The Boy Who Loved Words

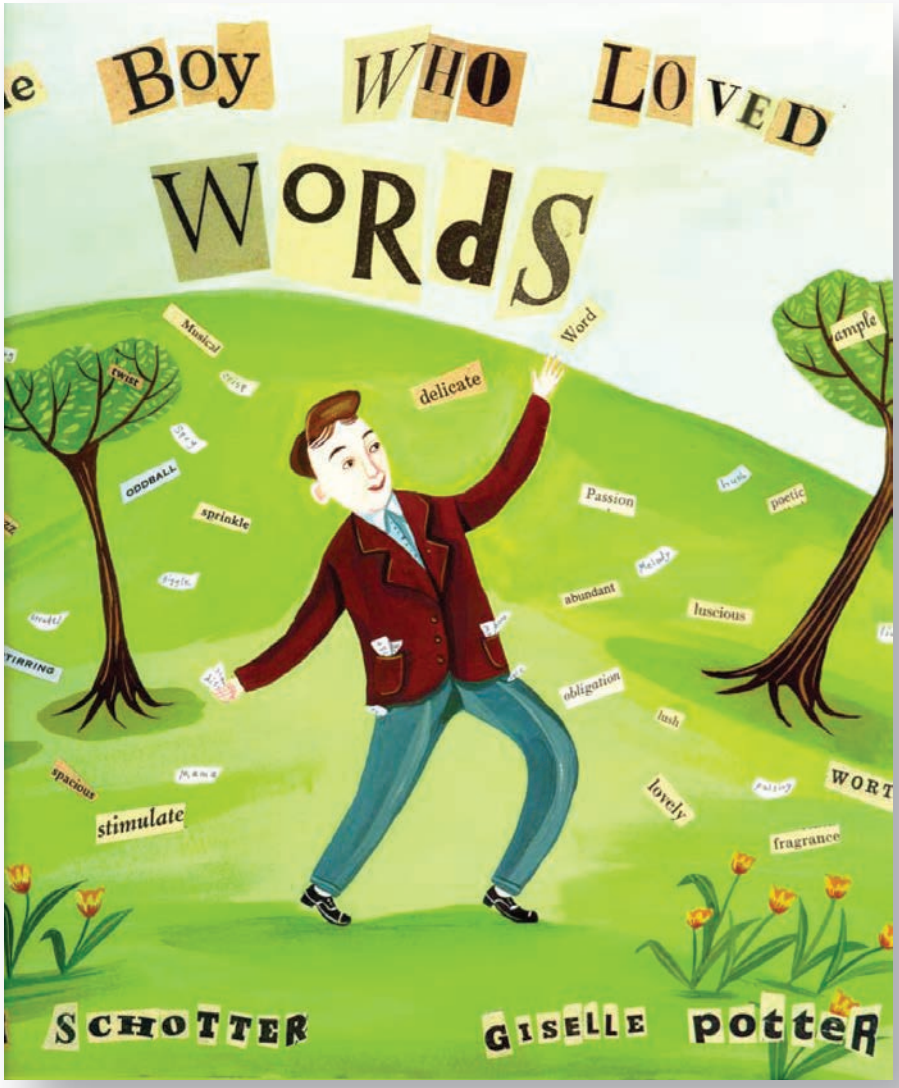
By Roni Schotter, Illustrated by Giselle Potter • **Schwartz & Wade Books, 2006**

Reviewed by Marjie Van Gunten

Selig, the boy who loved words, is the hero of this book. Indeed, he was a hoarder of words. While other children busied themselves with bats and balls, he stuffed his pockets—and his socks and his sleeves—with words. "Macaroon" and "mellifluous" melted in his mouth. "Tintinnabulating" and "tremulously" tantalized him. He "loved everything about words…the sound of them…the taste of them on his tongue…the thought of them…and most especially, the feel of them when they moved his heart…" His collection of words was "luscious," "abundant," and occasionally, "oddball."

Selig lived on the "periphery" feeling "eccentric" and "alone" until a genie in a dream persuaded him that his "predilection" for words was only lacking a purpose. As he followed his "passion," he met a poet who was delighted to share Selig's word wealth. Wordsworth, as he came to be known, found his days were filled with meaning as he proceeded to "sprinkle," "disburse," and "broadcast" his word power wherever there was a need. What could be a more fitting end to the story than for our hero to meet and fall in love with melody? As they live happily ever after, I found myself mesmerized by the possibilities of the music of language.

Throughout the book, words appear as scraps that flutter through Potter's folk-art illustrations. It is impossible to read the story without pausing to ponder the little slips and savor the sound of the syllables. In fact, during my first reading, I found the story to be secondary to the illustrations. At the end of the book is a glossary of Wordsworth's favorite words, but it hints only at the "legions" that fill the pages.

After reading *The Boy Who Loved Words*, your students will want to start snipping a collection of words just for the "scrumptious" sound of the syllables. Using the speech pieces from *Music for Children, Vol. 1* as models for word play, there are many ways to use their new word collections. Discover natural rhythm patterns and arrange them in rhythmic phrases. Let the delicious flavor of the words dictate the expressive quality of the performance. What can be done with contrasting word qualities? What movements might arise from repetitions of words? What timbre qualities are suggested by words? What if words combine to create poetry? Could melody add as much happiness to your words as melody brought to Selig?

"Resolve" to "amble," "toddle," or "swagger" to your favorite bookstore to read this book and "satisfy" your "voracious" hunger for "morsels" of "vibrant" but not "vernacular" vocabulary.