Caroline. *The Secrets of Vesuvius*. Roaring Book Press, 2001. ISBN 0761326030. 173 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Adventure stories; Historical fiction;

Subject: Riddles--Juvenile fiction; Vesuvius (Italy)--Eruption, 79--Juvenile fiction; Lost children--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Flavia Geminus once more tackles a mystery in *The Secrets of Vesuvius*, with her friends Jonathon, Lupus, and Nubia. The plot begins to thicken early in the book as the children rescue Admiral Pliny from drowning in the bay of Ostia and he tells them of a riddle that is supposed to lead to great treasure. The riddle has to do with a mysterious blacksmith who works in Pompeii, which happens to be where the children are heading for their summer holiday. While staying with Flavia's uncle for the summer, they begin to piece together the clues to the riddle, solve the mystery of the blacksmith's parentage, have a run in with love, and try to figure out why sheep are dying and snakes are leaving the farm. Will they be able to figure out the clues to Vesuvius before it erupts?

Caroline Lawrence weaves a complex plot that is too big for her book. There are so many intertwining stories involved in the main plot that confusion reigns supreme. For the first few chapters, the action is extremely slow and it is hard to keep interest in the book; however, the action picks up later in the book, but there are too many stories lines to fully follow. There is the love story between Jonathon's older sister, Miriam, and Flavia's uncle, plus a few other suitors for Miriam's hand, the marital unrest between Tascius and Rectina, Mordecai trying to save the lives of injured people, the truth of Vulcan's real father, and Gaius' experiences while trying to warn the people of Pompeii of the dangers of the volcano.

This a good book for younger readers who do not really care about the plot so much as the time period and the subject matter. It is a semi-interesting perspective on the time of Vesuvius' eruption, but holds little else to recommend it to the general public.



Tomacek, Stephen M. *What a Great Idea! Inventions that Changed the World*. Illustrated by Dan Stuckenschneider. Scholastic, 2003. ISBN 0590681443. \$18.95. 112 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational Books;

Subject: Inventions--History--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

"What a Great Idea" is a basic introduction to 45 inventions that have had a major impact on the way people live. Author Tomacek divides the text into five major time periods: the Ancient World, the Metal Age, the Age of Discovery, the Age of Electricity and Communication, and the Age of the Atom. The Age of Electricity and Communication encompasses the development of anesthesia, antiseptics, the electric motor, and plastics, among others. The book's strength lies in author Tomacek's ability to then draw a connection between one invention and how it influenced the discovery of others. For example, the work of Wilhelm Roentgen, William Cannon, and others on X-rays led to the eventual development of diagnostic tools like CAT scans and MRIs.

Tomacek's text is simple and straightforward. Although his book does not offer the depth of information that some others might, it is an excellent introduction and encourages further reading. A bibliography and list of pertinent websites are included.

Wilkinson, Philip. *Eyewitness Guides. Islam*. Illustrated by NA. Dorling Kindersley, 2002. ISBN 0-7894-8870-1. \$15.99. 64 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Non-fiction;

Subject: Islam—Juvenile literature; The Middle East—Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

This outstanding introduction to Islam covers a variety of topics from the prophet Muhammad to Islamic architecture, scholarship, and music. The most detailed discussion is devoted to the Five Pillars, the basic tenets of Islam. Other topics include the role of the mosque in an Islamic community, education, food, and the Crusades. The text also covers Islam's influence in Spain, Northern Africa, and Asia.

The book follows the standard Eyewitness Guide format of plentiful crisp color photographs and maps with accompanying captions. The text is well-written and easy to follow. The author has been careful to avoid discussion of controversial topics such as Islamic extremist groups. He also does not really discuss the role of women in Islam, although he briefly mentions that in some societies they are well educated and may hold prominent positions in public life. Overall the book is a timely and superb addition to the Eyewitness Guides series.

Koste, Virginia Glasgow. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Coach House Press, Inc., 1982. ISBN 0880201061. Contact publisher regarding price. 44 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy M. Nelsen

Reading Level: primary, intermediate

Rating: shortcomings

Genre: Fantasy Plays; Plays; Humorous Plays; Occult Plays

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Wizards--Juvenile drama; Oz (Imaginary place)--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Imagination is a wonderful thing, and friends are to be made, wherever you are.

Production Requirements: Extensive and complicated set needed (7 scene changes) with a large number of specific props.

Acts: 1, with possible intermission

Run Time: 1.5 hours

Characters: 13 principal and 7+ ensemble

Cast: It is suggested that adults play the 7 principle characters, with the exception of Dorothy, and that children play the other roles. There is some double casting involved with the opportunity to do more.

There must be 6 men and 5 women, large casts of the ensemble and the rest of the roles are flexible as to gender.

Time Period: Summer of 1900

This is the basic story of The Wizard of Oz, but as told by the author himself, Frank Baum, who acts as the narrator. The traditional characters and plot are included.

The play is founded upon a good idea: to create the world of the Wizard of Oz, in a clearly theatrical environment, where the author himself addresses the audience and explains the reasons he did certain things in the book and tells about his favorite parts. While the concept is imaginative, the production itself is clearly lacking in delivery. The characters have become almost "slap stick" in this adaptation, halting the action and progression of the play with non-relative jokes and tricks, most predominately with regards to the lion (joking about "lion-hide") or Oz (pointless commentary about the government). They are predictable and not because we are familiar with the story, but rather because they continue in the same circle of directionless dialogue, without improvement or development. This adaptation also leans largely on MGM's widely know screen version. Several of the repeated lines are from the lyrics in the film. There are nice moments in which the character of Frank relates his feelings and his excitement with the audience and for a time he becomes a part of the production when he assumes the character of the wizard of oz; but these moments are few and far between. The playwright is specific in her production desires and offers complicated and time consuming suggestions, such as an elaborate set, water being thrown on the stage, a witch melting, bursts of smoke, large musical underscores, legs shrinking under the house, wind, etc. These could be quite costly and most-likely unnecessary.

Sadler, Judy Ann. *Christmas Crafts from around the World*. Illustrated by June Braddford. Kids Can Press, 2003. ISBN 1553374274. \$12.95. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Christmas stories;

Subject: Christmas decorations--Juvenile fiction; Handicraft--Juvenile fiction;

Simple craft projects from fourteen countries will engage children in home-made traditions of Christmas. Easy-to-find supplies are inexpensive and will keep children decorating for weeks. Supply lists will help parents and teachers quickly purchase needed items, and step-by-step instructions, and clear illustrations will help young crafters find success in their creativity.

Each craft project has a too brief paragraph that explains the origin of the project. Many readers will want to know more about the traditions, which will lead them back to the library for more Christmas books.

Keens-Douglas, Richard. *The Nutmeg Princess*. Playwrights Canada Press, 2000. ISBN 0887545998. Contact publisher regarding price. 69 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate; Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Adventure Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Work--Juvenile drama; Honesty--Juvenile drama; Folktales--Juvenile drama;

Theme: When you believe in magic, amazing things happen.

Production Requirements: simple/moderate costumes, sets, and props. Birds & hawk sound.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 90 min

Characters: 23

Cast: All adults 5F, 8M

Time Period: Past

The village kids on the island of Spice in the Caribbean are playing when Pettite Mama comes into the village. She is a very strange woman who believes in the magic of nature, and because of this the whole village is afraid of her, except Aglo. He befriends Pettite Mama, and in doing so learns about a mysterious princess. This princess can only be seen, according to Pettite Mama, when the smell of nutmeg is strong, in the early morning in the lake in the mountains. The next morning Aglo and Petal (his best friend) set off up the mountain to find the Nutmeg Princess. After being confronted with many obstacles, Aglo and Petal find the lake where the princess is said to be, but only Aglo can see her because Petal doesn't believe she is real. They go back to the village and tell everyone what they saw. Several villagers go up to the lake to see the princess, but they are unable to because they do not believe. Aglo and Petal go up with them and decide to go out to where the princess is on her raft. When they reach it, Petal sees her for the first time. The Princess gives them each a diamond from her hair and then vanishes. They run home to show their families, and are met with Pettite Mama's lawyer who tells them that she has died and left everything she owns to them.

The characters in this play do not change from the beginning to the end, and there are no differences between the various villagers' personalities. However, this may allow the focus to be drawn to how Aglo, Petal and Pettite Mama are different from the rest of the community. The one character who makes any sort of adjustment is Petal who, at first skeptical of Pettite Mama, in the end believes what she said. Also, the speech patterns of all the characters do not remain constant. At times the dialogue implies strong, Caribbean accents, and at other times characters lose their accents, although this may not be as noticeable to an audience as it is to a reader. Readers of the script may find the switching accents very distracting from what the character is actually saying. The attitudes of the villagers are strongly illustrated in the dialogue. For example: when Aglo and Petal are having difficulty getting to the raft in the lake, some of the villagers who are there are so frustrated with them that they refuse to help. The individual characters don't generally have their own voice, but each group within the play does. For instance, the villagers seem to have the same voice together, but they differ from that of Pettite Mama and Aglo's parents. This tends to give an "us verses them" feel, which adds to the conflict. Things happen quickly in this story; even the songs are mostly a faster than average tempo. There is a lot of arguing and teasing in this play, which is naturally a quick sort of dialogue. The action definitely drives the story forward, with every action having a specific purpose. Much of the action is comical, as when Aglo and Petal convince the Mongoose and Goat to be tied up so they can envision all the sweets they can dream of. In addition, many members of the cast play two or more roles. The set can be very simple and imaginative without taking away from the story because so much of the play is based on magic and mysterious things, and was written not to have elaborate and complex sets. There are some sound cues that are needed, like birds and a hawk. This play would be good for a high school or community theatre production.

