

Come On Out and Play

by Bill Harley

“Come On Out and Play” is a musical story about a bear who decides to have a party, despite the fact that everyone tells him it won’t happen. In the end, it does, and things happen that no one ever suspected could. As the bear says, “You never know what might happen!”

The story is about believing in what you do and who you are. As in many stories, it is the character of the bear - what he does because of who he is at his core- that determines what will happen. Character drives the plot. If he was a bear that listened to everyone else, there would be no story. In addition, his good nature is central to his success.

One interesting aspect of the story is how Bill interacts with his band (when it’s a band show) or with the audience. Thus, the story takes place on two levels - one the story itself, and two - the relationship with everyone in the performance environment.

The story is reminiscent, in its message, of many other stories. Looking at that may lead to interesting discussions in the class about those stories (e.g. The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krause, and The Little Engine That Could) and how the main characters are presented. Also, in the structure of the story, the idea of repetition is emphasized to describe character and events. Comparisons can be made with other stories to underline the importance of repetition in language and writing. Questions for discussion might include:

- 1) Describe the bear’s character. How did that influence what happened in the story?
- 2) How did the other characters influence the story?
- 3) What lines are repeated time and time again? How are these lines used in the story?
- 4) What is the storyteller trying to tell us? Can you think of other stories that have a similar message?
- 5) Why does Bill involve the audience and/or his band? What happens? How does that add to the story?

Available on the CD “Come On Out And Play” and in the book Bear’s All Night Party (August House Publishers).