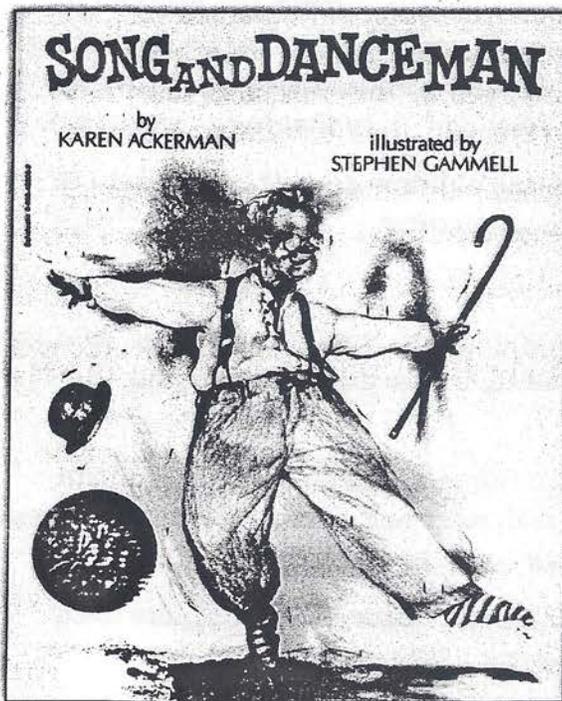


Song and Dance Man

WRITTEN BY KAREN ACKERMAN
ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHEN GAMMELL
(KNOPF, 1988)



*"I wonder if my tap shoes
still fit?" Grandpa says
with a smile. Then he
turns on the light to the
attic, and we follow him
up the steep, wooden steps.*

—FROM *SONG AND DANCE MAN*

Grab your hat and cane and head on up to the attic with Grandpa for a vaudeville show that is "better than any show on TV." For the full effect, paint a large lid-ded box and stock your "trunk" with old hats, canes, bow ties, and other props for your reading (and for dramatic play after). Gather children around on blankets. Spotlight the area with a lamp as you read.

An Inside Look

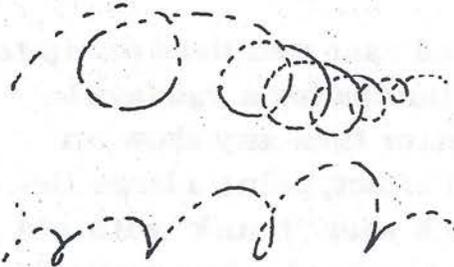
Stephen Gammell, the illustrator of such favorites as Caldecott Honor winner *The Relatives Came* (by Cynthia Rylant; Bradbury, 1985), has a style that "sparkle[s] with personality." (*Publishers Weekly*, October 14, 1988) Though he has written several children's books, he says he prefers illustration. "Yes, I have written a few books, but the words are really nothing more than something to keep the art flowing smoothly." (From *Something About the Author*, Vol. 81) Gammell also won a Caldecott Honor for *Where the Buffalos Begin* by Olaf Baker (Frederick Warne, 1981).

An Art Lesson

Materials

- * colored pencils
- * drawing paper

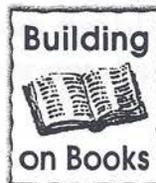
[TIP] To further inspire your young artists, let them make sketchbooks. (Bind plain paper in report covers or with paper fasteners.) Encourage children to sketch the world around them—people, places, and things.



A close look at this book's lively illustrations reveals the ways the illustrator used colored pencil to bring the song and dance man's show to life. You can almost see Grandpa gliding across the floor, hear his toes tap, and watch him spin and jump until at last, out of breath but smiling, the show is over and his grandchildren clap and shout "Hurray!"

Invite children to notice lines in the *Song and Dance Man* illustrations—lines that make shadows, lines that make light, lines that slide, leap, and so on. Encourage them to find their own words to describe lines, too. Then let children experiment with ways they can use lines to bring their own drawings to life.

- 1 Let children experiment with making different lines—thick and thin, dotted, and dashed, and those that go up, down, around, zigzag, and so on.
- 2 Ask: "Can you make lines that move the way you do when you do a somersault?" Follow up by suggesting other descriptions such as lines that skip, lines that look like a bouncing ball, lines that jump, and so on.
- 3 Follow up by letting children add other elements to their lines to create pictures.



Revisit the theme of grandparents with these stories. Add stories children write about their own grandparents, too. (See *Tell Me a Story*, page 86.)

Now One Foot, Now the Other by Tomie dePaola (Putnam, 1981). A boy whose grandfather helped him take his first steps gives his grandfather the same gentle help after a stroke.