Harris, Aurand. *Androcles and the Lion*. Anchorage Press, Inc., 1964. \$25.00. 51 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Fantasy plays;

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

Theme: Nobody deserves to be put into bondage.

Production Requirements: Simple props/costumes/sets.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 90 min

Characters: 1F, 5M

Cast: All adults

Time Period: Greek/Roman

The characters are individually introduced and then the story starts. Androcles, Pantalone's servant, is sent to collect the rent from various tenants, but on his way he is stopped by Isabella, Pantalone's niece. She wants him to give a letter to her lover, Lelio, who lives across the way. Lelio decides to marry Isabella and asks Pantalone for her hand in marriage. Pantalone refuses because he would have to give up Isabella's dowry. Pantalone places a captain to guard his niece so that she cannot elope. With the help of Androcles, the captain is tricked into letting her escape. Androcles chases after her to give her the dowry. Pantalone believes that Androcles has run away and he and the captain chase after him. Androcles goes into the forest to find Isabella and instead is confronted by a lion. They struggle, but lion gets a sliver in its paw. Feeling sorry for the lion, Androcles pulls out the sliver. Pantalone and the Captain find Androcles and trap him. He is taken to a pit in Rome to be eaten by lions. Isabella and Lelio go to Rome to try to set Androcles free. The Lion also goes after him, but is captured and put in the pit with Androcles. When the event starts, the Lion recognizes his friend and they call it a draw. Meanwhile, the emperor finds out about Pantalone's dishonesty in keeping the dowry and punishes him for it, and then sets Androcles free.

The characters in this play are lively and full of personality. They embrace the commedia dell'arte style and use it to play off of each other. Many commedia dell'arte plays don't have a captain character and he is portrayed as the misfit oddball. Typical of the commedia dell'arte style, this play is very presentational. For instance, in the beginning, the characters are all introduced to the audience, which is then shown that the characters have a script, placed in the audience's view, in case the actors get too carried away and forget where the story goes. This is used several times very comically. For example, when Isabella and Lelio are trying to hide in the forest, they don't know where to go, so they read the script that says "The Captain Enters," then realize that they need to run for it. The plot is perfect for an audience of all ages because it doesn't become very complicated or confusing, but there is enough drama to keep older audiences engaged and kids will enjoy the physical element of this play. The action moves the play along. In fact, the movement and physical comedy tell part of the story in and of themselves. The dialogue has a rhythm and rime to it that makes the story feel and look fun and exciting and boosts the fast-paced comedy. There is music available for parts of the play, although whether a producer would want to buy the actual scores of music or make up his or her own, it would work either way because of the genre of play. This play could easily be done very effectively on either a low or high budget.

Burgess, C. V. *Tony Joins the Force*. University of London Press Ltd, 1957. Contact publisher regarding price. 23 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic plays; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Police--Juvenile drama; Work--Juvenile drama; Discovery--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone has the opportunity to help out. It is up to you to take that opportunity.

Production Requirements: 3 different sets. Police costumes and modern clothing will do.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 25

Characters: 12 M 2 F

Cast: Some characters may be changed to make for a mixed cast.

Time Period: Present or 1950's.

Tony has just gotten out of the army and has now decided that he wants to join the police force. He gets his buddy Chippy to join with him. Chippy has a hard time with the police because he doesn't think they do their job right. Chippy's father was killed by a drunk driver when Chippy was a kid. The police never found the guy who did the hit and run so Chippy's family never received compensation for the accident. His childhood and life have been very hard because of it. Tony and Chippy both pass their exams (though Chippy barely passes) and they start their street work. Chippy decides to turn in his resignation papers because he just doesn't like the force, but later is able to catch a drunk driver who killed a man. This changes his whole perspective on the police because he feels that he's done something that has helped another family. He takes back his resignation papers and continues in the force with Tony.

Even though this play was written in the 1950s it still has a lot of current applications. The theme involves everyone. Chippy is able to take advantage of an opportunity, and even though he doesn't like his job at first, it proves to be what he was supposed to do to help out others. Most of the characters are static, with the exception of Chippy, but each character is very different and enjoyable to watch. Tony and Chippy's friends tell jokes and are the typical pranksters in any kind of boot camp. They help add to Chippy's dilemma of deciding if he really wants to join the force and to Tony's and Chippy's friendship. Tony is a tool to tell the audience about Chippy's life experiences and is also used to help Chippy learn about life. The play has a lot of action from boot camp, games, and actual police work, leading the play to be fast paced and helping time to elapse. The dialogue is easy to understand but enjoyable. Because of the characters' actions the play does not seem too simple but would be easy enough for anyone to grasp.

Levine, Gail Carson. *The Princess Tales: Volume One*. Illustrated by Mark Elliott. Harper Trophy, 2003. ISBN 0060518413. \$6.99. 232 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy tales; Fantasy fiction; Humorous stories;

Subject: Fairy tales--Juvenile fiction; Fairies--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

From jewels popping out of one's mouth, to being susceptible to all kinds of diseases and injuries, to being ten times as intelligent as anyone else, the heroines of *The Princess Tales* have a lot to deal with. In "The Fairy's Mistake," twin sisters, Rosella and Myrtle both run into the same fairy. While Rosella is rewarded with jewels coming out of her mouth every time she speaks, and Myrtle is punished by insects and snakes doing the same, somehow Rosella ends up miserable while Myrtle is quite content. It takes a little more doing for the fairy to make sure all turns out well. Lorelei in "The Princess Test" is a casebook example of the utterly accident-prone, but it may just win her a prince. In "Princess Sonora and the Long Sleep," the extra-intelligent Sonora has to figure out how to outsmart the machinations of a wicked fairy and find a husband who will actually listen to her.

While, as in many fairy tales, the endings of these stories are perhaps a little too neatly tied up, their freshness and humor succeed in producing an extremely enjoyable reading experience. Gail Carson Levine, well known for her excellent and original rendition of the Cinderella story in *Ella Enchanted*, continues to show her flare for retelling fairy tales in an unusual but highly amusing way. Young teenagers especially will enjoy the book, particularly the romantic bits.



Tolan, Stephanie S. *Surviving the Applewhites*. HarperCollins, 2002. ISBN 0066236037. \$17.89. 216 pp.

Reviewer: Peggy Robertson

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous fiction;

Subject: Theater -- Juvenile fiction; Juvenile delinquency -- Juvenile fiction; Home schooling -- Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Welcome to Wit's End, home to the Applewhite family. Parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and children live in a hodge-podge of homes and cottages and attend Creative Academy, their version of a home-school. All family members seem to thrive on the eccentricity and creative nature of Wit's Ends except E.D. who would vastly prefer the structure of a traditional school.

Then Jake Semple joins the mix. Classed as trouble-maker, Jake has been kicked out of every school he's attended and comes to Wit's End as a last resort before Juvenile Hall. Because they are roughly the same age and because E.D. has an organized course of study, E.D. is unwillingly assigned the task of helping Jake understand the Creative Academy curriculum. At Creative Academy each student decides individually what to study and how to study. Mostly, the children are left to their own devices so the adults can pursue their own creative projects. Suddenly the family is forced to work together when E.D.'s father Randolph agrees to direct a community theatrical production.

This award-winning book is a delightful peek into a very eccentric family. Jake Semple has spent the last several years trying hard to be different. He is thrust into a family where every member is not only different but prized for their creativity. Each character is made to feel valuable and important individually but when brought together for a common project, they see how their individual talents buoy up the entire family. The lesson for Jake (and all of us) is that being different is not as important as being needed, that finding a passion allows not only personal growth but also a means of helping others.

Dorn, Patrick Ranville. *Career Fair*. Encore Performance Publishing, 1986. Contact publisher regarding price. 25 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young Adult;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic; Plays; Allegory;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Career exploration--Juvenile drama;

Theme: You will always have someone to give you guidance.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple sets, costumes, props and a bell sound.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 minutes

Characters: 6F, 5M, 5-20 Universal

Cast: 4 adult F, 3 adult M, the rest are variable

Time Period: Present day

Three friends are late to class. On their way, they run into the janitor, Holly Coast. She directs them to the Career Fair where the rest of their class is meeting. While making their way to the Career Fair, they run into evil Professor Barker who takes them to his own, personal, specialized Career Fair. Professor Barker shows the kids the different ways to gain power, money, and control over others. He does this in an attempt to recruit them into his empire. Holly Coast helps each of the kids make the right decision, but ultimately leaves it up to them to decide whether or not they are going to join Professor Barker's evil empire. After each kid has made his or her decision, Holly Coast rids the world of the bad people under Professor Barker by using the legal justice system. The kids are saved and the evil guys are booked all because the children listened to Holly Coast.

