welcoming the soldiers back from war" (64). Overall, this book is an extremely valuable teaching resource for educators wanting to share Shakespeare's plays with children. Not only does it provide a humorous and witty adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, but it also includes a list of interesting and inspiring activities to help children learn more about the history, context, and meaning of this play.

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Suicide, Substance Abuse, and Pregnancy in Young Adult Theatre / *Marissa McHugh*

Naked at School. Chris Caddock. Newest, 2001. 153 pp. $16.95 paper. ISBN 1-896300-46-4.

Naked at School is a compilation of three insightful plays that were written for young adults and that can be approved for viewing in schools and in young adult theatres by parents and teachers alike. The three plays — *The Day Billy Lived*, *Wrecked*, and *Do It Right* — are successful in educating parents, teachers, and young adults about difficult social issues such as suicide, substance abuse, and sexuality.

The first play, *The Day Billy Lived*, begins with Billy attempting suicide; he slips into a coma but is soon woken by a mysterious man and his secretary. They take him on a spiritual journey, comprised of a series of visions, where he is left to judge the value of his own life. Throughout the play, the man tallies up points on a score-board under two categories: reasons to live and reasons to die. In the end, the man loses the game, but Billy disregards the score and embraces his ability to live. While readers will quite likely recall Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Craddock's emphasis on suicide gives the text a more serious tone.

And yet, the play perhaps overstates to its audience that suicide is irrational and illogical. Billy's preliminary monologue (to a recorder) prior to committing suicide shows him to be naive and selfish. Before taking a bottle of pills, he states that "I want my room left just like it was. That's really important. I want it like a shrine. And I want a wax replica of me, sitting here, where I am. . ." (10). Billy again demonstrates his self-centredness when he describes why his mother deserves to find his dead body: "She never reads the paper, and she makes me go to church and she's always trying to get me to eat meat. She's stupid" (18). The justifications for suicide are seen as being irrational throughout the play, especially when, in one of his "visions," Billy asks a woman on a ledge to name ten reasons why she should commit suicide, and she answers, "Because the new fall fashions are ugly" (28).

In a way, Craddock seems to simplify suicide as a manifestation of egoism, the ultimate display of self-centeredness. Such a portrayal arguably acts as a kind of preventative measure aimed at reducing the risk of viewers themselves considering suicide, yet Craddock recalls in his preface that there was a concern about the opposite: "In the workshop for *The Day Billy Lived*, an earnest social worker leaned

into my face and said, 'You realize kids are going to attempt suicide after seeing this play'" (1). Indeed, audiences who worry primarily about the influence of theatre — its stories and characters — on the action of real young adults, rather than on theatre's ability to transport people emotionally and intellectually to a different experience or sensibility, might be concerned with the play's representation of substance abuse and attempted suicide. In the play, Billy explains that he attempted suicide before and it did not work: "Last Sunday, I took twenty two Aspirin, had a nap on the couch and woke up with a headache"(9). This could be interpreted by certain audiences as being problematic because the play attempts to present a fairly truthful perspective on suicide and on depression: although Billy's rationale for attempting suicide is presented as irrational and naive, the play also includes a line that misinforms a teenage audience on the effects of substance overdose.

The Day Billy Lived also gives an honest, in-depth examination of depression. Billy blames his family and friends for his depression, but as the play culminates, he repeatedly fails to illustrate how his family and friends have wronged him. He finally confesses that he cannot explain the real reason why he is in psychological pain:

> I got this little ball of pain. Here. And I don't know exactly how it got there, but it's there. And it gets bigger as I go. And as I go, it gets harder to get on with things. And the ball seems to suck the stuff out of what I do. Sucks the meaning, the joy. Sucks the fun right out of everything I do. (33)

This description of his pain shows that his depression is unconditional and that he needs medical help to overcome it. Such a statement sends a clear message to audiences that depression is a psychological disease and not simply a conditional manifestation.

In *Wrecked*, Craddock moves from the issue of teenage suicide to explore different types of substance abuse and the effects of this abuse on pre-teens, teens, and adults. The main plot involves Sharon (an alcoholic mother) and her children, Lyle (age 16) and Susy (age ten). Throughout the play, Sharon drinks excessively and, as a result, neglects Susy, while simultaneously forcing Lyle to assume the role of the parent/adult in the household. Craddock borrows from Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to illustrate the effects of alcoholism by contrasting Dr. Jekyll's behaviour with the behaviour of an alcoholic. In the play, Susy overhears Buddy (Lyle's best friend who happens to have a marijuana addiction) talking about Stevenson's book. Buddy, having just finished the book, is shocked that Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde are the same person. He explains the plot and the surprise ending:

> Okay, there's this guy, a doctor guy, sweet lovely guy, right? And there's this other guy. This mean horrible monster of a guy, who does terrible things, nasty stuff. But it turns out they're the same guy! . . . Yeah, cause the sweet lovely doctor invented this potion and he drank too much of it, and it turned him into a monster guy. (78)

Susy recognizes that her mother also has two personalities — responsible parent and angry "monster" — as a result of drinking too much "potion." Rather than blame her mother, she becomes aware that the "potion" controls her mother. Stevenson's novel would probably be familiar to high school students, and thus

would serve as a poignant metaphor for how alcoholism consumes those afflicted with it.

