

**CLASSICS FOR KIDS:
FOUR PLAYS ADAPTED FROM
THE BOOKS OF DON FREEMAN**

by Wysteria Edwards

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www.youthplays.com
info@youthplays.com
424-703-5315

Classics for Kids: Four Plays Adapted from the Books of Don Freeman (A Pocket for Corduroy; Dandelion; Manuelo, the Playing Mantis; Mop Top) © 2011 Wysteria Edwards
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A POCKET FOR CORDUROY

A ten-minute play adapted from the book by Don Freeman

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LISA, a young girl.

MOTHER

CORDUROY, male, a young stuffed bear.

ARTIST, a young man or woman.

MANAGER, male or female.

(Lights up on a stage with bright colored buildings and storefronts: Pandro's Laundromat. There are people busy loading their wash into larger-than-life washers and dryers. Everything in the laundromat should be magnified as a small stuffed bear would see it. LISA, a young girl, and her MOTHER enter. Mother is carrying bags of laundry, and Lisa is walking with her stuffed bear, CORDUROY. He is scruffy brown, much like the color of an acorn and wears a pair of bright emerald-green, corduroy overalls. He is Lisa's best friend and very curious. MUSIC plays as they enter the scene. Corduroy is full of life and eager to tell his story. He walks forward to address the audience.)

CORDUROY: Why, hello! *(He waits for a response:)* My name is Corduroy. As you can see, I'm a stuffed bear. And that is my special friend, Lisa, and her mother. Do you have any special friends? Lisa has loved me for as long as I can remember, which isn't such a long time for a bear who has stuffing inside his head for brains. I used to live in a toy store! A large, bright, wonderful place where I got to watch people all day long. Then one day, Lisa came and took me home with her. I have a cozy bed and lots of love. We even get to go for adventures in the park, at her school...oh, and one time we went to the circus! Today I'm excited because we are going to a special place where they wash clothes...it's called a... *(He can't remember:)* Uh, oh. I seem to have forgotten the name of it. Do you know what it is? *(Waits for the children to answer:)* Yes, yes...I remember now. It's called a LAUNDROMAT. *(He giggles:)* What a fun word! *(He tries it again in a silly, sing-song voice:)* LAUNDROMAT!! *(Beat.)* Sometimes when people do not own a washer and dryer they do their washing in a place like this. Come and explore with me!

(The laundromat is a busy place. There are people folding clothes, replacing loads in the machines, reading magazines, etc. Lisa moves Corduroy to a large chair, much too big for him.)

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LISA: Now, Corduroy, you sit right here and wait for me. I'm going to help with our wash.

(He tries to wait by swinging his feet around. He overhears Lisa's mother:)

MOTHER: Be sure to take everything out of your pockets, Lisa dear. You don't want your precious things to get all wet and soapy.

(Corduroy is confused...perplexed. Looking down at his overalls, he frowns.)

CORDUROY: *(To the audience:)* Pockets? What's a pocket? I don't have a pocket!

(Slowly he slides off the chair.)

I must find something to make a pocket out of.

(He begins to look around. There is a pile of fancy towels and washcloths. He takes the time to play with them. Placing one around his head like a turban, we hear SNAKE-CHARMER MUSIC. A red towel transforms him into a bullfighter.)

None of these seem to be the right size or color for a pocket.

(He sees a huge stack of colorful clothes in a laundry bag.)

Oh, wow, look! There ought to be something in there to make a pocket out of.

(Without hesitation, he quickly crawls inside the bag full of wet pieces of laundry. He pokes his head out and speaks to the audience:)

This must be a cave. I've always wanted to live in a dark, cool cave. Do you think I'll find a pocket in here? Let's look and see.

(He disappears into the bag as Lisa turns around to discover him gone. Her Mother has finished their laundry.)

LISA: Oh, Mommy! Corduroy isn't here where I left him!

MOTHER: I'm sorry, honey, but the laundromat will be closing soon and we must be getting home.

LISA: But Mommy, I can't leave without Corduroy! He'll be frightened.

MOTHER: You can come back tomorrow. I'm sure you will find him. Come along.

(Lisa and Mother exit. A YOUNG MAN [or WOMAN] wearing an artist's beret begins to take the wet laundry out of Corduroy's "cave" when the bear tumbles out onto the floor.)

ARTIST: How in thunder did you get mixed up with my things?

CORDUROY: The cave was damp and now I have the sh...shhh...shivers.

ARTIST: Well, the least I can do for you is give your overalls a good drying.