This play is the modern day story of good vs. evil. The characters all seem to have their own personalities, especially the kids involved. The vocations presented are shown in a stereotypical manner, however, they are written in a fun, comical light. The writer doesn't show any positive aspects to these very important vocations and so audiences are left wondering if there is any good in the workforce instead of being shown that there are good people still in the world. Some audiences may feel, for example, that only janitors, like Holly Coast, are good and that no elevated job is moral. The kids develop as they each decide to listen to Holly and make their decisions as to whether or not they will join Professor Barker, but they remain true to their personalities and act in a realistic way, as other kids would. The other characters don't change throughout the play even after they are banished from their professions. The action of the play drags every so often for a minute or two, but then picks up a little, especially when the kids are asked which vocation they wish to join. What brings this play down are its religious undertones. The janitor, Holly Coast is the kids' guide through their decision making process and she uses "Holly Water" to banish and humiliate the evil Professor. This may not be appropriate for all audiences.

Goldberg, Moses. *The Analysis of Mineral #4*. The Anchorage Press, Inc., 1982. \$25.00. 33 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Science Fiction Plays; Plays; Contemporary realistic plays; Occult plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Fellowship--Juvenile drama; Adolescence--Juvenile drama; Meteorites--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone has unique qualities and it is important to respect them.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props. Need for resemblance of chemical reactions (ideas are specified within the script); usually food coloring, baking soda and water are used.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30 min

Characters: 3F, 3M

Cast: Can be all played by teenagers, but there are specified 3F teens, 2M teens, 1M adult

Time Period: Present Day

Mickey and Judy are lab partners who are trying to finish their high school lab final before the deadline. They have one problem left, and neither one really cares about it, but they need to finish it in order to get an "A." The problem they are trying to solve comes from a substance taken from a meteorite. Aline and Bunny are also lab partners who are working on the same problem, but have done a lot of research and really care about their work. Mickey and Judy hate Aline and Bunny because they are different. Micky accuses Aline of being a witch because Aline can make predications that usually come true. Aline and Bunny find a mysterious compound that they cannot figure out so they ask their chemistry teacher, Mr. Archer, for help. He finds out that they found a rare substance that suggests the possibility of life in outer space. After more teasing about being weird, Aline comes up with the idea that perhaps she's an alien, since she was an orphan and her heart is on the right side of her body. This makes the other kids harass her more. Mr. Archer takes the substance to a nearby university to run more tests on the chemical makeup of the substance, where he finds out that it isn't what they first thought it to be, disproving Aline's theory that she is an alien. Mr. Archer explains that everyone is unique, which makes Aline feel better about being strange.

The characters in this play are all unique; each one has quirks, which illustrates the theme. These separate personalities conflict even within an individual group. For example, Judy believes that Aline is a witch, but she doesn't feel right about making fun of her the way that Micky does, even though she and Micky are best friends. This sort of diversity among the characters makes this play seem more realistic and believable. The author does a nice job of showing contrast between the soft-spoken Bunny and the loud and proud Tommy. With some scientific plays the audience may get lost in scientific jargon, but not with this play. Because of the high school setting, it's natural for characters (especially Mr. Archer) to explain what certain things mean. The pace of the play is smooth and consistent. There are high points, such as when Micky, after having been warned by Aline not to use it, adds a chemical and it boils over. Actions and situations like this drive the play forward and keep the theme fresh in the audience's mind. The theme teaches an excellent point but it is not overbearing. Not only does it show the highlights of everyone's differences, but it also illustrates the effects of someone being harassed for being unusual. The only difficulty in this production is that there are supposed to be visual chemical reactions. The script does give safe suggestions for these reactions, like using baking soda and water with different food coloring. There are other alternatives that could be used besides this. One problem is that these reactions may not always be reliable. This play would be suitable for a high school theatre class production.

Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerers Stone*. Illustrated by Mary Grandpre. Arthur A. Levine, 1998. ISBN 0590353403. \$16.95. 309 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories;

Subject: Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; England--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Harry Potter has spent the last ten years of his life living with the Dursleys. Though Harry is their nephew, the Dursleys let Harry know how much of an inconvenience he is and how little he is wanted. Harry's dreary life all changes on his eleventh birthday when he receives a letter informing him of his acceptance into the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In the Muggle's world (those who are non-magical), Harry is an outcast; however, in the magical world, Harry is considered one of the most famous wizards because he survived being killed by an evil wizard while still just a baby.

There is much for Harry to learn and he jumps right into Hogwarts and right into adventure. What do a dragon egg, a three-headed dog, and Devil's Snare add up to? It is with the help of Harry's new friends, Ron and Hermione that he is able to figure out the clues and save the day.

*Harry Potter and the Sorcerers Stone* is the first in an anticipated seven volume series by Rowling and is a thoroughly enjoyable read. The language is easy to read and the action is fun to follow for those who enjoy stories that incorporate the magical world into the plot. The wonderful illustrations by Mary Grandpre are a delightful addition and help the reader to visualize the world that Harry finds himself in. It can become frustrating when Rowling doesn't provide answers to all of the questions that are raised in Harry's and the reader's mind, but these minor set backs are not reasons to avoid this book. This is a book best suited to middle school and older readers, because there are some dark parts.

Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Illustrated by Mary GrandPre. A. A. Levine Books/Scholastic Press, 2000. ISBN 0439139597. \$25.95. 734 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories; Humorous stories;

Subject: Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry; Books—Reviews;

Now in his fourth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry Potter, along with most of his fellow students, is excited about the upcoming Triwizard Tournament which will involve Hogwarts and two other schools of magic. While Harry is too young to participate, his name is unexpectedly selected as an entry in the tournament, and according to the magical laws that bind the contest, he's obligated to compete. The Triwizard Tournament isn't the only thing Harry has to worry about; Hermione has become obsessed with freeing house-elves, Ron is angry that Harry was chosen for the tournament, and Cho Chang, a very beautiful fourth-year seeker, is pleasantly (and disturbingly) filling Harry's thoughts more and more.

Watching beloved characters develop and grow up is one of the most satisfying parts of a series of books, and J. K. Rowling's novels about Harry Potter are no exception. Teenagers will sympathize with Harry (albeit rather painfully) as he experiences the pangs of infatuation, the struggles of schoolwork, and the terror of facing tasks that seem insurmountable. Rowling realistically depicts the angst and uncertainty of the teenage years, while allowing Harry to still prove that courage and friendship will win out in the end. Readers will find this eminently satisfying fourth book in the series a moving, meaningful read.

Burgess, C. V. *What Shall I Say?* University of London Press Ltd, 1957. Contact publisher regarding price. 11 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Play;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Employment interviewing--Juvenile drama; Character--Juvenile drama;

Theme: To get a job, you need attitude, character, and ability.

Production Requirements: One simple set, modern costumes

Subject: Drama--Reviews;

Acts: 1

Run Time: 15 min

Characters: 5 M

Cast: Adults

Time Period: Present

A boss, Mr. Nuttall, wants to train his executive, Mr. Hills, to interview people for their company and to be able to help place them into their appropriate apprenticeships. They interview three different prospective employees; afterwards, they decide that the three main things that are important to find in a new employee are his/her attitude, character, and ability. They decide who to hire and why they have come to that decision.

This is a very short play and therefore the characters have no room to grow. The play is more of an instructional play to teach people how to go into a job interview. This is a good play for high school English classes which teach interview skills. It gives them a chance to see how their actions read to the interviewer and why they would or would not be hired. The play moves quickly and smoothly and the dialogue does not lag. This lends to the audience an understanding of what is going on very easily. This would be a good tool to practice individual interview skills after the students have seen the play.

Friesen, Gayle. *Losing Forever*. Illustrated by Chris Albert. Kids Can Press, 2002. ISBN 1553370317. \$16.95. 247 pp.

Reviewer: Cristine Rogers

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Teenage girls--Juvenile fiction; Remarriage--Juvenile fiction; Best friends--Juvenile fiction; Stepsisters--Juvenile fiction

Jess's life seems to be unraveling at the seams. Her parents have divorced and her mother plans to remarry. She struggles for meaning and acceptance of these changes. She also must accept a new stepsister and share her room. Meanwhile, her best friendships also become frayed.

As she discovers, all of her relationships change drastically and she has difficulty adjusting. In the end, her sound character and resiliency help her mend strained relationships and accept loved ones.

DeVita, James. *Dinosaur!* The Dramatic Publishing Company, 1996. ISBN 0871297299. Contact publisher regarding price. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic; Plays; Adventure Play; Fantasy Play

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Family--Juvenile drama; Paleontology--Juvenile drama; Magic--Juvenile drama;

Theme: When things are the hardest, we find what truly matters.

