

THE LAST HOLIDAY CONCERT

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 3-5

Submitted by: Linda Cannaday Terrell, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher at Phoenix Academic Magnet School and Graduate Student, School of Library and Information Science, LSU (Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas); and Christia Champagne, Student, University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Instructor: Dorothy Grimsley)

The Last Holiday Concert by Andrew Clements. Jacket Illustrated by Brian Selznick. Simon and Schuster, 2004. 166 p.

Summary

The Last Holiday Concert starts with an introduction to Palmer Intermediate School where all the elementary students from Collins Elementary and Newman Elementary converge for sixth grade. Hart Evans is a popular student who makes the mistake of shooting a rubber band during music class. The rubber band hits the music teacher, Mr. Meinert, on the neck, and Hart ends up serving time in after-school detention for two days. However, the detention time is the easy part. The hard part is when Mr. Meinert makes Hart become the director, choreographer, costume artist, and overall producer of the last holiday concert. Mr. Meinert has just found out he will not have a job to come back to in January due to a "Reduction in Force" in the school district. He figures he has nothing to lose by letting the students put the holiday concert together with little or no assistance from him. He puts Hart in charge of the production. Hart learns how hard it is to please everyone and produce a respectable holiday concert at the same time. After much chaos and rebellion, the theme "Winterhope" is selected. The variety of student performances is interwoven into a wonderful holiday concert. Hart is changed by the experience: he has grown from a "goof-off" popular boy to a responsible and humble leader.

Awards

Common Sense Media Best Book Award

Author's Biography

Andrew Clements was born in 1949 and grew up in New Jersey and Illinois. He now lives in Boston, Massachusetts. Mr. Clements earned a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Northwestern University, and he taught in Chicago for seven years. Mr. Clements experienced the loss of his job as a teacher that the school system called "Reduction of Force" just like Mr. Meinert did in *The Last Holiday Concert*. Andrew Clements worked for several publishing companies before he began writing his own books. He has written over forty books for children. Mr. Clements says, "Sometimes kids ask how I've been able to write so many books. The answer is simple: one word at a time. Which is a good lesson, I think. You don't have to do everything at once. You don't have to know how every story is going to end. You just have to take that next step, look for that next idea, write that next word."

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/destination.cfm?sid=183&pid=353745>

<http://andrewclements.com/>

Other Titles by Andrew Clements

Big Al
Frindle
The Jacket
The Janitor's Boy
Lunch Money
The Laundry News
The Report Card
The School Story
Things Not Seen (LYRC 2005 Ballot)
A Week in the Woods

Illustrator's Biography

Brian Selznick was born in New Jersey. His interest in art began when he was very young. He made dinosaurs out of tinfoil and drew monsters. After he graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, he worked at Eeyore's Books for Children in Manhattan where he sold books and arranged the windows. While he was working there, he read as many books as he could. His first book *The Houdini Box* was published while he was working there. Selznick researches and travels to learn about the subjects he illustrates. He went to England to do research about *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*. He also enjoys visiting schools to talk about how to write and illustrate books.

<http://www2.scholastic.com/teachers/authorsandbooks/authorstudies/authorhome.jhtml?authorID-231>

<http://rif.org/art/illustrator/selznick.msp>

Related Titles: School Stories, Character Development, Concerts

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Andrew Clausen
Blubber by Judy Blume.
Head or Tails: Stories from the Sixth Grade by Jack Gantos.
The Misfits by James Howe.
Niagara Falls, Or Does It? by Henry Winkler and Lin Oliver.
No More Dead Dogs by Gordon Korman.
No More Nasty by Amy MacDonald.
Regular Guy (and other titles in "Guy" series) by Sarah Weeks.
Surviving Brick Johnson by Laurie Myers.

Classroom Connections

See **SimonSays.com (Simon and Schuster, Inc.)**

A Teacher's Guide to *The Last Holiday Concert*

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/book.cfm?sid=33&pid=500483&agid=21>

This website provides classroom discussion topics and various activities and research ideas based on the content of the book. The questions are based on in-depth analysis of the characters in the story.

Social Studies: Holidays

- Have students research Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan, and Kwanzaa. Students may create a bulletin board that shows how and why each holiday is important and unique.

Discussion of Popularity

- Since popularity is an important concern for children, discuss the quote “What’s right is not always popular. What’s popular is not always right.” The students will then discuss how Hart had to choose between being popular and having to do what was right for the show.

Holiday Concert

- Students can put on their own Holiday Concert. They should share the talents that they think are appropriate for their own classroom concert.

Web Links

Book, Author

Andrew Clements

<http://andrewclements.com/>

The official site for Andrew Clements includes his biography, a list of other books he has written, upcoming appearances by Mr. Clements and information on books that are currently being written. It also includes some web links.

Children’s Literature – Andrew Clements

http://www.childrenslit.com/f_clements.html

Information about Andrew Clements including an interview and a list of his publications.

Kidsreads.com – The Last Holiday Concert

<http://www.kidsreads.com/reviews/0689845162.asp>

This site contains a review of the book and a list of other books by Andrew Clements. There are also links to other reviews about *The Last Holiday Concert*.

Nancy Keane’s Booktalks

http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/clements_last.htm

Two booktalks for *Last Holiday Concert* are included.

A Teacher’s Guide to *The Last Holiday Concert*

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/book.cfm?sid=183&pid=500483&agid=21>

Teaching guide for the book includes eleven (11) discussion questions and a number of ideas for activities and research.

Christmas Games and Activities

ESL Kidstuff

<http://www.eslkidstuff.com/ChristmasGames.htm>

Christmas games, other activities, and links to Christmas music audios.