

The Whipping Boy Play by C Wilhelm

Materials Required: The book, WHIPPING BOY, by Sid Fleischman  
Activity Time: two class periods if used as readers' theater  
Concepts Taught: enhancing literature with drama and readers' theater  
Permission of Sid Fleischman given for use

WHIPPING BOY

By Sid Fleischman (adapted as a play to accompany a novel study of the book)

Cast:

Cutwater \_\_\_\_\_

Narrator \_\_\_\_\_

Betsy \_\_\_\_\_

The Whipping Boy, Jemmy \_\_\_\_\_

Prince Brat \_\_\_\_\_

Petunia \_\_\_\_\_

Captain Nips \_\_\_\_\_

Hold Your Nose Billy \_\_\_\_\_

SCENE ONE---the bedroom

NARRATOR: Welcome to our play on the WHIPPING BOY by Sid Fleishman. This play is about a bratty prince who never listened to his tutor, and Jemmy his whipping boy. In this kingdom, it is forbidden to spank the heir to the throne. So an orphan named Jemmy is plucked from living on the streets and taken to the castle to serve as the whipping boy. During this story, the lives of both Prince Brat and Jemmy are changed forever.

Narrator: One night when the moon gazed down like an evil eye, the young prince appeared in Jemmy's chamber.

Prince Brat: Boy! Tumble out of bed. I need a manservant.

Jemmy: What are you up to now? Walkin' in your royal sleep, are you?

Prince Brat: I'm running away.

Jemmy: You can't run away like you was common folks. Why are you doing this?

Prince Brat: I'm bored.

Jemmy: With dumping bullfrogs in the moat so on one got a wink o' sleep?

Prince Brat: BORING!

Jemmy: And didn't you laugh fit to kill when the knight slipped off their horses and clattered to the ground? You'd hog greased the saddled.

Prince Brat: Boring.

Jemmy: And don't you get me thrashed so that this hide o' mine feels like the devil run me over with spikes in his shoes?

Prince Brat: Let's be off!

Narrator: Jemmy thought, "Why me? Can't you find a friend to run off with. But no-not you, Prince Brat. You've got no friends." Which was true. Prince Brat had no friends, so had to take his own whipping boy.

Jemmy: It's night out!

Prince Brat: The best time!

Jemmy: But ain't you afraid of the dark? Everyone knows that. You won't even sleep without a lit candle.

Prince Brat: Come on.

Jemmy: The king'll have a fit!

Prince Brat: Positively.

Jemmy: He'll hunt us down. You'll get off light as a feather, but I'll be lucky if they don't whip me to the bone. More likely, I'll be hung from the gallows.

Prince Brat: Carry the basket, Jemmy-From-The-Streets, and follow me!

Scene Two, Outdoors & the Paper Horse

Narrator: The moon lit their way like a lantern. But by morning, they were hopelessly lost on the horse they were riding. They were lost in a fog. That's when they ran into Cutwater and Hold Your Nose Billy.

(Cutwater and Billy, grab Prince Brat and Jemmy lightly from behind, acting mean)

Prince Brat: Who's there? Let go! Take your hands off me!

Hold Your Nose Billy: Well, what have we got here? A noisy brat on a fine beast of a horse.

Cutwater: I got another, Billy! Not much of a catch, two sparrows.

Hold Your Nose Billy: But ain't they trimmed up in fancy rags, Cutwater!

Cutwater: Ain't they?

Hold Your Nose Billy: Got any gold in your pockets, lads?

Prince Brat: No business of yours!

Hold Your Nose Billy: Ah, but so help me, it is my business. Don't you know who I am?

Prince Brat: A clod and a ruffian.

Hold Your Nose Billy: Worse than that! Ain't you never hears of Hold Your Nose Billy?

Cutwater: Famous he is, put to song is Billy.

Jemmy: The highwayman, are you?

Hold Your Nose Billy: The same?

Jemmy: A murderer?

Hold Your Nose Billy: Only in the line of duty. So you won't mind if we take your horse and empty your pockets?

Jemmy: Not a copper between us.

Cutwater: What's in the basket?

Prince Brat: Hands off, villain! Don't you know who I am?

(Jemmy elbows Prince Brat to stop talking)

Prince Brat: Bow to your prince!

Cutwater: Bow to what?

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Prince Brat: I am Prince Horace.

Cutwater: And, I'm the Grand Turnip of China!

Prince Brat: Dim-witted villains! I command you to turn us loose. Or, Papa will hang you both.