Production Requirements: Complex set/costumes, simple props. Call for large replicas of dinosaurs and parts of dinosaurs

Acts: 1

Run Time: 60 min

Characters: 5F, 2M

Cast: All adult except 1 F child

Time Period: Present day

Judith is a paleontologist who has one week left to prove the existence of the largest dinosaur ever heard of, the Megamaiassaur, before the board of the museum she works for pulls her funding. During this last week of digging, Judith's ex-husband sends their daughter, Mallory, to stay with Judith. Mallory figures out how to assemble the pieces of the Megamaiassaur's egg together which is enough evidence to convince the board. Unfortunately, the egg slips and breaks. Judith gets angry at Mallory and sends Mallory to her room. Mallory starts to play make believe and discovers a magical poem that transforms her to a place where actual dinosaurs live. She finds another poem that takes her back to the real world. Mallory tells her mother, but Judith doesn't believe Mallory. To appease her daughter, Judith asks Mallory to show her how the poem works. Mallory does so, and both are sent back into the prehistoric world. Mallory is too frightened to remember the poem that could take them back home, but after several obstacles that involve fighting off dinosaurs to save themselves, Mallory remembers the poem and they return safely. Upon returning, Judith realizes what is really important and she and Mallory start rebuilding their relationship.

Every character is given ample amount of time on stage which allows the audience to get to know each person and his/her distinct personality. For example, Mallory is a bratty, know-it-all, who does everything she can to get attention. Then there is Allen, who is new, doesn't know how to work with children, and is paranoid about allowing other people to touch his work no matter what it is. There is such a combination of personalities that it makes this play more realistic and brings in both some physical comedy as well as wit. The dialogue fits with each character as the scientists talk in complex terms and don't tend to be social but more secluded as their work requires. On the other hand Mrs. Boyd, Judith's assistant, always speaks very fast and in short concise sentences. The small dinosaurs that Judith and Mallory see are played by the other characters, doubling as dinosaurs. The major impediment to this play is the set. It calls for a large dinosaur footprint that it supposed to remain fairly hidden from the audience until the very end of the play. There is also the call for seeing part of the Megamaiassaur. Depending on the budget for the play, these production requirements may or may not be flexible depending on the director's vision. This play would be appropriate for children's theater, high school or for a community theater.



Lawrence, Michael. *The Toilet of Doom*. Dutton Children's Books, 2002. ISBN 0525469834. \$15.99. 200 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous Stories;

Subject: Sex roles--Juvenile fiction; Computer games--Juvenile fiction; Identity--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Life isn't bad for Jiggy McCue or his two best friends, Angie and Pete. Still, when he sees the words on the computer screen: "Feel that your life has gone down the toilet? Well, here's your chance to swap it for a better one! Invite someone in who's really got it made, hit 'F for Flush,'" he feels compelled to do it. As if dodging classes, maniacal teachers, and a crazed cat, weren't enough, Jiggy and Angie find that they have swapped bodies! This is a time for Angie to try out the uses of testosterone and for Jiggy to get in touch with his more feminine side! The adventures that these three have as they unsuccessfully try to switch back to normal are bungled at every turn and thwarted by evil electricians, making it seem that no one will ever get his or her rightful body back. The end has a twist that will leave the reader with more questions than answers and will provide a great starting point for another Jiggy McCue book!

The Toilet of Doom is a hilarious read that will have you chuckling! The title might seem a little juvenile, but it is well worth the effort to delve into the book and find out more about the mysterious Toilet of Doom and all that comes with it! This is a book that would be fun for summer reading, or even a book to read with your kids so that you can explain any of the British slang that's contained within it. This isn't the most literary book, but it sure is entertaining!

Hall, Willis. *The Play of the Royal Astrologers*. Heinemann Educational Books, 1960. ISBN 0435210076. Contact publisher regarding price. 101 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy tales; Plays; Humorous plays; Adventure plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Work--Juvenile drama; Honesty--Juvenile drama; Fairy tales--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Procrastination leads to more work overall.

Production Requirements: Moderate-elaborate costumes/sets, need of curtain.

Acts: 3

Run Time: 2 hours

Characters: 2F, 4M, 5-14 Universal

Cast: All adults

Time Period: Past - Medieval

The action starts off with the emperor's chancellor "opening" the play. However, he doesn't know where the emperor is and runs off to find him. Meanwhile, the audience is introduced to a father and a son who are supreme examples of laziness. To avoid being sent to work, they devise a plan to convince the town that the father is an astrologer. It works. In the meantime, the Emperor has discovered that four chests of his gold have been stolen. He calls for all astrologers to try to find it in return for a reward and his daughter's hand in marriage. If they fail, they suffer getting their heads cut off. The father (with his son as an assistant) is the last left to try. By chance, the four thieves are hiding in the father's garden and overhear him talking about the task. Out of fear they turn themselves in but confess that the chests were taken by pirates who are about to set sail. The father and son go after the pirates and hide aboard as stowaways, but the emperor believes them to be running away with the chests and sets off after them. Because they believe the father to be the Royal Admiral, the pirates surrender to him. The father gives the ship and crew, with the chests, to the Emperor, who makes him his Royal Astrologer and gives his daughter to the son.

Overall, the plot of this farce is very entertaining. All of the characters involved are larger than life. Father Mole Cricket rises to the occasion and becomes the leader over his son, although both would rather sleep than do anything, unless it means losing their heads. In contrast, the emperor is extremely demanding and short tempered; anyone who doesn't do exactly as he wishes has his or her head cut off. There's a large amount of wit and wordplay within the story, as well as each character having an individual voice, making for well-rounded dialogue. There is also a lot of physical comedy incorporated into both the action and the talking. This physical element serves to further the story because others have to compensate for the father and son being lazy. The play moves with an even tempo, with small intervals of high comedy. The theme is easily recognizable without being overbearing. To put on this play, you would need a curtain that can be opened and closed, but otherwise the sets can be as elaborate as you would like to make them. However, complicated sets aren't completely necessary. A few elements needed are things like a throne for the castle, some sort of a garden for the Father's home, and ropes for the pirate ship. This play is appropriate for most audiences. Children under the age of ten may not understand the witty humor, but would be entertained by the physical comedy.

Baker, E.D. *The Frog Princess*. Bloomsbury, 2002. ISBN 1582347999. \$15.95. 214 pp.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Frogs--Juvenile fiction; Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Princes--Juvenile fiction;

While Princess Emeraldalda is walking in a swamp she meets a frog who insists he is the enchanted Prince Eadric. After some indecision Emeraldalda does what one should in such cases and kisses the frog. But the spell backfires and instead of Eadric turning into a Prince, Emeraldalda turns into a frog. To break the now bamboozled curse Emeraldalda and Eadric leave the swamp to find the Witch who originally laid the curse. Adventures ensue as the two enchanted royals encounter, among other things, an evil Witch and large snakes. With the help of Emeraldalda's Aunt Grassina, who is a good Witch, the curse is finally reversed and Emeraldalda and Eadric begin the process of living happily ever after.

While the premise of this book is fresh and enchanting, the resulting novel is clichéd and uninspired. Emeraldalda and Eadric are both sweet characters but neither is enhanced by their time as frogs. Even the additional characters that would normally populate a fairy tale, such as fairies, dragons, and witches, seem to be manufactured into existence. The plot is static and unexciting and the final resolution is insincere. The additional revelations of other curses: the old-enchanted boyfriend of Aunt Grassina and Eadric's enchanted horse, are strained. There are some fun moments especially as Emeraldalda is getting used to being a frog and pre-teen girls may find this novel fun, but overall there is not much excitement.

Engar, Keith. *Merlin's Tale of Arthur's Magic Sword*. The Anchorage Press, Inc., 1982. \$35.00 for first performance, \$32.50 for second, \$30.00 for each after. 56 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult;

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fairy tales; Plays; Folklore; Occult Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Magic--Juvenile drama; Honor--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everybody is somebody.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props. Need for semblance of sword in a stone.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 90 min

Characters: 5F, 13M

Cast: 1 F child, 4 F adult, 2 M children, 11 M adult

Time Period: Sixth century Britain.

The King Pendragon is about to die and his knights wonder whom he will name king after his death. King Pendragon announces that his son has just been born and that when his son comes of age, he will be the new king. The King's daughters, as well as their husbands, are furious. When the girls try to find the baby, they discover that he has disappeared. Fourteen years later, two boys named Kay and Arthur are playing in their backyard. It is time for Kay to be knighted. After being knighted, Kay goes to London with his father for a tournament. King Pendragon's daughters are there planning some way to take over the kingdom since it has been left in the hands of King Leodogrance and the Archbishop of Canterbury until the rightful king should come forth. Merlin sends Arthur to the tournament. While there, Arthur sees a sword stuck in a stone. Realizing that Kay doesn't have a sword, he decides to try to take this one and give it to him. He pulls it out, not realizing the implication of what he had just done. One of King Pendragon's daughters sends her son to take it from him and kill Arthur; they fight over it. Hearing the commotion, the town comes to find out what has happened. The true story of who pulled out the sword is told and Arthur proves it was him by doing it again. King Pendragon's daughters realize that he is their brother and they and their husbands pledge allegiance to him.

