

Arlecchino

Grace Germana

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The mysterious origins of a famous Italian character are plumbed for a story in this upbeat picture book.

Grace Germana's picture book *Arlecchino* plays upon the origins of a famous figure in Italian culture—the Harlequin.

The Venetian Harlequin character (Arlecchino in Italian) has a long history in Italian art and drama. The Harlequin is especially famous for his outlandish and beloved diamond-patterned costume. In this story, that costume is designed by a young boy, Arlecchino, who is looking to create something to stand out in a parade and contest. He is sad that he might not have anything with which to make the costume, but it turns out that his mother has a variety of bright castoff clothing items that she's collected over the years; those scraps have been waiting for just such a purpose.

The characters' personalities are not developed, and no details are provided to flesh them out. The question of why the contest matters so much to Arlecchino is not answered. The origin story of the beautiful costume is a fascinating starting point for the story, and Arlecchino adds a personal touch, but the hows and whys of his memorable design aren't explored.

The plot is clear and works toward a lovely message: success is not dependent on material wealth. Arlecchino's creativity is what matters most, not the resources at his disposal.

The book's language is accessible, though some errors in grammar and sentence structure stand out. The computer-generated illustrations are in full color and match the text on each page, though they do not add details to the story. Their figures are awkward, with disproportionate bodies and stiff positioning.

Arlecchino is an upbeat picture book that plays with the cultural origins of the Harlequin character.

CATHERINE THURESON (January 3, 2019)

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