



Children's Book and Media Review

Volume 24 | Issue 4

Article 34

2003

Full Issue

Children's Book Review

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Review, Children's Book (2003) "Full Issue," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 24 : Iss. 4 , Article 34.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss4/34>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Everlasting Contrasts: Babbitt's Use of Opposites in *Tuck Everlasting*

By Gregory Bryan

PhD Student

Department of Language and Literacy Education
University of British Columbia

For more than a quarter of a century, *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt 1975) has been a treasured element of many children's and adults' libraries. With the 2002 release of Disney Pictures' adaptation of *Tuck Everlasting*, a new audience discovered Natalie Babbitt's timeless adolescent story. The release of the movie, with its Academy Award-winning cast including Sissy Spacek, Ben Kingsley and William Hurt, generated a new wave of interest in the book. This being the case, it is not remiss for us to cast a loving glance back to this classic American novel.

It was with fondness that I again returned to Babbitt's book for another pleasurable reading experience to prepare me for my viewing of the new movie. Each time I re-read *Tuck Everlasting*, I admire anew Babbitt's masterful use of opposites and extremes in creating the world of Winnie Foster and the Tuck family. By the use of polarities, Babbitt emphasizes and exaggerates the features of those things being contrasted. Within the pages of *Tuck Everlasting* can be found numerous examples of such opposites and direct contrasts.

Mortality versus Immortality

At the heart of *Tuck Everlasting* is the contrasting of mortality and immortality. Tuck, his wife Mae, and their two sons, Miles and Jesse, and their family horse, have inadvertently drunk from a fountain of

eternal life. As time passes, they discover they cannot die. Jesse loses his balance, falls out of a tree and lands on his head. The family fears that he must surely have broken his neck but, to their great relief and surprise the fall "didn't hurt him a bit" (38). Shortly thereafter, hunters mistake the Tucks' horse for a deer. The hunters accidentally shoot the horse, but the bullet passes "right on through him, and didn't hardly leave a mark" (39). The Tucks begin to recognize their invincibility. A snake bites Tuck, Jesse eats poisonous toadstools, Mae slices her hand cutting bread – all without hurting them. After ten years, and then twenty, the Tucks see that they are never getting any older. Miles is "more'n forty by then" but still looks twenty-two (39). The Tucks report that in eighty-seven years, they have not aged at all.

Ten-year-old Winnie Foster chances across the magical fountain in the wooded lot that her family owns. The day is "hot and breathless" (23). Winnie has "lost her patience...and decided to think about running away" (4). Winnie is as much interested in running away from the stifling and oppressive heat of her mother and grandmother as that of the sun "on a day that was...near to boiling" (13). "I don't think I can stand it much longer," Winnie complains (14). She seeks the cooling shade of the woods and when Winnie happens upon the fresh water spring, she thirstily prepares to slake her dry throat. Mae, Miles

and Jesse, however, kidnap her. While insisting on a drink from the spring, Winnie is suddenly “seized and swung through the air, open-mouthed” (31), forced on the horse’s back, and hurried away to the Tuck’s cabin.

When Winnie finally reaches the cabin and is introduced to Tuck, the old man tells Winnie that meeting her is the best thing that has happened to him in eighty years. Tuck tells Winnie that the reason for kidnapping her was to prevent her from drinking from the spring. He explains the impact that the spring has had upon his own life and the lives of his family. Tuck takes great care in stressing that the age-old human longing to avoid death is not as desirable as it initially might seem. Tuck explains the role of life and death, and the necessity for someone to experience both. Life is about “growing and changing, and always moving on. That’s the way it’s supposed to be,” Tuck informs Winnie (62). “Dying’s part of the wheel [of life], right there next to being born,” (63) Tuck stresses. Winnie learns “that birth and death, compassion and loneliness, innocence and knowledge, joy and sorrow, freedom and constraint are all a part of the wheel of life” (Hartvigsen and Hartvigsen 1987, 183).

This theme of life versus death, or immortality versus mortality, is central to the novel. As the book unfolds, Winnie leaves behind her childhood and we see her “crossing a threshold to maturity” (Hearne 2000, 158). Winnie is blossoming through adolescence and toward womanhood—perhaps, in a mortal world, the height of immortality—where it becomes possible for a woman to conceive, create and give birth to offspring. Winnie’s immediate predicament, however, is that she has now been presented with the opportunity to elude death. Winnie is faced with the possibility of dispensing with the constraints of mortality, casting aside the need to produce offspring

in order to achieve any semblance of immortality. Winnie now possesses the potential to live, in the flesh, for all time. What should she decide—life eternal or endless death?

Different Perspectives

Winnie’s decision is made more difficult given that she must consider Jesse and Tuck’s differing views of the situation. These contrasting viewpoints are at least partly understandable given the different position of life within which Tuck and his son find themselves frozen. Jesse is in the prime of life. At seventeen, he is described as “a boy, almost a man” (25). He is “glorious” and “wonderful” to look at and is “even more beautiful up close” (25, 27). In contrast, Tuck is aged and weary. He is a “big man” with a “sad face” hosting “melancholy creases [on] his cheeks” (48).

Tuck says that his family’s predicament, is that they are “stuck so’s [they] can’t move on” (63). Tuck’s words suggest that he would gladly face death—cheerfully *accept* death—in order to “move on” with his life. In being unable to die, Tuck feels that he is also unable to live.

In contrast, Mae tells Winnie that Jesse “can’t stay on in any one place for long” (53). Jesse’s life is one of continual motion and exploration. He is excited by the prospect of “go[ing] all around the world, see[ing] everything” (72). He does “what strikes him at the moment” (53) in his pursuit of eternal happiness and joy. When Jesse proposes to Winnie, he says she and he “could have a good time that never, never stopped” (72). Tuck may feel himself stuck in the same state forever, but Jesse proposes a state of continuing good times involving constant travel and movement from one state of wedded bliss to another.

Tuck is of the opinion that “you can’t call it living, what we got” (64). Without the prospect of death, Tuck reasons

that there is no life. The opposite perspective, such as that also held by the envious man in the yellow suit, is that the Tucks are not only living, but are getting to live forever!

Order and Disorder

Tuck Everlasting revolves primarily around the question of mortality and immortality. Carefully embedded within the story structure there are, however, numerous additional examples of extremes from opposite ends of various spectrums.

Winnie is accustomed to the ordered, spotlessly clean Foster house that has been “mopped and swept and scoured into limp submission” (50). The “square and solid” Foster house has a “touch-me-not appearance” and is surrounded by a four-foot high iron fence which seems almost to shout to the world, “Move on—we don’t want you here” (6). The family home is so regimented that Winnie feels like a prisoner “cooped up in a cage” (14). She dreams of breaking free to “make some kind of difference in the world” (15).

The Fosters’ sovereignty extends out of doors, where a manicured lawn is “cut painfully to the quick” (6). Once beyond the confines of the fence—beyond the extent of the Fosters’ reign of control—things become less ordered. Winnie is able to thrust “her arms through the bars of the fence and [pluck] at the weeds on the other side” (14). As Winnie sets out on her path toward independence and moves further from the Fosters’ and deeper into the wood she encounters “endless tangled vines” (24). The contrasting appearance of the Fosters’ house and the nearby wood even evokes different reactions from passers-by. The house is “so proud of itself that you wanted to make a lot of noise as you passed, maybe throw a rock or two.” On the other hand, the appearance of the wood “made you want to speak in whispers” (6).

When Winnie first arrives at the Tuck home, she is taken aback by the unkempt appearance of their cabin. In contrast to her feelings of being a prisoner inside her own home, however, Winnie comes to delight in the love with which she is showered while staying inside the home of her kidnappers. The Tucks share their home with “gentle eddies of dust” and “silver cobwebs” that reflect an ambiance in which a mouse has taken up residence in one of the table drawers—“and welcome to him!” (50). Despite the dishes “stacked in perilous towers,” walls that are “piled and strewn and hung with everything imaginable,” furniture scattered about “helter-skelter” and a sofa whose arms are “webbed with strands of thread and dangerous with needles” (50, 52), Winnie finds the cabin charming, comfortable and welcoming.

Circles, Springs and Storms

In talking with Winnie, Tuck’s words stress the cyclical nature of life and death. This circle motif is a recurring theme in the book. The book begins with the imagery of the Ferris wheel. The outside of the Ferris wheel moves a great deal, covering lots of area. The hub of the wheel, however, while revolving a full 360 degrees, actually never moves far. It is a “fixed point...best left undisturbed, for without [it], nothing holds together” (4). It does a full circle, but never moves far beyond its point of origin.

