



2003

### Eleven Vests

Sarah Ratliff

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#### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Ratliff, Sarah (2003) "Eleven Vests," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 4 , Article 22.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss4/22>

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Bond, Edward. *Eleven Vests*. Methuen Drama, 1997. ISBN 0413721205. Contact publisher regarding price. 37 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Ratliff

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic plays; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Delinquency--Juvenile drama; War--Juvenile drama; Responsibility--Juvenile drama;

Theme: How do we learn responsibility for ourselves and what we do?

Production Requirements: need a school jacket, and school and military uniforms

Acts: 7 scenes

Run Time: approximately 30 mins

Characters: 7

Cast: 3 or more actors, adults

Time Period: present

A young student is accused of vandalizing a book and a school jacket. He is kicked out of school, but returns to kill his headmaster. Years later, as an adult, he is a soldier. While taking prisoners of war, his companion is killed by an enemy soldier. He then kills that soldier.

It's very easy to become distanced from this play. As Americans, we are not familiar with the school system in Britain and this can cause the audience, if American, to be pulled out a little during the action. However, while the settings in the play are unfamiliar to American audiences, the point the play is trying to make is not: we are responsible for our actions. Despite the valid theme, the play still shows weaknesses. The characters could be developed more; it is very hard to empathize with the Student because the audience doesn't really know him. We know his actions, and they are deplorable, but we don't really understand him. Perhaps this was the playwright's intent. We still hope that the Student will change, will become better, but when he doesn't, we then have to look inward to ourselves and begin the questioning process. Edward Bond does a good job of pushing us toward this point. This play would serve as a wonderful way of opening a discussion focused on responsibility.