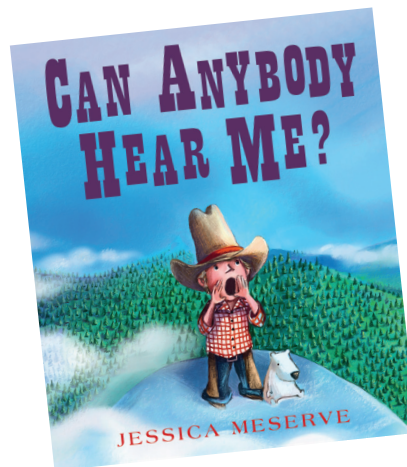


CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by **Spencer Thornton**

Can Anybody Hear Me?

Written and Illustrated by Jessica Meserve
Andersen Press Ltd. and Houghton Mifflin Company,
2008



Learning to use the soft and loud timbres of the voice can easily be made accessible for young children in the primary grades. Jessica Meserve's *Can Anybody Hear Me?* takes us on an imaginative journey into the life of a little boy yearning to be heard by his annoyingly loud-speaking family. Although he tried to converse with his family members, he discovered his voice was simply not loud enough for anyone to hear him.

He climbed to the top of a mountain and tried to speak as loudly as he possibly could, but his voice was so soft it vanished into the surrounding atmosphere. Feeling discouraged, he returned to the bottom of the mountain, where he met a wolf, a bear, and an owl. Each unexpected encounter forced him to use his voice in new ways: speaking, howling, growling, and shouting. His adventure helped him finally find the strength of his own voice. The story ends with the little boy reuniting with his family and sharing his adventures of triumph with his loved ones as they sat in awe and silence.

The vivid illustrations, combined with the premise of this storyline, give students a clear pathway to explore the various timbres of the voice including soft/loud, high/low, chest voice/head voice, whispering/shouting, and speaking. It also demonstrates when and where it is appropriate to utilize these different types of voices. Orff Schulwerk teachers will find this resource most useful with children in preschool through the first grade and will enjoy their students' effortless

gravitation to mimicking the many sounds of the story's animals.

When I read this book to my kindergarten class, their eyes filled with blissful amazement and wonder as I modeled each character's voice, along with exaggerated gestures and facial expressions. Most importantly, students were able, independently, to demonstrate some of the voices. Orff Schulwerk teachers might also invite their students to add more characters to the storyline and even bring the tale to life through the drama component of the Schulwerk process, or perhaps transfer the different vocal timbres to unpitched percussion instruments. This would allow them the autonomy to take ownership of the story and develop it into a beautiful creation of their own.

Can Anybody Hear Me? is out of print, but used copies are readily available. Whatever way you might decide to use this book with your students, I am certain you will find it to be a consistent delight and invaluable resource to have in your classroom collection. ■

SPENCER C. THORNTON teaches kindergarten through Grade 6 general music at Park View Elementary School in Portsmouth, Virginia, where he conducts Grades 3–4 and 5–6 chorus and a Grades 4–6 Orff ensemble. He holds a bachelor's degree in music education with an instrumental music emphasis from Norfolk State University, a master's degree in music education with a vocal pedagogy focus, and is certified in Kodály, First Steps in Music, Conversational Solfège Levels 1 and 2, and Smithsonian Folkways World Music Pedagogy. Spencer has served as presenter, mentor, cooperating teacher, curriculum writer, author, music education researcher, and elementary general music consultant. He is a member of AOSA, OAKE, FAME, NAFME, SMTE, and VMEA.