ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Red Fox at McCloskey's Farm
Brian Heinz
Chris Sheban, illustrator
Creative Editions
978-1-56846-195-3
(September 2006)

Red Fox's dinner plans involve a visit to old McCloskey's farm in this delightful story, filled with action and such noisy movements as chickens flapping their wings and a howling dog. Old McCloskey hears the turmoil and adds to the boisterous action of the story by falling over a rocking chair while trying to locate the disturbance outside. He is wearing only his underwear and this scene will bring smiles to the children's faces.

The size and space of the rhyming text creates a story that is enjoyable to read. The oil colored illustrations provide a whimsical look on the characters' faces as they move from one scene to the next, showing many emotions such as fear, anger, and excitement. Red Fox is determined to have his way, and the hound dog and old McCloskey are determined to have theirs, as the story builds to its conclusion.

The author taught science and language arts to elementary students for years before writing more than a dozen children's books, including *Cheyenne Medicine Hat*. The illustrator has provided art for children's books like The *Shoe Tree of Chagrin* and *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly*, as well as paintings for the jackets of the novels *The Tiger Rising* and *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Although this story is well written with illustrations that complement the story, the format of the book is not easy to manipulate, with part of the text and pictures on pages that must be unfolded to continue the story. Children may have a difficult time following the plot because of the design of the book.

Readers and listeners) aged five to eight will enjoy the rhythmic beat of the words and the vividly colored pictures of the fox, the hound dog, and the chickens. The picture of Red Fox and the barnyard scene on the front cover of the book are quite appealing and will attract the interest of children and adults. This tale provides another starring role for a member of the fox clan with a surprise ending.