This family plotline in *Wrecked* is juxtaposed with scenes intended to show "slices of life within the high school community," as Craddock describes them in the production notes that preface the play (50). Mainly, they explain the joys and perils of alcohol abuse from a teenage perspective. These "slices of life" feature one main party (described from different points of view), which serves as a hub for destructive drinking behaviour and which features no less than five key events within these scenes — a girl gets pregnant as a result of having sex while under the influence of alcohol, a student vomits during a test, someone has his/her stomach pumped, a drunk driver loses his license, and another drunk driver hits a car with a family inside and kills them. Though these scenes do illustrate the possible consequences of irresponsible drinking, they also seem to celebrate it. The scenes are set up as "bragging" conversations between teenagers who revel in their ability to boast of drunken debaucheries. The scenes often seem to lack focus, purpose, and unity of thought in relation to the rest of the play.

In *Do It Right*, Craddock explores the topic of teenage pregnancy through three juxtaposed plotlines about sexual activity, the risks involved with sex, and the resources available to help deal with unexpected pregnancy. The primary plotline concerns two 16-year-olds, Jen and her boyfriend Daryll. When Jen discovers that she is pregnant, she is devastated, confused, and unaware of the options available to her. Jen's discovery of available resources and her exploration of her options as a teenage mother show the audience how and where to find information about sexual activity and pregnancy. Another plotline involves a growing friendship between Becky and Brad. Through their friendship, Brad finds the courage to admit that he is gay, even though Becky has sexual feelings for him. The third plotline involves Becky's ten-year-old brother Joey and his friend Leo, who are on a quest to discover what sex is and how it is performed. Jen comes to visit Becky and ends up explaining the whole process to them with brochures from Planned Parenthood, even though they had found their own resource — a pornographic magazine.

The play begins with three different parents attempting, but ultimately failing, to explain sex to their children. Leo's father tries to explain it to him by using a bee analogy: "If the pollen comes into contact with the female parts of the flowers, if you will accept the term, a new flower begins to be generated. And that's how sex works" (106). The ten-year-old Leo is left confused and replies, "What?" (108). The three different parents in this play (Leo's dad, Jen's mom, and Joey's dad) all fail to explain the act of sex in more literal terms, in part because of their own discomfort with the topic. As a result of their own discomfort, these parents all refuse to answer important questions that their children ask. Through the actions of the young protagonists and the discomfort of the parents, the play argues that there is a serious societal need for sex education.

Brad Fraser, a Canadian playwright known for his own witty ability to tackle challenging social issues (such as sexuality, drug use, and abuse) in the theatre for adult audiences, praises this compilation: "Chris Craddock has done a rare thing; he's created theatre for young people that might actually entertain them. In his three play anthology Mr. Craddock explores sex, drugs and suicide from a teen-age perspective, and he does it with wit and insight" (back cover). However, Craddock does more than just speak to young people; he also speaks to parents and teachers. Throughout the three plays, he illustrates how young people's perspectives on so-

cial issues are largely shaped by the attitudes and the actions of their parents: not only do children tend to imitate their parents, but children who lack information are more likely to make poor choices. By evidencing this, Craddock's plays speak as much to parents and teachers as to young adults about prevalent and important social issues.

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Summer Reading for Fall, Winter, or Spring / *Jean Stringam*

No Missing Parts & Other Stories about Real Princesses. Anne Laurel Carter. Red Deer, 2002. 136 pp. $12.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-2531-1.

Dead Man's Gold and Other Stories. Paul Yee. Illus. Harvey Chan. Groundwood, 2002. 112 pp. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-475-3. Ages 11+.

Revved. R.P. MacIntyre. Thistle Down, 2002. 173 pp. $16.95 paper. ISBN 1-894345-46-0.

Fractures: Family Stories. Budge Wilson. Penguin Canada, 2002. 195 pp. $16.00 paper. ISBN 0-14-331201-4.

Tunnels! Diane Swanson. True Stories from the Edge. Annick, 2003. 140 pp. $18.95 cloth, $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-781-7, 1-55037-780-9. Ages 8-12.

Samurai Spirit: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life. Burt Konzak. Tundra, 2002. 132 pp. $12.99 paper. ISBN 0-88776-611-0.

Nerves Out Loud: Critical Moments in the Lives of Seven Teen Girls. Ed. Susan Musgrave. Annick, 2001. 112 pp. $19.95 cloth, $12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-693-4, 1-55037-696-2. Ages 14+.

You Be Me: Friendship in the Lives of Teen Girls. Ed. Susan Musgrave. Annick, 2002. 123 pp. $18.95 cloth, $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55037-739-6, 1-55037-738-8. Ages 15+.

One of the pleasures of this particular group of young adult books is the multicultural or international aspect of many of the volumes. The subjects and genres of Anne Laurel Carter's historical fiction are varied: an Irish/Newfoundland fairy tale, letters written by a young Acadian woman, and several romances set on the prairies in a past century. Both Canadian and Chinese ideologically, Paul Yee's collection is also realistic as well as fantastic. Diane Swanson's non-fiction roves the world in search of amazing tunnel stories, and Burt Konzak's collection of samurai lore from