Some of the characters in this play are catching and entertaining, specifically Merlin, and Marion, Kay and Arthur's little sister. They have so much spirit and energy that they keep the play going. King Pendragon's daughters and their husbands all seem to be one and the same. They all want the crown and they work together to get what they want; the problem is that none are unique, except perhaps Morgan, who has only some magic ability. Arthur doesn't have any special voice; he's a depressed little boy with parents who also sound depressed. The dialogue at times is very dull, but at a few key points it gets a little witty. For example, when, in the beginning, King Pendragon meets with those who have any right to claim his throne, they bicker back and forth, playing with words and each other's names. Otherwise, the pace seems very slow. There isn't a lot of action in the play except when Arthur is fighting for the sword, which doesn't happen until the very end. Most of this play addresses a younger audience, and the story loses its appeal during the periods where there isn't any energetic physical movement. The actual plot of the story was an interesting view of the fairly well-known legend. Very rarely do Arthur's sisters and their families get involved in renditions of the tale, which makes this play interesting to see, especially for someone who has heard several versions of this story. This play could be put on by a high school or community theater. It is appropriate for all ages; however, children under the age of 13 may not be able to pay attention for very long.

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.

Kelly, Tim (Book) and Larry Nestor (Music and lyrics). *Lumberjacks and Weddingbelles*. Pioneer Drama Service, 1981. Contact publisher regarding price. 54 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: Young adult;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Musicals; Historical plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Marriage--Juvenile drama; Washington--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Sometimes women are the smart ones.

Production Requirements: Fairly simple set for a musical, but you would have to find singers, and possibly dancers. The show could be done with one set or multiple depending on your finances and resources. Costumes can be done with modern clothes made to look the time period.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 70 Min

Characters: 11 M, 14 F

Cast: 25 total Characters. You can combine characters but remember this is a musical, meaning that it needs to be either all adults or a mix of young adults and adults.

Time Period: Early 1900's

Asa, a lawyer, goes to Boston to get a group of girls to bring back to the Washington Territory to marry all the single Lumberjacks. Ma Scrubbs and Mayor Crook don't like Asa or the new girls. They plot a scheme to frame the girls for stealing and say that Asa was in charge of it. This was done so Mayor Crook could continue alone in his political affairs and Ma Scrubbs could continue to trap without her animals running away because there were no more trees. A hermit, who saw the whole thing, is hunted down by the lumberjacks to testify but he doesn't want anything to do with people. Ma Scrubbs tries to kill the hermit but Charity, one of the Belles, sees that he is only wounded and decides to fake the hermit's funeral. That way she knows that the hermit will be safe. The judge comes to town for the trial of the belles and the Hermit decides to testify. The Belles are proven innocent and the lumberjacks get to marry and keep their Belles.

The show is a lot like 'Seven Brides for Seven Brothers' but simpler. It is a fun play and has some very good characters. Ma Scrubbs and Mayor Crook (the name says it all) are the antagonists. They are sly, and Ma Scrubbs' family of misfits is very comical. Her son is lazy and overly large while her daughters are boy crazy and are always trying to flirt with the Lumberjacks. These characters make for comical elements. Charity and Asa are the protagonists of the play. They are the first to really fall in love. They are companionable and enjoyable to watch. The music is fairly simple and could be fun for a very young audience. Although, for teenagers this music could be very boring because it is too simple, but the play, without music, would work just as well or even better. What brings this play down is that there are long periods where the dialogue seems to drag. Some of this is accounted for when a song is about to begin, which makes for a slowing down in the tempo of the dialogue. There isn't a large amount of action in the play but what action there is has a purpose and moves the plot along. The theme sends its message clearly without being in the forefront of plot or characters.

Mouawad, Wajdi. Translated by Shelley Tepperman. *Alphonse*. Playwrights Canada Press, 2002. ISBN 0887546323. Contact publisher regarding price. 43 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Young adult;

Rating: Significant shortcomings;

Genre: Fantasy Plays; Adventure Plays; Folklore

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

Theme: People only believe what they can see and touch.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30 min

Characters: 21 - all played by the same person

Cast: 1M adult

Time Period: Present day

Alphonse has disappeared. His family sits up late worrying about him and trying to find a logical explanation for his absence. His brother reflects on Alphonse and tells a story about how Alphonse would get up in the middle of the night and have great adventures with his imaginary friend, Pierre-Paul-René. One night they were given a mission to go to the evil Flupan's castle in Pastryburg and bring back all of the stolen pastry recipes. What his family didn't know, when they phone the police was that earlier that night, Alphonse had actually set off for this mission. The police Investigator, Victor takes the case. He goes to Alphonse's school and finds that the faculty thinks Alphonse is strange and the kids all call him a liar. The only person to stand up for Alphonse is his best friend, Walter who admits that Alphonse likes to make up stories. Victor meets Judith, Alphonse's supposed girlfriend who shares a love letter with him. Meanwhile, a policeman finds Alphonse walking down a country road and picks him up. Alphonse had been missing for over two weeks. On the car ride home, Alphonse goes back into his imagination to find Pierre-Paul-René hiding in a cave. He continues his journey until he reaches Fulpan's castle. He opens the gate to find himself sitting next to Alphonse. They decide that they would rather live each other's life, and switch roles. No one in the real world, could tell the difference.

There is no character development in this play. The actor goes from character to character so often that it is hard to discern who is speaking sometimes. The pace is very slow. There is no high point or climax that is easily seen because the plot is very sporadic. Following this story is difficult because scenes jump from one place to the next in just one line. There is no smoothness to the storyline. Transitions are sparadic and don't make sense. For example at one point Judith introduces herself just to say that she'll be appearing later and then she isn't seen for several scenes. There is no reason for her to have done that. Another example is that at one point in the story Pierre-Paul-Rene' is suddenly talking to a cave about why it weeps. It is difficult for there to be any significant action or confrontation in a one man show like this one. According to the synopsis on the back of the script, this play is supposed to be about the old Alphonse meeting up with his young self. No where in the play was this clearly articulated. This confusion may be accounted for because this play was originally written in French for French children (perhaps)who have their own folk tales and understanding of the ideas behind this play that American's do not. This may not be appropriate for younger audiences.

Martini, Clem. *Mouse*. Playwrights Canada Press, 2002. ISBN 088754648X. Contact publisher regarding price. 54 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic plays; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Life--Juvenile drama; Curiosity--Juvenile drama; Mazes--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone has to find his or her own way in life.

Production Requirements: Simple set; costumes are modern but need to make mouse ears and whiskers.

Props can be almost anything you want.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 Min

Characters: 9 (1 F 3 M)

Cast: This play has been done with 4 actors, 1 female and 3 males by combining some of the characters.

Time Period: Present

Josh is a lab mouse who doesn't quite understand why he and all the other lab mice do the same things day in and day out. He goes to school just to shred paper and prepare for the mazes that he will do when he gets older. Josh confides in his friend Bowey that he just doesn't understand this kind of life. Bowey tells Josh about a sage who lives in the mazes. Josh decides to try and go and find the sage to see if he can help him understand his questions. When Josh finds him, the sage appears and disappears like magic, and he only answers Josh's questions with more questions. Josh learns that his questions are the way out of his everyday life and into something new. Josh eventually finds a way to get outside the lab mazes and into the real world, where he becomes a boy instead of a scared little mouse.

All action of the play is a little slow and monotonous. Josh is faced every day with the same things and is afraid of what is around the corner, but the daily routines never change and therefore are repeated until *he* changes. This leads to all the characters being static except for Josh. Josh takes advice from his friends and has to decide what he really wants to do with his life and how to proceed with his situation. He finally breaks out of the lab life, out of the maze, and into a life in which he can make his own decisions. This is important in anyone's life but I think the way the play shows it (having a magical sage guide/help him find his way instead of those he loved and trusted) would deceive the audience a little. Even so, the play does enforce that one should make their own decisions and learn from them just as Josh did when he left the lab. It is interesting that the characters are mice, showing Josh's feelings of being almost a robot in a small world. The dialogue is continuous and so the action of the play is constant and well paced.



Goldberg, Moses. *The Men's Cottage*. Anchorage Press, Inc, 1980. \$35 for 1st performance, \$30 for 2nd performance, \$25 for each after 2nd performance. 25 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Fantasy plays; Occult plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Growing up--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama; Friendship--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone has to grow up sometime.

Production Requirements: Open Stage. Simple costumes and props. Drums.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 min

Characters: 3M, 2F

Cast: 1F child, 1F adult, 1M child, 2M adults

Time Period: Native American Past

Gini Kanwa is in his preteens. His parents died when he was a baby and so he was raised by his uncle, Olunze, who is the chief of their tribe. Olunze has decided that it is time for his nephew to become a man and sleep in the Men's Cottage, where he will live until he finds a wife and moves out on his own. Gini Kanwa doesn't want to, since it means he will have to leave his grandmother and his best friend. Moreover, he will no longer be allowed to paint and make things. However, Olunze, as his guardian, makes him go through the ceremony. Gini Kanwa professes that he will not change who he is once he becomes a man, but after the ceremony he finds that, because of pressure from the other men to be a good hunter and so on, he can no longer find joy in what he used to love to do. It is because of this pressure from his uncle and the other men in the village that he turns his back on his friend because she is still just a child.

