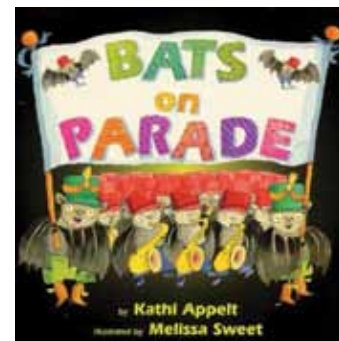


Bats On Parade

By Kathi Appelt

Illustrated by Melissa Sweet

New York: HarperCollins, 1999



"The grandstands were packed

On that midsummer eve,

Wing to wing, paw to paw,

Beak to beak, sleeve to sleeve."

So begins Kathi Appelt's book *Bats on Parade*. As the story unfolds, we see that this charming book is, at heart, about a grand parade with all the trappings of a high school marching band. "Bat Masterson" is the grand marshal, encouraging the town of exotic animals to "let the good times begin." And they do!

Melissa Sweet illustrates the story with watercolor over ink-pen drawings filled with humor and details. We see a cool, "batty" New Orleans jazz combo, complete with sunglasses and French berets, on one parade float. "Cleobatra" has her own flower-bedecked convertible car. She is preceded by the "bat rangerettes" in white patent-leather cowgirl boots!

I love this book for a number of reasons. For the music teacher, it is a story about a marching band in a small-town parade. I can hear John Philip Sousa in my mind as I read it to my classes. The elementary classroom teacher

will appreciate that the story is told in rhyming couplets, allowing students to increase their linguistic skills.

As a musician, each turn of the page introduces a new and specific section of the marching band, from the piccolos to the sousaphones. An additional bonus is—well—addition! As each instrument enters the parade, the text reveals a multiplication problem. Rather than being awkward and inhibiting the story line, the language flows smoothly throughout the body of the story.

"And right on their heels,

Their golden horns gleaming

49 trumpets

In sevens came streaming"

I teach pre-school and elementary music. Whenever I find literature that integrates core curriculum and promotes a musical concept, I grab it. With my own district's dwindling budget for materials and supplies, I must be circumspect in what I purchase. *Bats on Parade* gives the reader an introduction to the instruments in a marching band, it offers cool math problems through multiplication, and it is told

in rhyme. I call that a three-in-one treasure.

"They turned towards the grandstand.

What flourish! What flair!

Then that old 'Stars and Stripes'

Filled the midsummer air."

With flourish and flair, I recommend this book as a staple in the elementary music classroom. Because it stars bats, not goblins, it's a great alternative story for use during Halloween as well. ■

Holly Deuel Gilster has been teaching music using an Orff Schulwerk approach for more than 30 years. She has studied children's literature with the acclaimed author Jeanne Whitehouse Peterson. An author herself, her young-adult short story "Lost" won first place in the 2008 SouthWest Writers International Writing Competition. She has published a book of listening "maps" for the elementary classroom teacher, called Learning to Listen, Listening to Learn Vol. 1, and is a frequent presenter at Music Teacher conferences.