

The Napping House

Written by Audrey Wood, Illustrated by Don Wood
Red Wagon Books, Harcourt, Inc.



Reviewed by
Pat Boozer

From the quiet mood of the first words: "There is a house, a napping house, where everyone is sleeping," to the illustrator's peaceful artwork, the reader is immediately captivated and drawn into this ingenious little book. It invites the reader into a restful scene, where two great trees hug an old-fashioned, two-story house. All the window shades of the house are lowered. A lonely tricycle sits abandoned in a side yard. The gate of a white-picket fence has been left slightly open, as if to say, "Come on in."

From the outside, this little, palm-sized book can be easily overlooked. A small, board-book, with stiff, unnumbered pages, it's probably not the first book I would pull from the bookstore's shelf for a closer look. Yet, the inside of the book shows again that good things often come in small packages. (I was pleased to discover recently that there is also a full-size version of the book now available. Larger pictures could only magnify its magic for children.)

As in writing music, story writers know a good story line must have an interesting problem (development) and a satisfying climax (ending.) Audrey Woods is indeed a story master, for her quiet afternoon nap time on a rain-drenched day takes a surprising turn, or should we say "tumble," resulting in hilariously noisy fun at the end.

A dreaming child napping in a cozy bed with a snoring granny makes for a rather dull story, but for a certain *wakeful flea* that bites a slumbering mouse, putting into motion a chain of events. Eventually, the bed in the napping house breaks, and soon, no one in the napping

house is sleeping at all!

Rich opportunities for dramatization await teachers who venture inside the walls of *The Napping House*, for either a superb classroom activity or a grand performance on a larger scale. To read the book as a story stands on its own merit. To create an exhilarating experience, set to an orchestration of instrumental and vocal sounds the descriptive verbs (*napping, dozing, dreaming, claw, thumps, bumps*). It builds the story's ending to an even more intense *crescendo* of noise and chaos.

Because I have used this book several times, I can't decide which I've enjoyed most: my first reading of the book itself, my students' fun-filled performances, or the creative processes as they've developed their

ideas for those presentations. They have cleverly assigned sounds to match the words in the book, practiced parts, missed cues and laughed at their (and my) mistakes. I've enjoyed the intelligent critiques and watching the improvements of their ideas unfold as they work.

I joyfully recommend *The Napping House* as an active part of every music educator's library.

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THE NAPPING by AUDREY WOOD HOUSE Illustrated by DON WOOD