Sophie by Mem Fox (Harcourt Brace, 1997). Explore life's passages with a story about a little girl and grandpa.

When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant (Dutton, 1982). The author shares memories of growing up with her grandparents in Appalachia—taking trips to the swimming hole, pumping water from the well for baths, and more.

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox (Kane/Miller, 1989). When a young boy finds out that his elderly friend has lost her memory, he tries to find it for her.

LANGUAGE ARTS LINKS

Book Talk

Word Watch: Using Your Senses

dusty brown, leather-trimmed trunk
smell of cedar chips
bright lights twinkle
silvery tap

Reread the story, asking students to notice words that help them picture the attic and Grandpa's show. In particular, notice words with sensory appeal. Can students feel the dusty trunk, smell the cedar chips, see the lights, and hear Grandpa's toes tapping? Invite children to share stories of their own. What sensory words have they used?

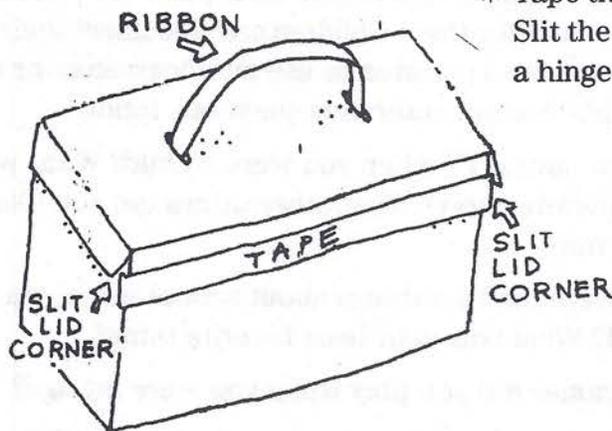
Out of an old cedar-scented trunk in the attic come tap shoes, bowler hats, striped vests, bow ties—everything Grandpa needs to take his grandchildren back to his vaudeville days. After reading the story, explore the idea of time with these questions. Be sure to let children share stories of their own favorite activities with grandparents, too. (See *Tell Me a Story*, page 86, for more.)

- * Why do you think Grandpa keeps his song and dance shoes in a trunk in the attic?
- * When do you think Grandpa was a song and dance man? What are some clues?
- * What do you think the "good old days" are?

Writer's Corner: A Trunkful of Jokes

"Know how to make an elephant float?... One scoop of ice cream, two squirts of soda, and three scoops of elephant!" Jokes are part of Grandpa's vaudeville act and though he tells the same one again and again, he still laughs every time. They're an important part of young children's lives, too. Using riddles, rhymes, and knock-knocks as models, they delight in making up and telling their own jokes—some of them very involved and drawn out. Let children share a few favorites. Then use their natural sense of humor to make a trunkful of jokes to share.

- * Cover a rectangular cardboard box and lid with craft paper and decorate.
- * Tape the lid to the top of the box along one long side. Slit the two corners of the taped side of the lid to make a hinged top.
- * Glue a handle to the lid (ribbon or a strip of fabric will do).
- * Invite children to write and illustrate jokes and place them in the box. (You can have them write punch lines upside down on the paper.) Invite children to use the jokes when they plan their own song and dance shows. (See *Tapping Toes*, page 86.)



STORY EXTENSIONS

Movement: Tapping Toes

Let students put on their own soft-shoe show. Just tape a penny to the sole of each shoe near the toe. Put on some lively piano music and invite children to try out their tappers! Can they make "soft, slippery sounds like rain on a tin roof" (from *Song and Dance Man*)? What other sounds can they make? As an extension, let children combine their tap-dancing with magic acts, jokes, and songs for vaudeville shows like Grandpa's.

Social Studies: Memory Makers

A time before TV? Young children have a difficult time grasping weeks gone by, much less decades. To expand their understanding of time, make memory trunks.

- * Have children decorate shoe boxes and lids to make mini-trunks. For hinged trunk lids, see page 85.
- * Ask children to think about their "good old days"—a vacation or trip, a birthday, the day a new pet arrived. Have children choose items that represent their memories and place them in their trunks. Let children take turns opening up their trunks and sharing stories about the items inside.

Social Studies: Tell Me a Story

Have children interview grandparents or older family friends, inviting them to share memories of their past. (You could also visit a senior center for this.) Children can document their interviews with words and pictures or use audiocassettes or videotape if available. Sample interview questions follow.

- * Did you have a TV when you were a child? What was your favorite show? What other things did you like to do for fun?
- * What were the best things about school when you were a child? What was your least favorite thing?
- * What games did you play when you were my age?
- * Did you go to movie theaters or other kinds of shows? How much was a show? How much was popcorn?