There is also an interesting contrast in Babbitt’s description of the fountain that ascends with the power of bestowing eternal life. The water emerges from “a *little* spring bubbling up” at the foot of “the *giant* ash tree at the center of the wood” (8, emphasis added). While water continues to bubble forth from the spring, the tree remains a constant, not growing “one whit in all that time” from the Tuck’s first visit to the

second, some twenty years later (40). The initial that Tuck had carved into the tree remains “as fresh as if it’d just been put there” (40). The Tucks decide that the bubbling, flowing, dynamic spring is “the source of their changelessness” (40).

Babbitt employs a further contrast in the weather. Initially, the characters suffer through the “strange and breathless...dog days” of summer (3), during which the temperature is so extreme that the “slightest exertion” leaves Winnie and others in “a flood of perspiration” (111). It is “mindlessly hot, unspeakably hot, too hot to move or even think” (116). The sun, itself, is “a roar without a sound” (116) which leaves the thirsty earth “cracked, and hard as a rock” (111). The only cloud is one of “hysterical gnats suspended in the heat above the road” (13). Later, however, the sky begins to change. Winnie sees that it is “not so much clouding up as thickening, somehow, from every direction at once, the blank blue gone to haze” (117). As the wind picks up, “the smell of rain” begins to “hang sweet in the air” (118). Lightning flashes and a wild and wet storm rages during Mae’s escape from prison. Rain comes “in sheets...riding the wind, flung crosswise through the night” (125).

A Fairy Tale Princess

Babbitt also uses contrasts to powerfully reinforce the image of Winnie’s blossoming beauty. While Mae Tuck characterizes herself as “plain as salt” (55), she is also described as “a great potato of a woman” (10). What disparity such an image evokes when one considers the lumpy, earthy, plain, colorless, solid, accessible, dependable nature of a potato (Tunnell and Jacobs 2000, 25). Compare this to the soft, sweetness of young Winnie.

Winnie’s childhood purity and innocence is also emphasized when Babbitt contrasts Winnie against a toad. As with the

potato, images generally associated with toads are of lumpy, plain, very earthy beings—certainly not the beautiful, virginal fairy tale heroine that is Winnie. Babbitt, herself, says that “toads are earth creatures like Mae. They’re not beautiful” (as quoted in Hearne 2000, 158). Ironically, however, frogs and toads are “common symbols of sexuality in fairy tales” (Hearne 2000, 158). Here is another contrast between Winnie’s pure innocence and the toad as an image of sexuality.

In the toad itself, we see opposite distinctions. To save it from a dog, Winnie picks up the toad. She discovers the creature is “rough and soft, both at once” (132). Being amphibious, the toad can additionally be seen to represent the contrasting images of water and earth.

Innocent Witches and Tainted Saviors

The contrast between Good and Evil is apparent amidst the murmurs of witchcraft that have led their friends to desert the Tucks. Miles’ wife concludes that he has “sold [his] soul to the Devil” (39). The Tucks have life eternal—which is generally considered to be the religious reward for a mortal existence of purity and goodness. Yet it is they who are accused of Black magic and witchcraft.

Ironically, Winnie initially thinks of the man in the yellow suit as “a kind of savior” (59). As Winnie bounces along on the back of the horse, having just been kidnapped, she and the Tucks pass the man in the yellow suit. At that moment, had her mind not “perversely went blank” (33) she could have called out to him and cried for help in liberation from her captors. Later, the man in the yellow suit leads the local policeman to the Tuck cabin, to “save” Winnie. In Babbitt’s novel, however, this supposed savior is the antagonist. The “witches”—the practitioners of Black

magic—are the innocent and good. The “savior” represents corruption and evil.

Surrendering to Freedom

The Tucks’ inability to die is emphasized when contrasted with the vulnerability and mortality of others. The man in the yellow suit wants nothing more than to acquire what he sees as the priceless gift of life eternal. Rather than realize this dream, however, Mae Tuck kills him. When Mae kills the man, however, we recognize that she does not do it out of malice. Rather, she acts “out of love for Winnie and for all people” (Hartvigsen and Hartvigsen 1987, 180-181). The death of the man in the yellow suit results in Mae’s arrest and imprisonment. It is generally agreed that in an “open-and-shut case....they’ll hang her for sure” (109).

As the novel draws toward its climax, Winnie *surrenders* her freedom, willingly entering jail to take the place of Mae. In sacrificing her liberty for captivity, however, Winnie actually finally *secures* her freedom. It is the “ultimate assertion of her independence, the final breaking of the bonds of trust and fear that had restricted her” (Aippersbach 1990, 91). Winnie is reminded of an old poem:

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage” (123).

Winnie casts aside the shackles imposed upon her during her upbringing. For all intents and purposes, her militant and suppressive mother and grandmother have imprisoned her as effectively as any stone walls or iron bars. She now declares her independence from the girl who had once been “too neat, too prissy; almost, somehow, too *clean*” (130, italics in original).

The novel’s concluding cemetery scene has been described as “one of the special moments in all children’s literature” (Tunnell 1987, 510). At book’s end, the Tucks visit the town cemetery. As Tuck

reads the monument inscription we discover the decision that Winnie made regarding the course of her life. The journey she selected for life included death. Tuck told Winnie, “you can’t have living without dying” (64). This being the case, in learning of Winnie’s death, we understand that she did live. In choosing death, Winnie opted for life.

A Fondness for Contrast

Babbitt demonstrates a proclivity for contrast. While expressing her lamentations about the lack of great literature for American children, Babbitt (1974) renders contradictory images to emphasize her point. With reference to Utopia and Hell, she says that while the world of “American children’s novels is sweet beyond bearing, the world of American adult novels is black beyond reason” (Babbitt 1974, 182).

In a later article (1986), Babbitt attempts to define her audience. She uses extremes to illustrate the variety that exists within children. Babbitt refers to a photograph of herself and her sister. At the time the photograph was taken, Babbitt was seven years old, and her sister was nine. In the photograph, the sisters are dressed alike, “but that’s where the likeness stops, because [the sister] was fat and [Babbitt] was emaciated.” Despite the “identical cotton dresses,” Babbitt’s arms hang from the puffed sleeves “as loosely...as the clappers in a pair of bells” while Babbitt’s sister’s sleeve cuffs “are like tourniquets.” We also learn that Babbitt’s sister was an excellent student, while Babbitt, herself, was “what the teachers now tactfully refer to as an underachiever.” The sister was “gregarious.” Babbitt was “pretty much of a hermit” (161). This detailed, often comical, analysis of a single photograph is, in itself, evidence of Babbitt’s masterful writing. It also demonstrates how effectively she uses contrasts and opposites to enhance that writing.

In reviewing *Tuck Everlasting*, Aippersbach (1990) maintains that the contrasts contained within the story are consistent with the overall structure of the novel. "It is a simple story that deals effectively with [a] complex theme" (Aippersbach 1990, 83). Aippersbach continues by saying, "the complicated themes of the book are...illustrated by simple things" (95).

In 1974, Babbitt lamented the lack of great literature for children. She complained that American children's novels lacked dynamism. The following year, Farrar, Straus and Giroux published Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*. Here is a children's novel that does not lack "art, ambition, craftsmanship, and commitment" (Babbitt 1974, 178). *Tuck Everlasting* continues to be popular over a quarter of a century later. It has received lavish praise. Tunnell (1987) describes it as "one of the most outstanding" of all books. He says it is a "special book" that is embraced by children and adults alike (509). Unlike Babbitt of 1974, people can no longer decry American children's novels as "a wasteland to be irrigated" (185). Babbitt has given us a gem to cherish. After all, "it is difficult to ignore writing that dances to its own wonderful music yet is clear and direct" (Tunnell 1987, 511). Regardless of how the audience feels about the new Disney movie, there remains little doubt that adults and children alike will enthusiastically continue to revisit Babbitt's superb novel.

References

- Aippersbach, Kim. "Tuck Everlasting and the Tree at the Center of the World." *Children's Literature in Education* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 83-97.
- Babbitt, Natalie. "The Great American Novel for Children – and Why Not." *The Horn Book Magazine* 50, no. 2 (April 1974): 176-185.
- Babbitt, Natalie. *Tuck Everlasting*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975.
- Babbitt, Natalie. "Who Is 'The Child'?" *The Horn Book Magazine*, 62, no. 2 (March / April 1986): 161-166.
- Hartvigsen, M. Kip, and Christen Brog Hartvigsen. "'Rough and Soft, Both at Once': Winnie Foster's Initiation in *Tuck Everlasting*." *Children's Literature in Education*, 18, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 176-183.
- Hearne, Betsy. "Circling *Tuck*: An Interview with Natalie Babbitt." *The Horn Book Magazine*, 76, no. 2 (March / April 2000): 153-161.
- Tunnell, Michael O. (1987). "Books in the Classroom." *The Horn Book Magazine*, 63, no. 4 (July / August 1987): 509-511.
- Tunnell, Michael O., and James S. Jacobs. *Children's Literature, Briefly* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 2000.