This play tends to show a stereotypical view of the Native American culture. The characters speak in disjointed sentences and don't have very much depth to them. Gini Kanwa is a strong-spirited kid who refuses to let this ceremony change him, but then his personality changes and goes the opposite direction, making him a cold and bitter man. The change is said to have been magical, but in the dialogue of the ceremony there isn't any sort of magical potion, spirit or anything that consumes Gini Kanwa, making it difficult to believe that he has suddenly changed everything about himself in the course of one night. This play brings up the issue that there are things that society deems to be for children and things that are deemed for adults only. Somewhere, the idea that adults can still do childish things gets lost, as does the feeling that it's fine for adults to enjoy playing games and making things. Somehow it is believed that those are no longer as important as work. This is a definite reflection on humanity. This play would be simple to produce. It could be very spectacular if one used specialized lighting that illuminates and emphasizes parts of the ceremony in particular. There is not a pressing need for any kind of an elaborate set; it would more than likely detract from the play. Consequently, this would be a good high school theatre production.

Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Illustrated by Mary Grandpere. Arthur A. Levine Books/ Scholastic Press, 2003. ISBN 043935806. \$29.99. 870 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Adventure stories;

Subject: Potter, Harry (Fictitious character)--Juvenile fiction; Friendship in adolescence--Juvenile fiction; Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Harry Potter's summer break from Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is anything but a holiday. He is trapped in the muggle world that is inhabited by the beastly Dursley family, with no idea what is happening with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and his friends. Suddenly, his connections to the wizarding world are restored in a frightful encounter with two dementors from Azkaban. Harry's defense against the dementors earns him a hearing in front of a Ministry of Magic committee and lands him into the hands of the Order of the Phoenix. While Harry makes it back to Hogwarts in one piece, he faces yet more challenges in the form of the new Defense against the Dark Arts teacher, his upcoming Ordinary Wizarding Level exams, and the disturbing nightmares of corridors. In Harry's time of peril, he is forced to rely on his dreaded nemesis, Snape, in the hopes that he can help Harry learn how to conquer his greatest challenge. Into the fray is also added a pinch of romance, beloved characters from past books, teenage angst, and answers to questions that Harry has always needed.

The first portion of this book moved along slowly as Rowling built up the plot line and each of the different characters. With the slowness of the action the reader may be tempted to skim pages. While this will help the reader move to more exciting things, the reader will miss out on the many little details that Rowling inserts in her chapters, such as a garbage bin spitting out trash that didn't taste good. This book lives up to the hype that surrounded its release and shows off Rowling's maturing writing style. What makes this fifth book different is that the American copies still contain all of the British slang that has always been replaced with American slang in the previous books. The original slang adds a lively color to the text, but can cause some confusion. Dark subject matter is included in each of the chapters and the reader discovers more about the first war with Lord Voldemort and comes face-to-face with the cruelty of the Death Eaters, making this a book better suited for older children. Beware getting towards the end of the book late at night, because the suspense will suck you in and you won't be able to stop reading until the very bitter end!

Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Illustrated by Mary Grandpere. Arthur A. Levine Books, 1999. ISBN 0439136350. \$19.95. 435 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Adventure stories;

Subject: Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Harry Potter (Fictitious character)--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Harry enters his third year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry with some trepidation. He has just "blown up" his Aunt Marge, is on the run from the Ministry of Magic, and then finds out that the demented wizard, Sirius Black, who killed Harry's parents, has escaped from the wizard prison Azkaban and has decided that Harry is to be his next victim. Harry's third year at Hogwarts proves to be just as exciting as his previous two years as Ron's rat and Hermione's cat face off, Professor Trelawney's predicts ominous omens of death, Hermione mysteriously balances a heavy class schedule, and they discover the shocking secret that the new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor is hiding. With the help of his trusty friends, Harry is able to survive the attacks, figure out the truth, and save two lives.

This is an exciting thrill ride for avid Harry Potter fans. Unlike the first two books, the third book does not drag at the beginning, but begins with a bang and just continues from there. Rowling does not disappoint her fans in her third novel of Hogwarts. The action is fast paced and the intrigue keeps the reader on the edge of his/her seat. Definitely not a book to read at night to younger children, it is more appropriate for older children and those interested in the magical world.

Kelly, Tim. *Airline*. Pioneer Drama Service, 1981. \$35.00. 50 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: Young adult;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Play; Adventure Play; Fantasy Play;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Responsibility (Character trait)--Juvenile drama;

Theme: You will never know what life will throw at you.

Production Requirements: Simple Props/costumes/sets.

Acts: 3

Run Time: 120 min

Characters: 12F, 12M, 8+ Universal

Cast: 3 Teenaged F, 9 adult F, all adult M, 8 adult Universal other universal characters of varying ages.

Time Period: Present Day

A group of stewardesses are getting ready for their final flight, which will determine if Go Bananas Airline will hire them. An ex-stewardess sneaks on to the flight, after tying up the real stewardess, to meet Rock Starr, the latest media craze. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dragbottom finds that her husband has snuck off to catch the Go Bananas flight. After he leaves, she entertains the idea that her husband is the mad bomber she heard about in the newspapers. A collection of various eccentric passengers assemble, including Lulu Van Oops the actress, two flight-fearing teenagers, Mr. Mann the superhero, the suspicious Paper Bag Man, three-footed tap dancer Happy Tappy and the owner of the airlines, Sherwood Forest. The plane, flight 007, takes off and immediately there are problems. After a sore attempt to solve problems such as there being no navigation system in the plane, no seatbelts and also not enough fuel for the plane to fly farther than a few hundred yards, they are forced to land. The stewardesses are hired after apprehending the Paper Bag Man, Mrs. Dragbottom finds out that her husband is going to a bowling tournament and isn't a bomber, and the teenagers who were afraid to fly, feel only slightly better about it.

The plot in this play is so complex that the characters aren't given adequate stage time to develop. There are no set main characters. There is no real change in any character except that two teenagers were afraid to fly, and then felt only slightly better after their flight. There are too many stories trying to be told in too short a play, so the audience doesn't really get to know the characters enough to care about them. The first act in particular is confusing because the author is trying to introduce several stories at once and then they all end up coming together in the second and third acts. Due to the jumping from one story to another, the pace is disjointed and varies dramatically. For example, in the beginning the stewardesses are running around and are very frantic when trying to get ready on time for their flight but then it moves to the Dragbottom family that is dimwitted and who don't move very much. The dialogue of the story is filled with puns. Certain characters don't help to further the plot. For example, Mr. Mann, a superhero who doesn't do anything very heroic, except pledge to watch the mysterious man with a gun who has boarded the plane and in the end, isn't the one who stops the mysterious man. Another example is Happy Tappy who's growing a third foot, literally. There is no point in trying to create complex characters that are not major contributors to the plot. This play doesn't seem appropriate at this time due to its subject content and the experiences that we as a nation have had the past couple of years. Granted, it was written in 1981 in which situations were different, but the idea that an airline would allow a man with a paper bag over his head and a machinegun onboard a plane doesn't seem to be realistic nor does it further what the play is trying to say.

Burgess, C. V. *T.S. Lifeline*. University of London Press Ltd, 1957. Contact publisher regarding price. 24 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Adventure plays; Plays; Contemporary realistic plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Officers, Armed Forces--Juvenile drama; Ocean--Juvenile drama; Navy--Juvenile drama;

Theme: One good deed deserves another.

Production Requirements: Lots of set changes, and water to create a storm. Lots of props and 1950s sailor and grub uniforms.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30

Characters: 12 M

Cast: Some can be made female if wished.

Time Period: 1950's

Peter is a sailor who is going to do his apprenticeship on the ship the T.S. Lifeline. His roommate is Clinker. Clinker has been on the ship for three years and is about to take his last examination to become an officer, but has many shortcomings such as pride. Peter offers to help Clinker out with his studies. While at port, Clinker gets into some trouble, and Peter takes the blame but then gives Clinker the cold shoulder. Later, their ship gets caught in a typhoon, and Peter gets trapped under a loose plank. Clinker comes to the rescue and saves him. They end up being friends again and helping each other get to the next stage of their apprenticeships.

Clinker is a rough boy who, because of Peter, has an amazing yet unrealistic change of heart—unrealistic because of his pride and his quick temper. Additionally, Peter doesn't seem the type to get so angry over one brawl. In short, the characters just don't seem to stay true to their character types. The scenes also jump around a lot, making it hard to know that time is passing and where the characters are in such a short play. This production would also need to have a lot of props and scenes which would have to be used, but probably only once. For instance, one scene is in the middle of a storm. It would be hard to have that much water on stage, and there would be the difficulty of cleaning it up afterwards. There is plenty of action throughout the play but it would require a lot of fight choreography and a quite a bit of blocking. This play would be good to read as a class or on an individual basis, but to put it on as a theater piece would be fairly difficult.

Wilcox, Brad. *Growing Up: Gospel Answers about Maturation and Sex*. Illustrated by Nathan Pinnock. Bookcraft, 2000. ISBN 157345821. \$10.95. 132 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: nonfiction;

Subject: Sex—Religious Aspects—Mormon Church—Juvenile literature; Sexual ethics—Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

Books about maturation are often controversial. This new offering by well-known Latter-day Saint author Brad Wilcox mixes factual information with heavy doses of LDS doctrine and philosophy. Wilcox discusses prenatal development, social, spiritual and mental growth, male and female maturation, love and sex, pornography, masturbation and sexual harassment. He also includes preliminary notes to parents and kids.