(He unbuttons Corduroy's shoulder straps and puts his overalls in the dryer. The clothes dryer. The clothes begin to swirl around inside. The artist becomes inspired and takes out his sketch pad.)

CORDUROY: I could get dizzy watching those clothes go around and around, couldn't you?

ARTIST: *(Excited:)* This would make a wonderful painting! I can hardly wait to get back to my studio.

(There is a loud BUZZ signaling that the clothes are dry. The artist takes out the overalls and helps Corduroy dress again.)

Ah, there you go. Nice, dry overalls for a cute stuffed bear. You sit here right beside these soap flakes and wait for your little friend to come back and find you.

(He sits Corduroy by a big box of soap flakes. The Artist looks back at Corduroy.)

I wonder who that bear belongs to. He should have his name someplace. He's too fine a fellow to be lost.

(The MANAGER, who has been sweeping, calls out to the customers as the Artist exits.)

MANAGER: Closing time! Everybody out!

(The Manager turns out the lights. As soon as they go out, Corduroy begins his search again.)

CORDUROY: I still need to find my pocket.

(He looks in the soap flakes box.)

(Indicating the soap flakes:) Do you think I will find a pocket in here? We might be surprised. I should check it out.

(The soap flakes fall all over covering him.)

Is this snow? I've always wanted to play in the snow!

(He throws it up in the air making a "snow bear.")

(Stopping suddenly:) Oh! I still need to find that pocket!

(He begins to slip and slide on the soap flakes.)

Look at me! I'm ice skating! I've always wanted to ice skate!

(He falls right into a wheeling laundry basket. His mood instantly becomes sad.)

This must be a cage. I've never wanted to live inside a cage like a bear in the zoo.

(He is getting sleepy.)

Finding a pocket is very tiring work. Wouldn't you agree? Perhaps I should just rest awhile to replenish my energy.

(He nods off to sleep. Time passes and the sun gradually comes up again. We see the world come back to life, as the Manager enters and begins to clean up the soap flakes. Lisa comes running in and the bell on the door JINGLES.)

MANAGER: Good morning.

LISA: Hello. I left something here yesterday. May I look around?

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DANDELION

A ten-minute play adapted from the book by Don Freeman

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DANDELION, a lion.

LOU KANGAROO

RABBIT

THEODORE THE TAILOR

HAPPY CRANE

JENNIFER GIRAFFE

(The sun is coming up on a small bedroom. We HEAR the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. There is a brass bed, small dresser, a stool with an alarm clock, and a framed picture of a lion wearing a crown with the word "FATHER" underneath it. DANDELION, a lion, wakes up. He stretches, yawns and jumps out of bed. He is dressed in white pajamas with orange stripes. Excitedly, he does his daily exercises.)

DANDELION: I wonder if the mail has come?

(He puts on his sweater and hurries outside to the mailbox. There is a letter, written in fancy, gold ink. The initials J.G. are written on the back. Reading the letter to the audience:)

"Dear Dandelion, You are invited to my tea-and-taffy party on Saturday afternoon at half-past three. Come as you are. Sincerely, Jennifer Giraffe." *(Beat.)* Why, that's today! It's a good thing I planned to get a haircut!

(He comically and quickly eats his breakfast, and washes/wipes the dishes.)

(Counting the wipes on the dishes:) 1, 2, 3.

(Placing the dish in the drying rack. He makes his bed nice and neat, and runs off to the barbershop to see LOU KANGAROO. A barber chair is waiting for him. First, Lou trims Dandelion's hair with exceptionally large scissors. Next he "shampoos," placing a large bubble cap on him. RABBIT sits down on a stool to give him a manicure.)

LOU KANGAROO: So, what's the occasion?

DANDELION: Jennifer Giraffe is having a tea-and-taffy party today at half past three.

RABBIT: We're invited too! I just love tea-and-taffy parties, don't you?

LOU KANGAROO: We'll have to give you a new hair-do for the occasion!

RABBIT: Oh, yes. Maybe a wave would help.

(Lou holds up a magazine that shows a picture of a distinguished lion with a curled mane.)

LOU KANGAROO: It's what all the well-dressed lions are wearing this year!

DANDELION: Then it's exactly what I need!

LOU KANGAROO: Let's get that mane curled.

(The song "Steppin' Out With My Baby" by Fred Astaire begins to play. The lights transition...there is a drum-roll. In the dark, an extremely curly wig is placed on Dandelion. Lights up. Lou Kangaroo spins the chair around to face the audience.)

Ta da!

DANDELION: I look magnificent.