McDermott, Gerald. *Creation*. Illustrated by Gerald McDermott. Dutton Children's Books, 2003. ISBN 0525469052. \$16.99.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar;

Reading Level: Preschool;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Folklore;

Subject: Creation; Creation--Juvenile literature; Book--Reviews;

McDermott bases his text of the *Creation* on Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 of the Hebrew bible. He additionally uses diverse sources such as the illuminated Bibles *Moralisées* of thirteenth-century France to give his account. God describes how He created the earth, the heavens, and all living creatures. "I was before time. I was everywhere," He says, "My spirit moved over the deep. I floated in darkness." The text is minimal, but the carefully chosen words convey a feeling of power and reverence. As the Creation progresses the illustrations become especially appealing by increasing in detail and color. The first painting shows the separation of the light and the dark. The penultimate illustration shows a swirl of colors containing beasts and sea creatures, all surrounding the figures of a man and a woman. The final painting is of an embryo that is above the text, "I am all this. All this I AM." The illustrations use colors often depicted in the art of the American Southwest, while the figures are occasionally reminiscent of those seen in ancient cave paintings. In his introduction, McDermott explains how different parts of the book were conceived in different places such as Santiago, Chile and Tokyo, Japan. Artistic influences from these and other cultures can be found in his work. McDermott's minimal text and detailed illustrations combine to make a work that is both powerful and moving.

McCaslin, Nellie. *The Little Squire of Flanders*. Players Press Inc., 1996. ISBN 0887344763. Contact publisher regarding price. 20 pp.

Reviewer: Heidi Schiers

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Folklore; Fairy tale plays; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Knights and knighthood--Juvenile drama; Christian pilgrims and pilgrimages--Juvenile drama; Married people--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Mistaken identity in medieval France

Production Requirements: Minimal. Someone who can do basic or extravagant gymnastics (as the jester).

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30 minutes

Characters: 10

Cast: 4 men, 4 women, 2 can be either man or woman

Time Period: Medieval

Sir Robert has just been knighted, received a kingdom, and married the fair Genevieve. It has been a good day. Unfortunately, he had vowed long before that should he be knighted, he would leave immediately on a pilgrimage to Saint James. The time has already arrived for him to depart from his newly acquired riches and bride. In the year that he is gone, the evil Sir Bernard takes over Sir Robert's kingdom, and Sir Robert believes he has lost everything. He meets a young and devoted squire named Guillaume, who aides Sir Robert for the next seven years in his exile. Together, they rebuild Sir Robert's fortune, and he returns to his castle in hopes of better fortune. While there, he discovers that Guillaume was really Genevieve in disguise, and that she is the one who helped him out and is his dear friend.

The *Little Squire of Flanders* is yet another fanciful tale of a girl masquerading as a boy, but contains none of the complexities or humor which usually accompanies such stories. The major flaw of this short play is that it is too narrative-driven. The basic structure of the play consists of a short scene between Sir Robert and Genevieve at the castle, followed by an announcer who briefly relates the story of the last year, followed by another short scene with Sir Robert and Guillaume in the forest, and yet another explanation of the last seven years by the announcer. The show ends with a short scene between Sir Robert and Genevieve back at the castle. Throughout these short scenes nothing happens. It is a play of talking heads in costumes, without any real conflict. Sir Robert tells Guillaume that perhaps they could purchase a bakery, and the next thing the audience sees is the announcer, telling them that so much time has passed, and in that time the two companions purchased a bakery and later an inn. The play would have been much stronger had it focused on some of their adventures together in those seven years, perhaps at the inn.

The end could have provided a welcome opportunity for conflict. Perhaps Sir Robert could have had to encounter the sneaking, thieving Sir Bernard. Alas, no. Sir Bernard is conveniently away on pilgrimage to make recompense for his sins. Should Sir Robert remain in his comfortable lifestyle with his lovely wife whom he does not know well, or should he instead seek adventures with his faithful friend in far off lands? Instead, in his moment of choosing between the two, Sir Robert suddenly realizes after seven years of oblivion that Genevieve and Guillaume are one and the same. Everything is happy and all problems are surpassed...except that there were none to address.

Like the script, the characters in this play are weak. They have no depth. The audience does not see how Sir Robert feels about his situation or the people in his life. The ladies in waiting have a conversation which does not help to progress the story enough to be in the script, and Jacques the tumbler appears once to perform some cartwheels. To play the role of Pierre would be comparable to playing a piece of scenery. Sir Bernard also appears only once in the first scene, to sneer at Sir Robert. The

announcer might as well have just told the audience that there exists a bad guy who plans to usurp the kingdom. In fact, the announcer has the most important and active role in the play.

Genevieve, as the smart and skilled cross-dresser, might have had the most opportunity to gain some depth, but she is as superficial as the rest of them. She is so completely devoted to her husband that she hardly protests upon his departure, and then waits patiently and dutifully for him without complaint. This is true love. Yet Genevieve waits not just the one year while Sir Robert is away on pilgrimage, but an extra seven as she works by his side. As Guillaume, she does not even encourage Sir Robert to return to his kingdom. The story gives no reason as to why she might have done this. If she loved Sir Robert, why did she not reveal herself to him in their first encounter in the forest, seven years earlier? She might have had a particular motivation for remaining in disguise, but it is not written into the play. Such motivation is left to the whims of freehanded and creative actors.

The play could easily be accomplished with a small cast of children actors. It was the intent of the author to keep the play simple, as is apparent from her stage directions and recommendations for lighting and set, but McCaslin oversimplified. One could read a fairytale or legend and arrive at similar if not more creative and interesting results through improvisation upon the idea. In such a case, things would be happening between people; it would be more active. *The Little Squire of Flanders* is a nice, fluffy play about a knight and a lady, but it is not worth the royalties that it would cost to produce.

McCallum, Phyllis. *Crumple, Rumpelstiltskin*. Pioneer Drama Service, 1974. Contact publisher regarding price. 27 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Fairy Tales; Plays; Fantasy Plays;

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

Theme: Money and lies can't bring you happiness, only the truth can.

Production Requirements: Simplistic set, 2 thrones, rugs, but multiple props.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 20-25 min

Characters: 7

Cast: 3 F / 4 M

Time Period: past or present

This play follows the basic story of the traditional fairy tale *Rumpelstiltskin*. The playwright has chosen to add the character of Grump who serves as the palace butler, cook, footman, chamberlain and parlor maid and whose primary function is to involve the audience in the production and enlists the audience's help twice during the production.

The play moves along quickly with the dialogue. Its stereotypical characters are what the audience expects from the story, but they are far too underdeveloped to really promote the plot. This particular production involves the audience, twice asking children to come up and help with a bit of dusting or moving of boxes, each time rewarding that member with a cupcake. This audience interaction is fun and engaging. The production would be very simplistic with few, but specific props. Those props most difficult to locate would be two thrones, ropes painted gold, and a spinning wheel - though its function can be hidden from the audience. The script seems to cram a lot of information into a limited space, but the play is portable and would make a nice traveling show in some cases.

McCallum, Phyllis. *Hansel and Gretel*. Pioneer Drama Services, 1971. Contact publisher regarding price. 19 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Fairy Tales; Plays; Occult Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Fairy tales--Hansel and Gretel--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama;

Magic--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Evil doesn't win in the end.

Production Requirements: Multiple props, extensive set, but could be pantomimed.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 15-20 min

Characters: 8

Cast: 2 M / 6 F

Time Period: Long ago.

This play follows the basic story of Hansel and Gretel. The wicked stepmother tries to get rid of the two children by giving them to the wicked witch to bake in her special oven so that the wicked witch may add them to her gingerbread house. The additions of significance are the good witch who is banished to live in a nearby tree until her powers are restored. With her powers restored, the good witch is able to help save Hansel and Gretel and the children's real mother, who had been turned into a bird, but is able to warn her children of harm.

Though a few lines are humorous and there is a strong foundation for the relationship and chemistry that exists between Hansel and Gretel, the majority of the characters are static and lack purpose. The play is far too inter-tangled with "magic petticoats" and new characters that it fails to develop the actual fairy tale, assuming that the story is widely known and the plot need not be explained. The action comes in disorganized spurts and far too soon. The play could be simplified by pantomiming the numerous desired props (like a plate of dead rats, a gingerbread house with moving parts, two quick costume changes, and a giant moving tree) but otherwise is complicated and time consuming for such a short production. The dialogue is predictable and the attempted theme is reached in the end but without the process to get to that point. If simplified, this production could well emphasize the importance of family togetherness.

