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Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

Kid's Sand Box Fun With Professor Woodpecker

978-1-4389-1116-8

Two Stars (out of Five)

"We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it" George Eliot wrote in *The Mill on the Floss* in 1860. When adults become parents nostalgia for their own childhoods often grows more intense and becomes a powerful force in their child-raising. Parents treasure happy memories of simpler times past and they fervently wish to provide their children with similar joyful remembrances.

This slim book seems driven by such nostalgia for childhood. Professor Woodpecker is approached by two human boys who have found a sandbox. They ask the bird where the sandbox came from and Professor Woodpecker begins to reminisce about his grandfather who built it for him and his brothers. As he describes the sandbox the woodpecker offers safety tips for parents who might consider a similar project explaining that Grandfather Edgar "fenced it in behind the garage where we would have plenty of room to play and be safe. It had its own locking spring gate." The boys Billy and Lee embrace Grandfather Edgar's vision of a sandbox as a place where kids' creative imagination would be allowed to run free as they begin to construct roads and buildings in the sand.

This is the sixth book in the Professor Woodpecker series. Previous volumes address gardening toy trains baseball cards and other nostalgia-laden subjects.

The dialogue in this book is written like a script rather than with narrative attributions and quotation marks. The illustrations are simple line drawings in full color with some of them sporting conversation bubbles. The boys' lines are awkward and forced. For instance Lee says "As we build things we develop our skills and abilities while having so much fun." Real little boys don't talk like that.

In the spirit of educational toys and books *Kid's Sand Box Fun* might have been more useful as a coloring book and the authors would have set a better instructive example if they had employed a proofreader to ensure correct spelling and punctuation.

Although this book is wholesome and well-intentioned nostalgia-seeking parents would

provide their kids with better memories by taking them outside.