ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

The Pig Who Went Home on Sunday
Donald Davis
Jennifer Mazzucco, illustrator
August House Publishers
978-0-87483-571-7
(Oct 25, 2004)

In this twist on a nineteenth-century version of the three little pigs story, Mama Pig notices that her children have grown too big for their cave. She tells Tommy he must leave, and stuffs a wheelbarrow with items he'll need for the world. She waves goodbye with a warning and a plea: "If you have to build a house, build it out of rocks and bricks. And please come home to see your Mama on Sunday!"

Tommy pushes his wheelbarrow into the colorful countryside. Soon, he sees-not a big, bad wolf, but an Appalachian red fox! The fox persuades the pig to ignore his Mama's advice to build a brick house, and later, "Gulp!" The fox has pork for supper. Tommy doesn't go home on Sunday.

Mama sends the next pig out with a wheelbarrow. Soon the fox persuades this pig to ignore his Mama's advice. The result: "Gulp!" The fox has pork for supper.

Before Mama can thrust her final little pig, Jackie, into the cold-hearted world, the enterprising tyke takes matters into his own hands. He packs his own sack full of shoes, saucepans, and a butter churn, and heads out into the colorful countryside. Will Jackie meet success? Will he outwit the fox? Will he make it home on Sunday? In the end, Jackie shows resourcefulness and maturity, and gets to see his Mama again.

The author is a highly acclaimed professional storyteller who was raised in Appalachia and has been featured at the World's Fair, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Storytelling Festival, and as guest host on National Public Radio's "Good Evening." He has published several children's books, short stories and novels for young adults, and recordings of his storytelling.

This book is his adaptation of a Victorian folktale, first written by Andrew Lang and published in London in 1892, in which all three pigs outlive the vicious fox, despite the mistakes made by the first two. Davis honors his own grandmother with this version, explaining in the afterword that she disliked how the historical tale "taught children that they could do the wrong

thing and still get away with it."

The illustrator has previously created art for *I Know What You Do When I Go to School* and *Little Johnny Buttermilk: After an Old English Folktale*. Here, she uses a rich watercolor palette to create wonderfully luscious pigs whose curvaceous lines link rhythmically with the earth's curves and the fattened forms of the stars, moons, heat, and smoke. Her designs leap from the page, energetically expressing the memorable layers of this tale.

Davis's silly pigs get their due. But Jackie, who listens to Mama and also exercises his own will and imagination, survives. And so, too, will this story as families enjoy it over the years.

Laura Read