Base, Graeme. *Jungle Drums*. Harry N. Abrams, 2004. ISBN 0810950448. \$18.95. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture Books;

Subject: Jungle Animals--Juvenile Fiction; Drums--Juvenile Fiction; Magic--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ngiri Mdogo was the smallest warthog in Africa. That wouldn't be so bad, but all the other warthogs make fun of him. And why did they unleash their criticism on one of their own kind? Well, they envy the Other Animals who are more beautiful and impressive with their spots, stripes, and plumage. The Other Animals, who carry themselves with pride and dignity as they participate in their annual Grand Parade, are no kinder than the warthogs. They also tease Ngiri for being so small and plain. Seeing Ngiri's sadness, Old Nyumbu the Wildebeest, gives Ngiri a set of wish-producing jungle drums. Ngiri sadly passes the night playing the drums while wishing with all his heart. The next morning, he hasn't changed, but the Other Animals have and, after another night of playing his drums and wishing, things become even more mixed up. Everyone in the jungle is upset and they want things the way they were! Soon, even though things are not exactly back to normal, the jungle beasts put away their insecurities, stop their fault-finding, and begin to get along with each other.

Base is an accomplished artist and author. His illustrations are stunning and impressive while the animals' motions are clearly depicted. In addition to the story being just plain fun, it carries a powerful message about how selfishness and envy cause discord while tolerance and acceptance of differences promotes unity and appreciation. As in other Base titles, each reading of *Jungle Drums* has more for the reader to discover. The reader will also automatically learn a little Swahili along the way, as Base has given the animals their Swahili name. A pronunciation guide and answers to hidden animals puzzles and other jungle secrets are located at the back of the book.

Wolf, J. M. *Two Pigs, a Wolf and a Mud Pie*. Scholastic Inc., 2002. ISBN 0439271681. Contact publisher regarding price. 9 pp.

Reviewer: Morgan Hagey

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy tale plays; Humorous plays; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Fairy tales--Juvenile drama; Three little pigs--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Things are not always what they seem

Production Requirements: There needs to be a small set. One suggestion from the author is to use living sets with children who don't want to talk on stage, but want to be in the play. There needs to be two "houses" for the Hansel and Gretel scene and for the Snow White scene. During the dance scene, it may need to be decorated like a high school dance.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 10 minutes

Characters: 15-20

Cast: There needs to be four children male or female willing to have lots of lines, then there are several parts (five to be exact) that still have some lines, but not as many as the three little pigs or the wolf. There also needs to be six children who don't want to speak but want to be in the play.

Time Period: Variable, written ambiguously so it can be set whenever the director would like.

Tic, Tac and Toe, otherwise known as the three little pigs, are the main characters of the play. The story picks up after the three pigs have moved into Tic's brick house and outsmarted the wolf. Tac and Toe return home from buying mud pies at the grocery store to find Tic not home. Fearing that he has been kidnapped by the Wolf, they go out to find him and end up in the enchanted forest. There, they come across the ginger bread house and Hansel and Gretel. Realizing that Hansel and Gretel are in the middle of their own story, Tac and Toe leave them to outsmart the witch and continue searching for Tic. Next, Tac and Toe come across Snow White's forest cottage. Snow White doesn't want the pigs to try and sell her anything. She doesn't have any information, so the two pigs continue on. When they enter Cinderella's town, the prince and Cinderella get mad at the pigs because they try to move her shoe which is "going to ruin the story!" They aren't any help at all. So, Tac and Toe decide to call it a night and go home. When they finally get back, it is already the next morning, and they find Tic and the Wolf waiting for them. It turns out that Tic had left a note for his brothers, letting them know that he had gone to help the Wolf fix his flat tire. Apparently, the Wolf is a vegetarian who would never eat pork. Naturally, everyone ends up happily ever after.

J.M. Wolf's fun story of the three little pigs offers an interesting twist. Instead of rewriting the classic story, he offers us a continuation of the tale. This cute take on a classic would be interesting to children in elementary school, who would enjoy the simplicity of the language and the interesting adaptation of the well-known fairy tale, as well as the numerous jokes that they would be able to understand. The different fairy tale references keep the story moving and interesting, and the short time of the play will allow younger students to enjoy it by accommodating their short attention span. In addition, the large and diverse cast requirements give opportunities to shy actors and actresses. The play also comes with many good ideas for costumes, sets, and lights, making it easy for an educator to mount this play in his/her classroom. This play would be ideal for elementary school teachers, especially third through fifth grade. Any age elementary through seventh grade could be an appreciative audience.

Koscielniak, Bruce. *Johann Gutenberg and the Amazing Printing Press*. Illustrated by Bruce Koscielniak. Houghton Mifflin, 2003. ISBN 0618263519. \$16.00.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar;

Reading Level: Primary;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Non-fiction;

Subject: Books--History; Gutenberg, Johann, 1397?-1468--Juvenile literature; Printing--History of; Book--Reviews;

Bruce Koscielniak's narrative explores the history of printing, from the development of paper in China to the printing of the Gutenberg Bible. Though Johann Gutenberg is the main subject of the book, Koscielniak explains how the Chinese invented the woodblock method of printing and how they developed ink. As well, Koscielniak describes how the Koreans improved on the Chinese system by casting movable metal characters. While these developments were underway in Asia, in Europe books were copied by hand, a costly labor-intensive job. This meant only monasteries with scribes in-residence, libraries, and very wealthy people could afford to buy books. In addition, many people were illiterate. In 1435, Johann Gutenberg began working on the "secret tools" that eventually led to a new way of casting moveable metal type pieces. Gutenberg also developed a new linseed oil-based ink and a press that would push paper or vellum onto the inked type. His innovations made printing books less expensive and accessible to more people. His most famous publication was the Gutenberg Bible, a 1,282 page Latin Bible with two columns of forty-two lines of text per page. Only forty-seven of the original two hundred copies printed still exist. Koscielniak's writing style is fluid and easy to read. His cartoon-like watercolor illustrations often add humorous touches to the text.

Chorpenning, Charlotte and MacAlvay, Nora Tully. *Flibbertygibbet (His Last Chance)*. The Children's Theatre Press, 1952. ISBN NA. \$ NA. 53 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Ratliff

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy Tale; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Forgiveness; Acceptance;

Theme: Forgiveness, Acceptance

Production Requirements: A barn, a tree, stone wall, a well, music

Acts: 3

Run Time: approximately 1 hour

Characters: 8

Cast: Adults or Adults and Children

Time Period: Once upon a time.

Flibbertygibbet has returned to the small farm community in Scotland to try once again to belong there. He befriends a young girl, Nannie, who is the only one who believes in his magic. He must befriend the others in the community, especially the farm owner Gavin, in order to avoid banishment forever. However, when Adam and Bess learn of his magic, they try to buy it for their own personal gain, thus banishing Flibbertygibbet from the community. They are then kicked out and sent to look for him. Once they find him and bring him back, Nannie must learn to forgive Adam and Bess so that she can find her friend again.

This play is magical. It teaches of forgiveness and acceptance in a way that will enchant children of all ages. The characters are compelling, as is the story. Children will leave wishing that they had a friend like Flibbertygibbet. This play reminds the audience that there is magic all around us in everything we see or do. Families will love this play.

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.

Koste, Virginia Glasgow. *The Medicine Show or How to Succeed in Medicine without Really Trying*. Anchorage Press, Inc. \$20.00 per performance. 27 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: primary, intermediate

Rating: dependable

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Humorous Plays; Fantasy Plays

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Molière, 1622-1673 --Adaptations--Juvenile drama; Classical comedy--Juvenile drama; Family--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Humor can be found in every situation and sometimes sheer will and wit can beat out knowledge and hard work.

Production Requirements: Simplistic, few props, blocks, etc. Perfect for a traveling show.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 25-30 min

Characters: 8

Cast: 5 men, 3 women, though 2 of the men's parts can be played by women.

Time Period: Present day, then a long time ago.