Members of the LDS culture will find this a valuable resource. Wilcox treats difficult topics with candor and in a voice that will appeal to youth. He uses correct scientific terminology throughout, but also mentions common slang terms. Not all sections may be appropriate for the younger range of his target audience.

Except for a few anatomical drawings of male and female sex organs, the black and white pencil illustrations are weak and detract from the effectiveness of the text. Because Wilcox frequently discusses LDS culture and doctrine, this book would be confusing and of little use to those not of the LDS faith.

Jacques, Brian. *Triss*. Philomel Books, 2002. ISBN 0399237232.\$23.99. 389 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories;

Subject: Animals--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

A trio of slaves, Triss, Welfo, and Shogg, make their escape from evil Princess Kurda of Riftguard, but find themselves running from the royal Slave Catcher and a ship full of pirates. At the same time, Scarum, Sagax, and Shroova leave their home of Salamandastron to seek adventure. Deep in the protection of Mossflower Woods, two lost Dibbuns from Redwall Abbey find the location of the legendary Brockhall, the ancient hall of the Badger Lords. Each of the three individual stories has their own tightly woven plot line, but in the end the stories come together as Triss, Shogg, Scarum, Sagax, and Shroova find each other while trying to escape from the pirates and make a run for the sanctuary of Redwall Abbey. Once at the Abbey, the adventurers have their work cut out for them as they must help the Redwallers defend their home from the princess and her evil companions, as well as the monster that guards the corridors of Brockhall. No one beast can save the day in this novel, it is only through the help of every individual that Redwall Abbey can be saved.

The first few chapters of this novel are slow, as Jacques has to set up the three different story lines. Gradually the action begins to roll and the story becomes engrossing. All of the twists and intriguing characters that Jacques introduces the reader to make the book a worthwhile read. The only difficulty in this book may come from the various dialects that the different species of animals use. One way to overcome that obstacle would be by reading this book out loud, making the dialects easier to understand and giving children the chance to ask questions about the complex plot as you read.

Sheldon, Dyan. *My Perfect Life*. Candlewick Press, 2002. ISBN 076361839. \$16.99. 201 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous story;

Subject: Interpersonal relationships--Juvenile fiction; High schools--Juvenile fiction; Elections--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Ella Gerard is what most high school students can only dream of being: gorgeous, popular, and dressed to kill; however, she also has the zaniest girl in school, Lola Cep, as her best friend. So when Lola's arch-nemesis, who also happens to be Ella's ex-best friend, is nominated to run for school body president, Lola nominates Ella to run against her. Ella is then thrown into a mad dash for votes and mud slinging galore. Carla Santini wants to win and will allow nothing to stand in her way, not even her ex-best friend. Thankfully, Lola has multiple plots hidden under her dangling shawl and manages to get Ella into and out of all sorts of sticky circumstances. By the end of the election, everyone's skeletons are coming tumbling out of their closets and more is on the line than just losing to Carla.

Dyan Sheldon writes a funny portrayal of high school life and the experiences that we have all gone through. It is nice to see an author who reveals the darker side of popularity in an entertaining way. While this is not a book that could be considered a literary masterpiece, it is a well written book that will provide many chuckles and some all-out roars of laughter and which will make you glad that you are no longer in high school yourself.



Goldstein, Bobbye. *Mother Goose on the Loose*. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2003. ISBN 0810942399. \$18.95. 106 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humor;

Subject: Nursery Rhymes—Juvenile fiction; Children's poetry—Juvenile fiction; Cartoons and Comics—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Editor Bobbye Goldstein has collected a series of Mother Goose-themed cartoons from the *New Yorker Magazine*. Each section is introduced by a nursery rhyme or a short poem written by the editor. The cartoons are grouped according to nursery rhyme, for example, *Hey Diddle Diddle*, *Jack and Jill*, and *Humpty Dumpty*. The cartoons themselves, drawn by artists who contribute regularly to the *New Yorker*, are hilarious and clever commentaries on life. Goldstein includes a short after word on the history of cartooning. This is a fun collection that will appeal to young adults and their parents.

Kelly, Tim. *Amy Goes Army*. Pioneer Drama Service, 1982. Contact publisher regarding price. 18 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: All;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Humorous Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Army; High schools--Juvenile drama; Dreams--Hollywood--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Some accidents are for the best. Rank doesn't always matter

Production Requirements: One set and easy costumes. All are listed in the book.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 20 Min

Characters: 12 F

Cast: 5 teenagers, 7 adult F. Some of the students and some of the adults may be changed to male.

Time Period: When the army used typewriters.

Lucille is in the army and is the office clerk for the day. Unfortunately, she can't leave her post to go and see the famous rock star who is visiting for the day to give autographs and does a news report for the Army. Lucille has to stay at her post and greet visitors for the high school recruiters. One of the visitors is an old friend, Amy, who is still in high school. Lucille convinces Amy to hold her post so she can go and get the rock star's autograph. Amy agrees to this. While Lucille is away, the reporters go to the Office and find Amy. They tell Amy they need to interview her on the air to help with their report. Amy agrees to this. They do the report and Amy is a huge success. The captain then recruits Amy to continue to do recruiting for the army. Lucille is forgiven for leaving her post and everything ends happily.

The play is fun and quick paced. The set is easy and this play can be produced anywhere. It is good for all ages. The dialogue is entertaining and interesting. Many jokes are said and the characters' personalities add a lot to the comicality of the play. Amy is a high school student on tour of an army compound. She is a typical 'blond.' She says what she wants without thinking of the consequences and this gets her into some trouble but it also saves her in the end with the success of the news report. Sergeant Grimm, who lives up to her name, only lives for the Army and expects everyone else to, too. This plays a big role when she finds out that Lucille has left her post. She is furious. Mrs. Mollasseskeg is very snobbish and hot headed because she is the wife of the commanding general. She demands everything to be her way and if something goes wrong, like when Amy insults her, she throws a huge tantrum. The play is a farce and therefore contains no overt message to the play. The play has a lot of mix-ups in it with the switching of Lucille and Amy. The play is light because of the farcical nature and therefore doesn't require a lot of concentration on the part of the audience. Also, because it is a farce, there is no growth in character. The play is enjoyable because of the creative use of words and the action of the play builds nicely. There is a lot of tension because of the confusion that is caused by Lucille and Amy switching places that builds each incident that keeps the play going.

Martini, Clem. *The Field*. Playwrights Canada Press, 2001. ISBN 088754648X. Contact publisher regarding price. 35 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Contemporary realistic plays;

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

Theme: You can't judge a book by its cover.

Production Requirements: Simple set, a dog (a puppet will do), modern costumes.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 25 Min

Characters: 1 F, 2 M, 1 canine

Cast: One girl about 9, two boys (one 9 and one 12) and a dog (can be a puppet).

Time Period: Present

Lane, a blind girl, has just moved into a new neighborhood in the summer. She spends most of her time in the field not too far from her home, exploring her new world and playing. Arun, a boy who has just come back from camp, meets Lane in the field and they strike up a conversation. Lane's older brother Ben comes to get her for dinner, but when he sees Arun, he is disturbed and won't tell Lane why until Arun has left. Ben tells Lane that she can't play with Arun because Arun is from India. Lane's father is against foreigners and so she decides to tell this to Arun. When school starts, he doesn't talk to Lane, and she feels that everyone hates her because of what her parents believe. One afternoon, Ben and Lane are playing in a field when Arun comes by. Ben and Lane continue to play until Ben falls into an old abandoned well. Fortunately, Arun helps Lane get Ben out of the well just in time before it collapses. Lane decides that her father can sometimes be wrong and that Arun is really a pretty cool kid, and she and Ben take Arun home to meet their father.

The action of the play is very well paced. Each scene blends nicely with the last and the audience is able to easily understand what is going on. The language shows the passage of time, such as when Lane and Ben play in the field the second time and discuss how school is going, so the audience knows that summer has ended and school is now in session. The action is kept up by the intensity of the words or by the actions of the actors. When characters are just talking and getting to know each other, they play with the dog and explain about themselves. When there is the confrontation between Arun and Lane about Arun being Indian, the audience is able to hear the strong use of words and the misunderstandings that children have about things like race. Ben is a fairly static character, but both Lane and Arun show progress in understanding more about their differences. For example: Arun throws a piece of gum to Lane and it falls beside her. She asks Arun where the gum is and he jokingly says, "Are you blind?" He realizes that she *is* blind and that simply because she can do things on her own doesn't mean she isn't handicapped. Lane realizes that people are people, each person is unique, and that not everyone, like her father, appreciates it. These realizations come mostly when they are faced with a large trial, like the time Ben falls into the well. This makes the children work together to save him and helps them become friends again.

Levine, Gail Carson. *For Biddle's Sake*. Illustrated by Mark Elliott. Harper Collins, 2002. ISBN 0060000953. \$14.89. 104 pp.

Reviewer: Emily Fry

Reading Level: All

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy tales;

Subject: Fairy Tales--Juvenile fiction; Princes--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction;

Books—Reviews;

*For Biddle's Sake* is another addition to Gail Carson Levine's series, *The Princess Tales*. It is a humorous story of a girl named Parsley, who eats nothing but parsley which stains her teeth green, but above all, possesses an enchanting smile. Parsley is taken in by the fairy Bombina because of that smile, and spends many happy years with Bombina. The time comes when Parsley falls in love with the younger son of the king and Bombina feels jealous that Parsley is sharing her smile with someone else. Things really get interesting with an angry fairy whose specialty is turning humans into frogs; however, as in all fairy tales, there is a happily ever after.

