

[PDF] The Z Was Zapped: A Play In Twenty-Six Acts

Chris Van Allsburg - pdf download free book

Books Details:

Title: The Z Was Zapped: A Play in T

Author: Chris Van Allsburg

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Van Allsburg's latest is not an alphabet book but an "alphabet theatre": as its title page proclaims, it is "a play in twenty-six acts, performed by the Caslon Players, written and directed by Mr. Chris Van Allsburg." In it, each letter of the alphabet is shown on a draped curtained stage, undergoing some sort of (usually ominous) transformation. Turning the page reveals the text that spells out the alphabetical event: the A was in an avalanche; the B was badly bitter; the C was cut to ribbons; and so on. This is an original and unusual undertaking, executed with both visual and verbal adroitness. In technique it most resembles Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*; in both books, black pencil is used with remarkable skill to create the richness of texture and shading usually associated with full color. It is perhaps closest to *Harris Burdick* in ambition as well, in the sense that an imaginative challenge is presented to the reader (here, to

come up with a verbal account of the pictured transformation before turning the page to find it). But the imaginative possibilities of the "alphabet theatre" are limited; this alphabet book format is more of an intriguing design element than a way to teach the ABCs. The picture and text that belong to a single letter are not on facing pages. While Van Allsburg's visual ingenuity is in full evidence (among his hauntingly realistic images are the evaporating E and the jittery J), there is both a sinister quality and an stagey dimension to the work. Artistically, a virtuoso performance, but one with an undeniably cold cast. All ages.

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From School Library Journal Grade 1 Up Returning to the black-and-white medium of conte pencil, Van Allsburg now presents an alphabetical morality play in 26 acts. Each sculptured letter is the subject in an action-packed tableau enacted on a sedately curtained stage. Here is a preview of coming attractions ``A was in an Avalanche, B was Badly Bitten, C was Cut to ribbons." Children can try to guess what action has occurred, thereby increasing their vocabulary and the fun, or they can turn the page and read the text, or better yet do both. This clever romp resembles old vaudeville theater, with one curious act following the next. The ``Y" is even yanked offstage by a crook. However, the art reminds one of a still frame from a black-and-white film. In the frame titled ``S was Simply Soaked" the water hangs in mid-air above the ``S" as if the projector were shut off in mid-action. There is also a surrealistic quality inherent in the illustrations. While the younger crowd may be able to guess some of the verbs that Van Allsburg illustrates, this is more an alphabet book for older children, who will enjoy guessing what heinous act is being foisted upon these noble letters.

Karen K. Radtke, Milwaukee Public Library

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