This play is a self-proclaimed American version of Molière's "Le Médecin Malgrè Lui." The actors begin as themselves, introducing the play and getting ready for the show in front of the audience. Then, they become the characters of the woodcutter Sgnarelle and his wife Martine, who are in a fight because the lazy husband won't shape up. Martine decides to play a little joke on Sgnarelle and tells two other characters (Lucas and Jacqueline) who are in desperate need of a doctor for their employer's (Geronte) daughter (Lucinda), that Sgnarelle is a great physician. They semi-forcefully convince Sgnarelle to come along although he knows nothing about medicine. Lucinda, the sick daughter is betrothed to someone she doesn't want to marry. She is in love with Leandre. In response to this betrothal she suddenly "loses her ability to speak." Her father wants her to marry a wealthy young man and desperately needs the cure for her inability to speak so that the marriage will take place. Sgnarelle is commissioned to heal her and with a mumble-jumble bit of Latin, he convinces all the characters that he is a great doctor and in the meantime, arranges for the Leandre and Lucinda to run away together and marry secretly. In the end, the truth is discovered and everyone is happy. All except for Martine. Despite her wishes, her husband doesn't learn that hard work is essential; after all, he became a doctor without really trying.

The characters are all lighthearted and likeable. Their dialogue is lively with the exception of the first argument between Martine and Sgnarelle, which seems static and forced. The humorous elements of the dialogue helps the play to move along comfortably. Koste has been able to capture the of Molière's farce, at the same time she attempts to teach a lesson, thus detaching her work from that of Molière's. This effort to teach a lesson seems incongruent with the play.

This play is produced as an introduction into the world of Molière and French theatre. The script includes much of his original phraseology and Koste has included additional information for the cast and director about the background of Molière's work and his life. This is done in an effort to spread appreciation for the work of this playwright and a greater understanding of his work. This attempt is not noticed in the play itself, but rather with the additions at the end of the book. It would make a good study of the French playwright's style, but fails to carry its intentions over into the actual production. Simplistic set delivery makes it a nice show for traveling casts and productions.

McCaslin, Nellie. *Johnny Appleseed*. Players Press, Inc., 1996. ISBN 088734447X. \$ Royalty quoted upon application to Players Press, Inc.. 15 pp.

Reviewer: Hagey, Morgan

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Legends; Plays; Historical Fiction;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Legends; Euthenics;

Theme: Giving to the earth is better than taking

Production Requirements: This play requires some amount of historical props

Acts: 1

Run Time: 15 minutes

Characters: 9

Cast: You need a someone to be or look 50 to be Johnny Appleseed, a

Time Period: 1840

Cy James is a new neighbor of the O'Brien family. He comes by for a visit with them and hears of Johnny Appleseed, a friend of the O'Brien family. He is famed with having planted practically every tree in the state. Then, right in the middle of their conversation, Johnny himself stops by for a visit. Everyone is glad to see their old friend, and introduces him to Cy James who is very glad to meet him.

The next scene opens, and it is the next day, Mrs. O'Brien has made Johnny some new clothes so he doesn't look so ragged. Everyone is trying to encourage Johnny to stay around for awhile. He considers it, but in the end, he continues on his way, planting seeds and doing good deeds.

This play is good for young elementary aged students. It is very short, which means it would be good to perform it in conjunction with something else, whether that be a lesson on American legends, or perhaps a performance of another famous legend. By itself, it would seem rushed and random.

The writing is clear, which is ideal for young audiences and readers. However, the sudden appearance of Johnny Appleseed seems contrived. Perhaps to a younger reader, this would not be the case. However, there is no time between the exposition and the climax. It all happens at once.

In general, I can see young children thoroughly enjoying a performance of this. Children would even be great performers in a school setting. The production requirements could easily be simplified to allow for a classroom performance.

MacDonald, Margaret. *The Skit Book; 101 Skits from Kids*. Linnet Books, 1990. ISBN 020802283X. \$ contact publisher. 145 pp.

Reviewer: Hagey, Morgan

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Dependable;

Genre: Folklore; Plays; Humorous Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Skits from Stories; Gross Skits; Skits With Trick Endings

Theme: Humor Through Theater

Production Requirements: The production requirements vary depending on which skits you

Acts: N/A

Run Time: Variable, from 2-3 minutes and on

Characters: Variable

Cast: You really need at least three people to make most of these work.

Time Period: Contemporary

The book is filled with 101 different skits for children that the author collected from different kids. There are different topic categories that can guide your productions. For example:

1. Skits with Trick Endings
2. Skits using Word Play
3. Grossies
4. Skits from Stories

These four examples are just a few of the different categories that this book has. They are usually really funny. For example, there is a skit that takes place at the World spitting competition. There are no specific lines in any of the skits, there is, instead, guidelines to go off of. The rest is up to the performers.

This book allows for creativity within the characters. There are no lines, so improvisation is essential. Using improvisation can allow the performers to relate better to specific audiences. This book would also be good for amateurs. Theater can get quite complex and this book is a simplified introduction to performance. Anyone can get up and do these skits. They are short and have variable cast sizes, which is nice for different kinds of groups. Basically, these skits are far from "great" theater, but they offer kids the chance to try performing without the stress of having to memorize lines and blocking. I would recommend this book for beginning performers, or anyone who wants to have fun fast.

Cheatham, Val R. *Skits and Spoofs for Young Actors*. Plays, 1977. ISBN 0823802205. Contact publisher regarding price. 194 pp.

Reviewer: Morgan Hage

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Humorous plays; Plays; Parody;

Subject: Problem solving--Juvenile literature; Honesty--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: This book of short tales has distinct morals for each skit. For example, the skit "The Tortoise and the Hare Hit the Road" has the theme of "slow and steady win the race."

Production Requirements: Because this collection contains many different short spoofs, the production requirements are simple but varied. You need some general costumes; you don't need complicated lights or set. You could do it as simply or as complicated as you want.

Acts: 1 for each skit or spoof.

Run Time: Between 15 minutes and 2 hours

Characters: On average 5 or 6 people.

Cast: You need approximately 5 students to do any of the plays; you can vary that number, either more or less, depending on which skit or skits you choose.

Time Period: Written in contemporary language but the time period varies depending on which skit you choose. Most are "timeless" fables or fairy tales.

This collection contains skits and spoofs of classic tales, such as *Cinderella* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, with an added funny twist. Cheatham uses contemporary language and jokes to tell these stories. For instance, when little Red Riding Hood encounters the Big Bad Wolf, the wolf offers to carry her basket of bread for her. She declines, politely declaring that she gets points toward her Girl Scout merit badge for carrying the basket. Each skit is funny and is simple to understand and to stage.

This collection of short plays is quite delightful. It has a lot of fun dialogue that is easy for children to memorize. Each play teaches the timeless morals of fairy tales and fables in a light-hearted style without being heavy-handed. The plays are a lot of fun for adults and children. The jokes are easily understood by children but not below an adult's humor level. This is a difficult task to accomplish, but Cheatham seems to have done it. All in all, this is a humorous collection of skits and spoofs.

Grace, Catherine O'Neill. *The White House. An Illustrated History*. Scholastic, Inc., 2003. ISBN 0439429714. \$19.95. 144 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: White House (Washington, D.C.)--Juvenile literature; Presidents--United States--

Miscellanea--Juvenile literature;

This exquisite book looks at the history of the White House from the point of view of each of its first residents, from the family of John Adams, to the current president. Published in cooperation with the White House Historical Association, author Catherine O'Neill Grace writes that the White House functions as a home, an office, a museum, and a ceremonial stage, and she successfully shows the reader how. What is so intriguing about the book is that Grace is not limited to a mere description of the rooms or the responsibilities of the President. She includes interviews with such White House staff members as the chief usher, the director of the Marine Band, the pastry chef, and the presidential pet handler. Readers actually get a sense of what it is like to keep a 132-room household up and running, how staffers prepare for state events, and what a cabinet meeting might be like. There is interesting information about Presidential children, for example, Susan Ford held her senior prom at the White House. It also relates how successive presidents and their wives made changes to the White House. The plentiful color photographs are stunning, and offer a glimpse into such rooms as the library, the China Room, and the Green Room. The White House easily holds its own with some of the stately homes of the European aristocracy. The introduction was written by current First Lady, Laura Bush. The text has a familiar conversational style that draws the reader in. This book is a gem and can be appreciated by adults as well as children.

Diterlizzi, Tony and Holly Black. *Spiderwick chronicles: the seeing stone*. Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003. ISBN 0689859376. \$9.95. 108 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Waite;

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Fairy tales;

Subject: Goblins--Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Single-parent families--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

The second installment of the *Spiderwick Chronicles* is just as great as the first. In *The Seeing Stone*, we once again join Jared Grace and his siblings, Mallory and Simon, as they learn more about the fantastical new home in which they find themselves. After refusing to give up the field guide, Jared is faced with a huge problem when the local gang of goblins decides to kidnap Simon and hold him for ransom. Jared and Mallory struggle to find a way to keep the field guide safe while rescuing Simon at the same time. In this adventure, they find a friend and much needed help in Hogsqueal, a hobgoblin. They also cross paths with a huge troll and tree sprites.