If you are looking for a quick read that is well written, while entertaining, this is the perfect book! *For Biddle's Sake* would fit in perfectly with a teaching unit involving fairy tales or coming of age themes and would also fit in nicely as a bed time read with children. For those who need visualizations while they read, there are delightful drawings that accompany the text as well as a map at the beginning of the book for those who like to follow the action of the book.

Dickens, Ned. *Beo's Bedroom*. Playwrights Canada Press, 1996. ISBN 0887546528. Contact publisher regarding price. 27 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: All;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Adventure plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Monsters--Juvenile drama; Courage--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Fears help us to grow.

Production Requirements: A bedroom set, with lots of clothes, stuffed animals, and modern costuming  
Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 min

Characters: 2 F, 8 various

Cast: The other characters can either be male or female or the production can be done with just 4 people.

Time Period: Present

Beo is a girl who is afraid of the dark. After her mom tucks her into bed, the night creatures come out to play. Beo has to become strong to protect her stuffed animal friends. She defeats Grund, the pile of laundry under her bed and then she defeats his mum who is a robe hanging on the bathroom door. Beo is so tired she has to sleep, so Bard, her stuffed bear, says he'll take watch for the rest of the night but he falls asleep and a fire breaks out. Beo believes the fire is really a dragon and so she wants to save her stuffed animals but is not fully able to save Bard. The fire started when some of the laundry got caught on the heating vent. Beo's mother comes to the rescue and helps put out the fire and offers Beo the chance to sleep with her for the rest of the night. Beo decides that she now knows what is real and what is not so she can sleep alone again. She is growing up.

This play has a great theme of growing up and out of our fears and, for Beo, facing our fears. Beo is able to grow up because she has let part of her imagination go. This is explained in the last song when she sings to her toy bear, "Only a Toy." The rest of the characters are fairly static but this is because they are all apart of Beo's childish imagination so they do not progress throughout the story. The music is simple but interesting and has meaning for the reason the songs are sung. The play can be done without singing the songs (rather just saying them) if preferred but the songs do add atmosphere that helps move the plot along. The story is all told in rhyme such as the poem for Beowulf was. This makes for easy transitions between scenes and for easy understanding of what is going on in the story. The story is taken from the poem "Beowulf" and applied for children trying to face their fears. It would be interesting to read this play first and then for the older kids to read "Beowulf." The pace of the play is fairly exciting. It has its high points and then lets the audience rest before another high point comes along. This pacing helps the audience stay with the play and not get overexcited or tired from watching it.

Burgess, C. V. *What Shall I Do?* University of London Press Ltd., 1957. Contact publisher regarding price. 8 pp.

Reviewer: Charlene Gan

Reading Level: All;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Play;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Employment--Juvenile drama; Finance--Juvenile drama;

Theme: You need to be skilled to keep a job.

Production Requirements: A living room type set, modern costumes will do.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 13 min

Characters: 2 F, 3 M

Cast: 2 Female adults, 2 male adults, 1 teen boy.

Time Period: 1950's

Benny is just about to graduate high school and has not decided what to do with his life. His parents ask him what he wants to do. Benny says that he would just like to try out different things until he finds what he likes. His father says that Benny should stick to one job and become skilled in it because companies are now looking for skilled labor. Benny's uncle and aunt unexpectedly show up at his house. Benny's uncle, Arthur, has spent his life going from one job to another. Arthur has been laid off again and can't find work. Arthur comes to see if Benny's father can help him find work or lend him some money. Benny sees the situation that Arthur has gotten into because he isn't skilled in anything. This makes Benny decide that he better find out what he should do with his life.

This play is very reflective of the 1950's lifestyle in the wording and the characterization of the characters. The females are the homemakers, while the fathers sit on the couch reading the newspaper, while the son does his daily newspaper job and is very well behaved. It is very much like a "Leave it to Beaver" episode. I think that this play would be good for getting younger kids interested in something like career day or they could put this show on for other classmates to get them excited about looking into other jobs. The story is very easy to follow and the pace is constant but there is very little action. The theme is important for children to understand that what they are learning will help them get somewhere in life.

Doyle, Sharon Elizabeth. *In Other Words*. The Anchorage Press, Inc., 1979. \$20.00 for first performance, \$15 for following performances. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: All

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy Plays; Plays; Humorous Plays; Historical Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Communication--Juvenile drama; Development--Juvenile drama; Evolution--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Communication is more than words.

Production Requirements: Simple props/costumes, use of large letters which can stand on their own to become part of the set; they spell out the title.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 120 min

Characters: 2 F, 4 M

Cast: All Adults

Time Period: Present Day

The actors come onstage, taking letters from the title and using them for various improvisational actions like selling things, using them as instruments etc. The Professor then comes onstage and the letters are returned. He explains that communication is more than just letters, emphasizing that animals communicate also. The actors imitate his examples of gestures, faces and sounds. He then goes on to explain that our ability to speak comes from mimicking speech from our parents when we are young. After this explanation, the Professor goes back to caveman times to illustrate how words and names were created within a tribe. The actors again play out what the Professor says while the Professor jumps in and out of the scene as needed. He then explains how technology has expanded communication through the telephone, telegraph etc. Next, the issue of showing feeling through communication is discussed using a story of contemporary school kids and how two of them developed the use of movement and words to explain exactly what they wanted. The whole company sings and dances to a song written by these two kids about communicating with each other, and the curtain closes.

The actors need to be very versatile in order to portray a variety of types of people. Each person that an actor is portrays is vastly different from the other characters. For example, an actor could be a prehistoric baby and then turn around and be a whimsical teenager. They also need to be able to manipulate their body to create very visual images because all props and scenes are done in pantomime. For instance, one of the characters is so rigid that he can't move and his friends need to carry him to school. The pace of this play is pretty fast because the characters are trying to get a large amount of information across to children about a topic that literally scopes human history. Nevertheless, content doesn't seem to be sacrificed for timing. The play is built on physical movement, which not only illustrates the intentions of the play, but also keeps the focus and interest on what is happening onstage. The theme is the basis of the play, which is written to teach kids that different forms of communication are great and shouldn't be looked down upon. This idea is brought to the forefront of everything that is done onstage. This play would be best in smaller (20-30) groups of kids rather than large groups because there is so much interplay between the actors and the audience. This would be great for a children's theatre or community theatre.

Denson, Will. *Paul Bunyan and the Hard Winter*. Pioneer Drama Service, 1980. \$25.00. 35 pp.

Reviewer: Jennifer Eskelsen

Reading Level: All;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Adventure plays; Folklore;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Work--Juvenile drama; Bunyan, Paul (Legendary character)--Juvenile drama;

Theme: There will always be a need for heroes.

Production Requirements: Simple props/costumes/sets. Need of projection to create a silhouette of Paul.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 90 min

Characters: 11M, 3F

Cast: All adults

Time Period: 1800's

The loggers are working in the forest. One of them, Sam is getting ready for a flapjack eating contest when he meets Nick Slicker. Nick Slicker is a city reporter who wants to meet the famous Paul Bunyan. Sam tells Nick that he can't meet Paul because a city boy isn't safe in the woods. Nick proves his manhood by winning the flapjack eating contest and is allowed to stay with the loggers in their camp. It is a hard winter and not just because of the weather, but because the Committee for Right and Proper Action comes to the camp to shut it down. The Committee feels that because the local town is growing, there needs to be civilization in the woods and that loggers aren't civilized because of their heroic tendencies. The head of the committee, a widow woman, allows the men to stay at the camp temporarily, to prove that they can be clean and proper. After two months, the widow decides that these men are too rough and she kicks them out of the camp. Before they leave, a forest fire breaks out. Paul puts it out in no time. The loggers use Paul's action of putting out the fire to prove that civilization does need heroes like them. The widow recognizes that they are good men and decides to let the camp stay open.

Every character in this play has their own sense of what should and shouldn't be in the world. Each logger reacts to the news that their camp was going to be closed down a little differently. No one wants to lose their job or their home, but some of them are more open to the idea than others. This shows that each character is different and has individual thoughts and opinions. Each of the men take on certain roles, for example when Paul isn't around, Sam takes charge of the loggers. Others, like Johnny Inkslinger, take to the committee's side and do whatever the committee wanted. This difference in attitudes makes a variation in how the story is told and makes for a deeper story. The transitions from one situation to the next are smooth and sensible. The play does drag sometimes when the characters are arguing and it doesn't seem like there is anyplace for the argument to go but are always rescued from the argument from an outside source. One of the problems with the production of this play is that Paul is never actually seen on stage. What the script suggests is that the person who plays Paul has his silhouette projected on the screen so that all of his movements can be seen as a massive shadow. Another way that this could be done is to use a gobo in one or more of your lights. The music that accompanies this play ties in very well and makes sense. The men sing while they work and the Committee has a certain song they sing whenever they come or go. This play is appropriate for all ages and can be put on by a high school, middle school or community theatre group.