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Picture Books

Halloween Night
Arden Druce
David T. Wenzel, illustrator
Rising Moon
978-0-87358-797-6
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A witch, a spider, and a skeleton are just a few of the characters haunting the pages of this picture book. A different icon of the holiday is prominently featured on each two-page spread in this “Who’s Who” of Halloween for the preschool set. The watercolor illustrations depict each character in spooky detail, but with smiling, gentle faces that keep the pictures from being too scary.

Druce, a former school librarian and teacher, has previously authored another interactive Halloween tale, Witch, Witch Come to My Party, in addition to numerous classroom instructional guides. Her familiarity with her young audience is apparent in the clever design and child appeal of this offering.

The text and illustrations in Halloween Night work together to capture and focus the reader’s attention. The simple question-and-answer format is ideal for preschoolers. Druce presents a question like “…who can light a smile with a shine and a glow?” and the reader turns the page to see a Jack-O-Lantern announcing, “I can!” Subtle background pictures also provide clues to the character’s identity. For example, on the page with the clue “In a field of corn, when breezes mutter, who can stir in the wind with a flap and a flutter?” a small image of a scarecrow in a cornfield can be seen in the background. These visual hooks, along with the rhymed text and repeated refrain of “I can” are developmentally perfect for keeping a young child interested for the length of the book. The parade of characters concludes with a cheerful pack of children in costume, shifting the refrain from “I can” to “We can” for a satisfying signal of the end of the story.

The guessing-game format makes this an enjoyable book for sharing, either one-on-one or in a group. The intricate illustrations are bold enough for presentation to a group, yet also

include enough spooky detail to entertain readers for several minutes on each page. A Halloween picture book that stands up to repeated readings is always a treasure, and this book is no exception.

Carolyn Bailey