Now that Jared can see the real world around him, thanks to a stone courtesy of the house brownie, he and Mallory stand a fighting chance against their fantastical opponents. This is a great continuation of the Grace children's story. We find out more about the mystery of the field guide and how it came to be. This book also raises more questions as to why these creatures want the book so badly. This is a wonderful book for the young reader who has a fancy for the fantasy world.

DiTerlizzi, Tony and Holly Black. *Spiderwick chronicles: the field guide*. Simon and Schurster Books for Young Readers, 2003. ISBN 0689859368. \$9.95. 107 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Waite;

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Fairy tales; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Fairies--Juvenile fiction; Brothers and Sisters--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

If you enjoyed Lemony Snicket's *Series of Unfortunate Events*, you will really enjoy the *Spiderwick Chronicles*. The first book of the series, *The field guide*, introduces the characters and situation with mystery and intrigue. The Grace children, Mallory and twin brothers, Jared and Simon, find themselves in an uncomfortably new situation when they are forced to move into an old mansion after their father leaves their mother and them without any means of support. They begin noticing strange noises and occurrences in this mysterious house from the moment they step through the door. After searching the house, Jared with his siblings in tow, discovers a secret library that once belonged to their great uncle. In the library, Jared finds the *Field guide*, a book describing the surrounding area and the fantastical creatures that live there. They soon realize the existence of fairies, house brownies, and goblins right in their own back yard!

This is a great introduction to a fun and exciting new series. The Grace children instantly find a way into your heart as you experience their adventures right along with them. This fast, fun read is perfect for kids interested in fantasy but not quite ready for the heftier novels in the genre.

Larche, Dr. Douglas W.. *Number the Stars*. The Dramatic Publishing Company, 1996. ISBN 871297116.
\$ Listed in the publisher's catalogue. 62 pp.

Reviewer: Schiers, Heidi;

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical Play; Plays; Contemporary Realistic Play;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Holocaust; Danish Resistance Movement;

Theme: Heroism

Production Requirements: Nothing specific. Perhaps good dog barking sound effects.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 70-90 minutes

Characters: 14

Cast: 7 men, 7 women, with some doubling

Time Period: 1940s, World War II era

In World War II Nazi-occupied Denmark, fourteen-year old Annemarie Johansen does not like to get noticed, particularly by the German soldiers standing on every street corner. Encounters with them make her very nervous, and Annemarie's brazen, almost reckless younger sister often loudly teases Annemarie for being afraid. New regulations are introduced which apply to Ellen Rosen - Annemarie's best friend and Ellen's family because they are Jewish, and Annemarie faces losing her best friend under the Nazi relocation plan. As Ellen masquerades as Annemarie's older sister Lise, Annemarie and her family come to terms with Lise's death. Annemarie also comes to terms with her fears while helping the Rosens escape to Sweden, when she is all alone and runs into two Nazi soldiers. She learns that bravery is "just thinking about what you must do, and doing it," even when one is frightened.

Dr. Larche has adapted this play from the popular, Newbery Gold Medal winning book, *Number the Stars*, and has successfully captured the essence and bulk of the book and the insecurities of an adolescent who feels that she must be brave in a scary and uncertain world. Young audiences can relate to this play, finding courage to stand strong and help those in need, even when it is scary and the consequences are unknown. Families can appreciate and learn from the simple and honest relationship of the Johansen family. During a time of war, when butter, sugar and cupcakes are scarce, the Johansen family has everything they truly need: each other. Their affection towards each other is abundant. Annemarie attempts to be patient with her precocious and sometimes annoying younger sister, Kirstie, while her parents act as good examples to their children, willing to risk their own lives and defy injustice in order to help their friends. There is a great deal of trust between Annemarie and her parents. For example, when Ellen is separated from her parents and worries about them, Annemarie reassures Ellen that her parents are safe because Annemarie's Papa said so. Mrs. Johansen trusts Annemarie to go out on her own in order to deliver a very valuable package to the fleeing Jews. Audiences can also learn lessons about what true friends will do for each other, even if they are young, for even young people can perform heroic acts in real and even simple ways.

The play could best be accomplished in a small and intimate space. Set requirements are few, leaving the designer to be as extravagant or minimal as desired, but the script lends itself to a more simplistic design. Since in certain scenes much of the action occurs offstage, there could be a great deal of empty space to fill. This is particularly true in the case of the Nazi soldier questioning Annemarie and feeding her lunch to the two barking big dogs just offstage. Another possible awkward scene is when the girls stand on the coast of the sea next to a whole world of water where, the script mentions, the girls attempt to wade in the cold waters of the Baltic sea.

The scenes are short and move the story along, but the excessive use of blackouts make the play seem choppy. Fluid transitions between scenes will allow the audience to stay connected to the world of the play and not snap them out of the action, left to wonder about the time. Although the ending is abrupt and very storybook, a great lesson can be learned from Annemarie and her family through this play. They

did everything they could, and then placed their trust in the hands of Him who numbers the stars. This is courage.

Johnson, Angela. *A cool moonlight*. Dial Books, 2003. ISBN 0803728468. \$14.99. 133 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers;

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Skin--diseases--Juvenile fiction; Sisters--Juvenile fiction; Imaginary friends--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

It's not that Lila has never seen the sun—she just doesn't remember it. Soon after she was born her parents discovered she had a rare allergy to sunlight, and now she lives in a world of shadows and night. With the night, two girls about Lila's age come, Alyssa and Elizabeth, whom no one else seems able to see. They promise Lila that they'll find a way to help her feel the sun and give her a series of gifts that Lila calls her 'sun pieces.' Expecting a miracle, Lila keeps these gifts safe until the day she finally feels the sun's warmth...in a way.

Filled to the brim with tender affection, *A Cool Moonlight* manages nevertheless to avoid any saccharine sentimentality. Johnson effectively blends lyrical text with soft, evocative imagery to create a narrative that is at once sweet and subtle. The main character, Lila, is an engaging narrator, managing somehow to be both a normal child and one who is touched, faintly, by the magic of the moonlit world she inhabits. In the end, there's a kind of acceptance of her situation; she may never be able to live out in the sun, but, as Lila says, "there's nothing wrong with moon girls."

Stone, Tanya Lee. *Ilan Ramon: Israel's first astronaut*. Millbrook Press, 2003. ISBN 0761328882. \$23.90. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Astronauts--Israel--Biography--Juvenile literature; Ramon, Ilan, 1954-2003--Juvenile literature; Columbia (Spacecraft)--Accidents--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

This well-written, if slightly idealized, biography of Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut, begins with a description of the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster that took Ramon's life. It then briefly recounts Ramon's birth and childhood in Israel and his early career as an Israeli Air Force fighter pilot. When Ramon finished college, he worked for a time in the private sector as a research scientist, and then returned to serve as a squadron leader in the IAF. Because of his skill as a pilot and scientist he was chosen by the government to represent his country as its first astronaut. He moved his family to Texas where he trained for 4 years to be Columbia's payload specialist. His duties on Columbia were successfully completed before the mission ended in tragedy. The book concludes with various tributes to Ramon's courage and character.

Stone's writing style is clear and interesting. She adds human interest by describing the items Ramon took with him into space and Ramon's involvement with student science projects on the shuttle. Stone is careful not to fictionalize. Every detail and quote is documented in a lengthy list of sources at the end of the book. There is also a useful list of web resources and a detailed index. Within the body of the book, Stone includes three double-spread inserts that give accessible descriptions of the history of the space shuttle program, life on the space shuttle, and the different jobs performed by space shuttle crew members. The biography is tactfully illustrated with captioned color photos. This is a good choice for any reader interested the space program or the Columbia disaster. It is also noteworthy as a biography of a contemporary Israeli hero without political overtones.

Byrd, Robert. *Leonardo: Beautiful Dreamer*. Illustrated by Robert Byrd. Dutton Children's Books, 2003. ISBN 0525470336. \$17.99. Unpaginated.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Leonardo, da Vinci, 1452-1519--Juvenile literature; Renaissance--Juvenile literature;

Artists--Italy--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

This captivating picture book looks at the life of Leonardo da Vinci. Robert Byrd writes about Leonardo's curious nature, his restlessness, and his keen ability to observe life around him. He focuses not only on Leonardo's interest and talent in painting and sculpture, but also on his groundbreaking work in the fields of anatomy, mathematics, botany and optics. What makes Leonardo da Vinci so extraordinary, he writes, is that he received no formal education, yet had a thirst for knowledge that was never fully satisfied.

