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Westward Ho, Carlotta!

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Fleming, Candace. *Westward Ho, Carlotta!*. Illustrated by Catrow, David. Antheum Books for Young Readers, 1998. ISBN 9780689810633. \$16.00. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Western Stories;

Subject: Opera--Juvenile fiction; West (U.S.)--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

World famous opera singer, Carlotta Carusa, is bored with the everyday life of touring and singing to sold-out audiences. Carlotta decides to travel to the American West and share her talent there. On the stagecoach journey, she encounters many dangers of the Wild West such as a pack of hungry wolves, drought, and the meanest 'hombre' in the Dakota Territory, Skullneck Sam. In each situation she uses her voice and the magical power of music to save the day. She even helps Skullneck Sam realize his own talent as a singer. After turning down an offer to be the town Sheriff, Carlotta leaves Sam to continue her journey west to help others appreciate the power of music.

This delightful and whimsical tale expresses, albeit in exaggeration, the power of music.

Although, it doesn't really have the power to command the elements, music can change people. The illustrations are perfect for the story with lots of detail and characterization. The vivid colors bring life to the desert landscape of the American West. Humor is incorporated with fun colloquialisms such as "Jumpin' jackrabbits!" and "Dancin' dingoes." These and other details really capture the spirit of the typical Western story.