RABBIT: Now you need a new outfit!

DANDELION: I really should wear something more elegant than a sweater to the party.

(He makes his way to the tailor shop. There is a black and white checkered jacket next to a sign that reads, "READY TO WEAR." THEODORE THE TAILOR greets him. He is a bear. Taking the jacket off the form, he helps Dandelion put it on.)

THEODORE THE TAILOR: This jacket is the very newest style, and it just fits you. All you need now is a cap and a cane. Happy Crane will be glad to help you.

DANDELION: *(Admiring himself to the audience:)* What a dapper dandy I've become!

(HAPPY CRANE has a sign on an easel that says, "LET HAPPY MAKE YOU LOOK SNAPPY." He hands Dandelion a cane and places a top hat on his head.)

(To Crane:) Dapper?

HAPPY CRANE: Dandy. For sure.

(Dandelion looks at his watch.)

DANDELION: It's nearly half past three! I've just time to get something for my hostess. A bouquet of dandelions would be perfect.

(He is handed a bouquet by Happy Crane from a vase in the shop.)

HAPPY CRANE: Here, take these!

(A tall door emerges with several steps in front of it.)

DANDELION: *(To the audience:)* I bet you are thinking, "That is quite a gigantic door!" But have you ever lived with a giraffe? They take up a great deal of space! I better knock before it's too late.

(He knocks on the door and it opens to reveal an 18-foot giraffe puppet, JENNIFER GIRAFFE. There is a long string of pearls around her neck, and she is wearing lipstick. Her long eyelashes are curled, and there is a bow in her hair.)

JENNIFER GIRAFFE: Yes? What can I do for you?

DANDELION: *(Confused:)* Why, I've come for your tea-and-taffy party.

JENNIFER GIRAFFE: Oh, I'm sorry, sir, but you are not anyone I know. You must have come to the wrong address.

(She closed the door on Dandelion's face. He knocks again and again.)

DANDELION: I'm Dandelion! You've made a mighty mistake!

(He lets out a loud roar and then sits down on the steps.)

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MANUELO, THE PLAYING MANTIS

A ten-minute play adapted from the book by Don Freeman

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANUELO, a praying mantis who loves music and wants to make an instrument.

CRICKET

FROG

ELK

KATYDID

SPIDER, a friend who helps Manuel build a cello to make music.

SETTING

A meadow.

(CLASSICAL MUSIC playing in a park concert. MANUELO, the praying mantis, listens to the music.)

MANUELO: Ah, I love the sound of a symphony, don't you? Listen! I hear trumpets, a flute, the harp and a cello. The instruments work together to create the most beautiful sounds. I wish I could be a musician. Perhaps I can make my own music. I've seen a cricket rub his legs together and the sounds were lovely.

(Rubbing his legs together, but no sound. CRICKET appears from behind a tree.)

CRICKET: Clickety-clack! A mantis can't make music the way I can. Listen to me!

(She makes her CRICKET SOUNDS.)

You are just a mantis, a silly, silly mantis.

(She disappears behind a tree.)

MANUELO: There must be something I can do! I know, I'll make a flute!

(He finds a hollow cattail, and nibbles several tiny holes along the stem.)

Just look at my marvelous flute! Surely, it will make beautiful music!

(He blows on the flute but it makes no sound. FROG appears from behind a tree.)

FROG: Gerumph! Gerumph! We frogs know how to croak. Now that is music! A mantis can't make music the way frogs can.

(He makes his FROG SOUNDS.)

You're just a mantis, a silly, silly mantis.

(Frog hops away behind the tree.)

MANUELO: I just know that I can be a musician!

(He spies a trumpet vine clinging to the wall.)

Ah ha! Just the thing I need! I'll make a horn to play!

*(He snips a flower off of the vine and holds it up like a trumpet.
An ELK enters.)*

ELK: Her-hoon! Her-hoon! You can't make a sound like I can.
You're just a mantis, a silly, silly mantis.

MANUELO: My trumpet will make the most marvelous of
sounds! Listen!

*(He blows and blows, but no sound comes out. The Elk laughs
and exits behind the tree.)*

I refuse to give up!

(He scans around and spies a vine on the ground.)

At last, just what I want!

*(Bending down, he twists the vine into a harp shape. He takes
cobwebs and fixes the strings onto it, trying to make a harp.)*

The sounds of a harp make you feel like you're floating in the
breeze. Wait until you hear it!

(Stroking the "strings" with his fingers, the cobwebs break.)

Oh, no! The harp isn't the instrument for me. Alas, I am feeling
very sad, very sad indeed.

