

Goodnight St. Louis

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June Arthur Herman

Karen Wilke Heyse, Illustrator

Friesen Press

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Colorful illustrations, detailed listings capture the character and spirit of St. Louis.

Goodnight St. Louis is a fun book about the places and attractions in St. Louis, Missouri, that make it such a unique and enjoyable city. The text is very simple. Authors June Herman and Julie Dubray use rhyme to describe the things that make St. Louis special. From the places that are perhaps the best known, such as the Gateway Arch and the zoo, to some of the lesser known jewels, like The Muny, The Magic House, and Grant's Farm, the authors share their love of St. Louis with readers.

Karen Heyse's illustrations are colorful and detailed. She does a wonderful job of expressing the character of some of the places that the book mentions, and her work beautifully supports the text. For example, the authors write about the children's museum: "Goodnight Magic House and hair-raising good times." This reference might not make sense to those who have never visited the museum, but the illustration shows the old Victorian mansion that houses the museum as well as a drawing of a person whose hair is standing up due to static electricity—a visual reference to the static electricity ball that is one of the most popular attractions at the Magic House.

At the end of the book, the authors have included a paragraph providing additional background for each of the sights they mention. This is a wonderful way to share information with the reader without interrupting the simple meter of the story, and it makes the book more appropriate for a wider age range. Very young children will enjoy the simple rhymes, and older children and adults will appreciate the facts and history the book provides.

The list of places and events that are included in this book is long. St. Louis certainly has a great deal to offer, and the authors clearly try to include it all; however, the simple "goodnight" statements become repetitive without any plot to carry a reader through from beginning to end, and some children may become bored before the end of the book. Additionally some of the rhyming is forced and awkward. For example: "Goodnight Science Center and roaring dinosaurs. Goodnight Planetarium, where space is explored."

This book is wonderful for children who live in St. Louis or for families who visit the city and want a souvenir to take home. Both authors and illustrator have done a magnificent job of capturing some of the character and spirit of St. Louis.

CATHERINE THURESON (September 16, 2013)

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