This is an oversize book with detailed and lively ink and watercolor illustrations done in a cartoon-like style. Each double-page spread includes side bars containing excerpts from Leonardo's journals and interesting trivia on art in general and on life during the Renaissance. The text itself combines fact and anecdote to hold the reader's attention. The author has also included a timeline and a bibliography.

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.

LaVohn, Robert W. *A Midsummer Night's Midterm*. Pioneer Drama Services, 1999. Contact publisher regarding price. 30 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Plays; Plays; Fairy Tales;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616--Adaptations--Juvenile drama;

Classical literature--Juvenile drama; Comedy--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone can understand and enjoy Shakespeare.

Production Requirements: Simplistic set, only unusual prop: donkey's head mask for Bottom.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 40 min

Characters: 26

Cast: 13 M / 13 F (gender is flexible on 6 of the characters).

Time Period: The present and antiquity.

Four students study for a midterm that will be taking place on the following day on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As one student, Kyle, struggles to help her friends understand the plot, the characters from Shakespeare's play emerge and act out the play, pausing so that they and Kyle can explain what is going on and why Shakespeare chose to make certain choices in the piece. By the end, they are well versed for the test the next day and realize that Shakespeare isn't so outdated after all. In fact, he's quite enjoyable.

In this adaptation of the original *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, obviously the Shakespearean characters are well developed and very dynamic. The four students tend to be a bit stereotypical, but at the same time, they advance the dialogue and are essential to the plot. The playwright has added an interesting twist by having the students be female but have male names. There proves to be flexibility in this casting as well. The pace is nice and moves the play along quite well. The script is enjoyable and provides a great opportunity to share Shakespeare with younger audiences, as well as adequate explanations of the play's meaning and a bit of Shakespeare's background. The cast is fairly large, but each character is important. The production requirements are minimal, using few props (a donkey head mask, most importantly) and a simplistic set which really can be just a bare stage.

Kennemore, Tim. *Circle of doom*. Illustrated by Tim Archbold. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. ISBN 0374312842. \$16.00. 203 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers;

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Humorous stories; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Family life--England--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Lizzie Sharp is merely finding a way to vent her frustration when she creates a potion to drive away her family's unpleasant neighbors, the Potwards. However, when Mrs. Potward injures herself the very next day, obliging the elderly couple to move away, Lizzie becomes convinced she's a witch. With the help of her two younger brothers, Dan the skeptic and Max the youngest, Lizzie concocts a series of brews and wishes that seem to give quite satisfying results, including a hated teacher vomiting in class and the appearance of a very special bedspread. Of course, most of these could be explained away by mere coincidence...but could they really be...magic?

Kennemore's delightfully British narrative is an entertaining exploration of the fine line between coincidence and magic. All of the things Lizzie's activities 'accomplished' could be explained away by chance, but there's always a lingering sense of "What if...?" One of the most delicious aspects of the book is the manner in which Kennemore renders her characters. (Yes, Tim Kennemore is a she.) Their reactions to the events of the novel and interaction with each other are realistic. Archbold's remarkably Quentin Blake-like illustrations at the beginning of each chapter add, subtly but significantly, to the text, creating an overall whole that is utterly enjoyable. Kennemore's fans will not be disappointed.

Ayckbourn, Alan. *My Very Own Story*. Faber and Faber, 1998. ISBN 0571194575. contact publisher for price. 92 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Ratliff

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairy Tale; Plays; Fantasy Play; Contemporary Realism

Subject: Drama--Reviews; storytelling;

Theme: Every story has an ending.

Production Requirements: This is a very prop heavy show. A keyboard is also required

Acts: 2

Run Time: approximately an hour and a half

Characters: 21

Cast: adults

Time Period: Here, there and everywhere, any time.

Percy, Peter, and Paul have all been commissioned to tell their "very own story" for a night. Unfortunately for them, they have been commissioned for the same night. Percy begins to tell his story of a man, Rupert, who is stranded and taken in by a cursed family. He is instantly smitten with the lady of the house, but he is not too pleased with her brother, Frederick. Rupert finds a donkey in a hidden paddock and he tries to ride the donkey to town, but the donkey throws him off. As Peter continues the story we find out that the donkey is Frederick, who was cursed years before, after he fell in love with a beautiful girl named Cecilia, who lost her looks after the marriage. He later kissed Cecilia's once ugly sister who has become beautiful, Emilia, resulting in the curse performed by the girls' father and sorcerer, Varius. It is only when Cecilia finds unselfish love that the curse will be lifted. Percy's and Peter's stories are equally delightful.

Ayckbourn has a wonderful gift for storytelling. He is able to create a believable imaginary world within the world we currently live in. It is magical and intriguing. His use of comedy is wonderful, too. His three storytellers are charming, as are the stories they tell. This play can be simply performed. However, it does require a number of props, mostly just for distinguishing between the characters in the stories. The play is amusing and audiences should be entertained.

Frost, Helen and Harvey Cocks. *Why Darkness Seems so Light*. Pioneer Drama Service, Inc., 1999. ISBN 27398711001. \$ Check with the publisher. 36 pp.

Reviewer: Heidi Schiers

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic; Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Violence; Suicide; Gun Control

Theme: Violence is everywhere.

Production Requirements: Laser tag sound effects and guns onstage.

Acts: 1 Act; 9 scenes and 6 segues

Run Time: 50-60 minutes

Characters: 26 + extras

Cast: Preferably multi-racial. 12 women, 9 men, 5 variable. Preferably

Time Period: The spring of this year (present)

Tank, Johnny and Ginger go to a party where they get into a fight with some other kids. During the scuffle, Johnny is shot and killed. In the following days, Ginger and Tank try to deal with their feelings of guilt and loss, while their friends are caught in other violent situations. The youth and their families examine violence and its consequences.

"Why Darkness Seems So Light" has a rather intriguing title which is never really addressed through the course of the play. The play adequately tackles the issue of violence and its darkness, but there is little light in the displayed violence which would attract youth. Since the play is based on the writings of high school students in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and grew out of true stories, it deals with issues that are relevant to teenagers. Youth in this play like Rory, Tank, Marcus and Nathan describe a feeling of entrapment. Nathan is disillusioned and Tank has grown numb from watching his friends get killed. Neither has very much hope, and they wonder if there is any point in trying to go on. Ginger is torn between speaking to the police about Johnny's death and protecting herself, while Rory is trying to decide whether or not to kill the kids at the party who witnessed the murder or turn himself in. Marcus and Nathan discuss what action they would take if they were to get a girl pregnant, and Tank mentions the two year old sons of his dead friends, who will grow up without fathers. In these instances, the play also addresses issues of courage and responsibility. The play is at times melodramatic and implausible. For example, at a party one would expect to see drug deals going down, but instead Rory is packing heat and attempting to sell firearms to Tank, in front of many other partygoers. Nathan's stepfather kills Nathan's dog without provocation, and this is what incites Nathan to commit suicide. In contrast, the play is successful in addressing different forms of violence. The kids encounter school fights, domestic violence, and sexual violence. An insightful segue connects overt acts of violence to the more acceptable kind, such as teasing kids at school who are different or smell bad. The play is also successful in refraining from stereotyping characters. For example, in the instance of sexual violence between Marcus and Whitney, one might assume that Marcus is bad, brutish, or at least a "tough guy." But Marcus is really a good kid. He helps out those who are weaker than he is and be an example to his brother. He, like other characters get caught up in the situation.

Scenic and costuming requirements are few. The play calls for a generic set, and costume needs can be met with regular street clothing. There are many brief scenes, sometimes only consisting of a monologue or poem, which can be choppy if the scenes do not have smooth or clever transitions. The script is slightly dated, but it encourages updating slang and other references. At times it can be overly moralizing, but it does make a strong point against violence. Violence is everywhere, not just in the city, but in small towns, at school, at the mall, next door, perhaps even in one's own home. Victims are random; it can strike anyone from all races and classes. Violence in response to violence solves nothing, but awareness of its futility will perhaps curb its prevalence. "Can we lift the darkness and let our light shine in?" The characters learn that it is love that lifts the darkness and calls the despondent back.

Cormier, Robert. *The Rag and Bone Shop*. Delacorte, 2001. ISBN 0385729626. \$15.95. 160 pp.

Reviewer: Gail F. Bartholomew

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction

Subject: Murder--Juvenile fiction; Criminal investigation--Juvenile fiction; Police--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Rag and Bone Shop is made up of two stories. First is the account of a shy 12-year-old boy, Jason, whose good friend, a seven-year-old girl, has been murdered. It is also the story of the interrogator: a middle-aged man who does not like himself. The book is an intriguing look at how, in the space of three hours, an innocent boy can decide to confess to a murder he did not commit. At the same time it shows a man who starts out wanting to find the truth but decides to coerce a confession from a blameless, vulnerable boy.