(A KATYDID emerges from behind the tree.)

KATYDID: Katydid, katydid! Don't you know a mantis can't
make music the way we can? You're just a mantis, a silly, silly
mantis.

(A SPIDER from up above calls down to them.)

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SPIDER: Take heart, my good fellow. I know how you feel. I can't make music either. *(To the Katydid:)* Shoo, you!

(The Katydid exits behind the tree.)

I've been watching you all evening. If you do as I tell you, maybe together we can make a cello.

MANUELO: I'd forgotten about the cello! That is such a beautiful instrument.

SPIDER: I would love to help you, but you must promise me one thing.

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MOP TOP

A ten-minute play adapted from the book by Don Freeman

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOPPY, a young boy.

MOTHER

MR. LAWSON

A WOMAN ON A LADDER

A LADY WITHOUT HER GLASSES

SALESMAN

MR. BARBERPOLI

(A YOUNG BOY enters dressed in overalls and striped T-shirt and bright, red hair that looks like a mop on his head.)

MOPPY: This is my story. A story of a boy who NEVER wanted to have my hair cut. Everybody calls me Moppy for a reason. Do you think my hair looks like a mop? *(Waits for a response from the children:)* Well, I don't care what anybody says about my hair or what they call me, for that matter. I just want to stay at home and play...do the things that make me happy. I play all sorts of things! Let me show you. *(While he explains, he acts things out for the audience:)* Sometimes I play that I'm a soaring eagle flying over cannons and valleys.

(The sounds of a FLUTE playing a Native American song.)

Other times I pretend I'm a roaring lion stalking my prey through the African Savannah.

(Sounds of AFRICAN TRIBAL MUSIC as he leaps around the stage and growls at the audience.)

See, I need my hair to look like a lion's mane! You were scared, weren't you?

(He waits for a response from the audience, very proud of himself. He begins to hang from the branches of a "tree" as his MOTHER enters.)

MOTHER: Pardon me, but who do you think you are dangling there—Tarzan?

MOPPY: Oh no, Mother, I'm not Tarzan! I'm a man from Mars and I'm visiting all the stars and other planets!

(The SOUNDS of MISSION CONTROL during a space mission.)

MOTHER: Well then, Mister Man-from-Mars, could you plan to make a landing on this earth sometime today? We want you to hop on over to hairdresser and get that floppy mop clipped

off before your birthday party tomorrow. You want to be able to SEE your presents don't you? You won't if there's a bunch of hair in your eyes. Here's some money. *(Handing it to him. He stuffs it into his pocket:)* I've just called Mr. Barberpoli and he says he'll be ready for you at four o'clock sharp. What time is it now?

(He looks at his watch.)

MOPPY: It's 3:30 now.

MOTHER: Well, let's see you hippity-hop to the barbershop all by yourself.

MOPPY: Off I go!

(He zooms off like a rocket being launched. She laughs and exits. After he rounds the corner though, he loses interest.)

I don't need my hair cut at all – anyway not now.

(He walks along until some bright red lollipops catch his eyes in the candy store window. As he is standing there, a SHAGGY DOG, with his eyes hidden, enters and barks at him, wagging his tail. He bends down to pet the pup. The pup rolls on his back for Moppy to scratch his tummy.)

What a silly-looking pup you are! You're the one who needs a haircut, not me!

(The shaggy dog barks and exits. Moppy continues to walk until he comes across MR. LAWSON mowing his yard.)

That lawn is what needs a haircut, not me!

(Mr. Lawson stops to wipe his brow.)

MR. LAWSON: How about letting me use this machine on that grassy patch of yours, boy? It could do with some mowing.

MOPPY: No thanks, Mr. Lawson.

(He continues on his way. A WOMAN ON A LADDER is snipping branches off a low, droopy tree.)

MOPPY: Maybe a tree needs a clipping, but not me!

WOMAN ON A LADDER: Oh, I don't know about that. You could do with a few snips of these snippers, mister!

MOPPY: No thanks, ma'am!

(He skips along until he sees the barbershop. He starts to walk to the door but changes his mind. He turns to address the audience.)

I just don't want a haircut. I think I'm afraid. Perhaps I'll hide behind this barrel of brooms and brush and fancy mops.

(He moves behind the barrel. A LADY WITHOUT HER GLASSES approaches the barrel with a SALESMAN.)

LADY WITHOUT HER GLASSES: I'm wanting a mop to help me keep my kitchen floor clean.

SALESMAN: We have lots to choose from right over here.

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