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The Emperor's New Hair

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Martin, Justin McCory. *The Emperor's New Hair*. Scholastic Inc, 2002. ISBN 0439153891. \$ contact publisher. 8 pp.

Reviewer: Morgan Hagey

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Parody; Plays; Fairy Tale;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Self-image; Honesty;

Theme: Be happy with who you are.

Production Requirements: This play is fairly simple to produce. Props are easily assembled. A comb, mirror, bottle, and box, are not hard to find. The only thing that could be difficult to find is a bald cap for the bald emperor. The set is also simple. It requires a chair for the Emperor's throne and a possible backdrop.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 15 minutes

Characters: 8-12

Cast: The play requires 8 people but can be extended to a dozen or more.

Time Period: "Once upon a time..."

There once was an Emperor who was a very happy, except that he was totally bald. No one knew he was bald because he always wore wigs. One day a traveling salesman sells him some "Hair Today Magic Potion." He begins using it every day. He asks his trusted advisors, Twiddle and Twee if it is working. In order to avoid angering the king, they lie and say it is. Eventually, because they lie so much, they even begin to believe their own lies. They tell the king that his hair is long, thick, golden and wavy. So the king decides he needs a hair cut. The imperial hairdresser comes and believes that the Emperor has a ton of hair too, and gives him a trim. Then Twiddle and Twee decide to have a parade to show off the Emperor's new hair style. Everyone at the parade admired his new "hair," except for a little boy who keeps shouting that they king doesn't have any hair. Finally, everyone realizes that he really did not have any hair. The Emperor is very embarrassed, but gets over it and decides to embrace his baldness. Twiddle and Twee shave their heads, and the honest little boy becomes an advisor to the Emperor.

This short play is an interesting twist on an old tale. The children will love the characters of Twiddle and Twee. They will also be able to see what can happen when lies are told; people can get hurt and embarrassed. The message is a good one for children to learn. The production itself is simple to put on and ideal for a classroom setting. There is even a page specifically written for teachers to use as supplementary information. This play would be great for a unit on ethics and morality or even on a fairy tales. The children will be able to learn a lot while having fun. There are only a few words that would be difficult for a third grader. I would recommend this play for watching for any grade K-6. As far as production goes, I would recommend nothing younger than 2nd grade. There are some words that could be difficult for anyone younger than that. This play is quite fun and intriguing. Audiences of all ages would enjoy it.