The Rag and Bone Shop by Robert Cormier has the makings of a great thriller. The writing, the tone, the characters, and the perspective are all enjoyable, but the ending is disappointing. What seems unrealistic is that the characters afterwards are never able to redeem themselves, whereas, most likely, an experience like this would affect the rest of their lives. Jason ends up committing murder himself. This book seems to say that people who are abused or make mistakes will never recover. We certainly shouldn't hide from ourselves or our children that bad things happen, but it is a lie to say people do not recover from terrible experiences.

Ruby, Laura. *Lily's ghosts*. HarperCollins, 2003. ISBN 0060518308. \$17.89. 258 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Waite;

Reading Level: Young Adult;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: ghost story; detective and mystery story;

Subject: ghosts; moving, household; interpersonal relations; book--reviews;

A spiteful and pessimistic teenager, Lily is forced to move once again with her mother to the small town of Cape May, New Jersey. Lily is shocked to find that the old, drafty house that her family has owned for years is haunted by various ghosts, each with their own motives for tormenting her endlessly. Lily reluctantly finds a friend in the tall, good looking boy who lives nearby, Vaz. Together they try to find out why they are being haunted and to solve the mystery behind her great uncle's death. This is a great book for young adults who enjoy mysteries with a bit of the supernatural. It is a light hearted ghost story that doesn't focus so much on scaring the reader as solving the mystery. We see Lily change from the rough and hard hearted victim of circumstance to a girl who learns to appreciate her family and find value in herself. This is a great book with several twists and turns leading to an unexpected ending.

Leiblich, Lilian. *Hole in the Ground*. Pioneer Drama Services, 1980. Contact publisher regarding price. 22 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Young adult;

Rating: Shortcomings;

Genre: Detective and Mystery Plays; Plays; Contemporary Realistic Plays;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Mystery--Juvenile drama; Neighbors--Juvenile drama;

Theme: What you think you see may not be reality.

Production Requirements: The script calls for several complicated props, but the play takes place in only one setting.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 30 min

Characters: 4

Cast: 2 M / 2 F

Time Period: The present.

Eliot Traynor is a teacher and collector of Indian artifacts. His nosy neighbor, Dixie, comes over to visit his wife and finds Elliot acting very strangely and his wife gone. Through the conversation and a bit of spying, she determines that he has murdered his wife and is trying to bury her in the backyard. She calls in Lt. Wolf and Officer Randolph to investigate. After an aloof interrogation with Elliot avoiding questions and threatening Dixie, it is revealed that Elliot is telling the truth, his wife is out of town, and he is just trying to illegally bury a buffalo head in his back yard. He and Dixie go back to being annoyed but good neighbors.

The play contains a lot of questionable and adult themes and language. Though all characters with the exception of Officer Randolph are well-developed, both Officer Randolph and Dixie tend to be stereotypical and static. They seem to run around in circles without any real promoting action taking place. The plot exists, but at the same time, has no real purpose or lesson to teach. The advantages of this production are its small cast and possibility of a nice chemistry. This play, though intended for a young adult audience, is not recommended.

Gray, Dianne E.. *Together Apart*. Illustrated by NA. Houghton Mifflin, 2002. ISBN 0618187219. \$16.00. 193 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Sex role--Juvenile fiction; Blizzards--Juvenile fiction; Grief--Juvenile fiction;

Ever since the blizzard struck that killed her two brothers in the January of 1888, Hannah has been holding in a mixture of shame and grief, hardly helped by her father's new distance from her. Hannah feels horrible for having weathered the blizzard separated from her brothers, who died after the roof of their small country school collapsed. She survived by spending the time buried in a haystack with Isaac Bradshaw, a poor young man who happened to be out on the prairie at the same time as Hannah. They did nothing shameful, but Hannah's father has forbidden her to have any dealings with him. When both start to work for an eccentric widow in town, and Isaac is accused by his stepfather of having stolen tools from him, Hannah and Isaac must work to keep his whereabouts secret even as their own understanding of themselves, and their feelings for each other, begin to emerge.

Dianne Gray's new novel is a fascinating portrayal of two young people who, having shared a traumatic experience, struggle to identify their new places in and feelings about the world. The book is well-written throughout; the account of Hannah writing a play to work through her feelings is especially moving. While this book should be head for a variety of reasons, (historical information, empowerment of characters, and so on), the real draw will be the realistic, beautifully expanding relationships that Gray renders so skillfully.

Wolf, Allan. *The Blood-Hungry Spleen and Other Poems About Our Parts*. Illustrated by Greg Clarke. Candlewick Press, 2003. ISBN 076361565X. \$17.99. 53 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil;

Reading Level: All;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Poetry;

Subject: Body, human--Juvenile Poetry; Book--Reviews;

The Blood Hungry Spleen, by Allan Wolf, is a delightful book of poems about the human body. It is a whimsical but accurate description of each part. For example, "Your tongue is for chewing. For curling. For clicking. / It fits in you mouth like a bug in a rug. / Your tongue is for tasting and lollipop licking. / But hey, folks, let's face it. It looks like a slug!" Appropriately, Wolf created a poem with two voices for the kidneys. The Table of Contents has the same light hearted approach with sections such as "Parts That Bend" (fingers, toes, knees, elbows and ankles), "The Circulation Department" (heart, blood and spleen), and "The Production Department" (boy parts, girl parts, the cells that make us you and me). Notes at the end of the book describe more about body parts not fully explained in the poems. Greg Clarke did the comic strip style art that fits the mood of the book very nicely. Let's hope more books come from first time author Allan Wolf.

Miller, Kathryn Schultz. *The Shining Moment*. Anchorage Press, 1989. ISBN 0876022867. \$35.00. 39 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Ratliff

Reading Level: All

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic play; Plays; Historical fiction;

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

Theme: Life is full of shining moments.

Production Requirements: The set consists of a front porch of a house with a suggestion of a roof, railing, steps and a makeshift ramp. There must be a workable screen door and window, as well as a working record player. Porch furniture is also needed.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 45 minutes

Characters: 4

Cast: Adults only or adults and children

Time Period: 1986

William Henry goes to visit his grandfather Edsel, his Aunt Ida, and his cousin Ally on their farm. His grandfather is 89 and in a wheelchair due to failing health. Ally is obsessed with baseball and shares her love of the game with William Henry. While he is visiting, William Henry dreams of his grandfather playing baseball the night of Halley's Comet, only to discover in the morning that Edsel has passed away.

This play takes a nice look at families, love, and death. The play uses songs to capture the mood as well as to help with transitions. The characters could use a little more development, especially the grandfather; however, they still work as useful tools for telling the story. The plot is somewhat lacking, but the overall story is successful and would be enjoyed by younger audiences. It provides a great opportunity to discuss death, especially death of grandparents or older relatives.

Sturgill, Beverly. *The Enchantress of Ipswich*. Anchorage Press, Inc, 1998. ISBN 0876023596. \$40.00. 95 pp.

Reviewer: Sarah Ratliff

Reading Level: all

Rating: excellent

Genre: Historical fiction; Plays; Fairy Tale;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Honesty; Salem Witch Trials;

Theme: Honesty is the way to go.

Production Requirements: Period costumes, create a small town

Acts: 3

Run Time: an hour and a half

Characters: 18

Cast: adults

Time Period: 1692 New England

In the little town of Ipswich, near Salem, Massachusetts, trouble is brewing. Revenge and greed drive the citizens to cry "witch." A group of young girls decides to copy those in Salem by accusing a local woman of witchcraft. In addition, the town's authority figures stole all of the town's money to invest in a venture that literally sank, thus losing everything. If a townsman is convicted of witchcraft, then the town can seize their property, which leads to more accusations. Meanwhile, Grandfather (also known as The Wise One) and his granddaughter Megan arrive in Ipswich to save the day. Posing as a judge and his daughter just passing through on their way to Salem, the magical pair stay at the town inn, where Megan falls in love with the innkeeper's son, Nathaniel. In order to stay with a mortal, she must give up her powers by confessing that she is magical. Things get out of hand as the townspeople get caught up in the idea of witchcraft, but the Grandfather and Megan come to the rescue.

This is a very entertaining play. The characters are interesting and fully developed. The story mixes magic with reality. It provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss the issues that happened in Salem, while also providing an opportunity to see the way things could have been. It addresses the issues of honesty in a way that doesn't beat the audience over the head. It is also very amusing. Audiences of all ages will enjoy this magical play.