Narrator: Jemmy was thinking, "Hold your trap, Prince Brat, don't you have a thimbleful of brains?"

Jemmy: Me friend's muddle-headed. His pa is nothing but a rat-catcher. But don't he put on airs, though.

Hold Your Nose Billy: Got enough lip for two sets of teeth. Cutwater, take the lantern and fetch the horse.

Cutwater: What do you reckon's in the basket, Billy?

Hold Your Nose Billy: Plenty of time to find out.

Hold Your Nose Billy: (hold Jemmy by the ear and pull him away from the center of the set) Stir your legs. Walk! And don't let me catch you on our turf again. Do I make myself clear?

Jemmy: Clear as glass! If you'd be kind enough to point us toward the river, I'd be ever so much obliged.

Cutwater: Billy! They ain't just common sparrows. Have a look at this saddle.

Hold Your Nose Billy: (looks closely at saddle) Skin me alive! That's the king's own crest.

Jemmy: We stole it, horse and saddle!

Prince Brat: Bosh. Didn't I tell you who I was? Bow low, you fools, and be off.

Hold Your Nose Billy: Cutwater, what do you reckon a genuine prince on the hoof is worth?

Cutwater: His weight in gold at least, Billy.

Narrator: That was when Jemmy and Prince Brat were kidnapped and held for ransom. Cutwater and Billy found the excellent meal the Prince had taken for running

away, complete with a China plate, a silver spoon and a silver knife. They even found the Prince's golden crown.

Prince Brat: That's mine!

Hold Your Nose Billy: Was yours! (Billy puts one the crown)

Cutwater: Prince Hold Your Nose Billy! We're dog rich!

Hold Your Nose Billy: (grabs the Prince) Fifty five pounds, by my reckoning! We'll write the king a command, Cutwater. Fifty five pounds of gold in trade for his royal tadpole.

Scene Three: In the shack of Billy and Cutwater

Prince Brat: I'm hungry! I'll have a veal pie.

Hold Your Nose Billy: (ignores the Prince) There's ink for you, Prince. Take the hawk's feather and scratch out our message.

Prince Brat: I don't take orders from curs and villains.

Hold Your Nose Billy: Think of your pa. He'll be ever so much obliged to know you're safe and hearty.

Prince Brat: I told you, I'm hungry!

Hold Your Nose Billy: You won't eat a bean until you do us the document.

Prince Brat: But, I can't write!

Cutwater: And crows can't fly! You're a prince! Don't think you can pull the wool over our eyes. Hop to it!

Prince Brat: But I can't so much as scratch my own name.

Jemmy: Give me the hawk's quill. I'll write the words.

Prince Brat: That's right, my whipping boy knows the letters. Fall to, Jemmy-From-the-Streets.

Hold Your Nose Billy: Hold on. This ignorant whipping boy knows his letters, and the royal prince can't sign his own name. Something's amiss here.

Cutwater: What are you thinking, Billy?

Hold Your Nose Billy: I'm thinking these lads have mixed themselves up to flummox us.

Jemmy: Nonsense! I'm a mere whipping boy.

Hold Your Nose Billy: You take us for bedrock numskulls. Certain as eggs is eggs, you're the prince. Then genuine, straight-up-and-down Royal Highness!

Prince Brat: That ratty street orphan? That lowborn!

Jemmy: Silence! Can't you see the game is up? They're on to us. Hold your tongue!

Prince Brat: But I'm high Royal Highness!

Narrator: Prince Brat could not see the plan being formed by Jemmy.

Jemmy: Save your breath! Stop giving yourself airs, you witless servant boy!

Prince Brat: Servant boy! Don't you dare address me like that.

Hold Your Nose Billy: Bag your head! Give him a kick, Cutwater, if we hear another peep out of him.

Jemmy: Hand me a hawk's feather. I'll write my papa, the king.

Narrator: The Prince was sorry he hadn't learned to read and write. He would do so the first chance he had when he was returned to the castle. He didn't get it when Jemmy suggested that the "whipping boy" (really the prince) be the one to take the note to the castle, with his crown. But the prince refused when the two cutthroats agreed to the plan, which would have freed him.

Betsy & Hot-Potato Man Scene 4 (outside in forest)

Al: Jemmy and Prince Brat finally got free from Cutwater and Billy, and began walking. Jemmy wishes to be free of the Prince, and the Prince is having the best time of his life and does not want to return to the castle. Cutwater and Billy were not far behind, however, still looking for them.

(Jemmy and Prince Brat, walking like they are on a very long walk)

Jemmy: Lay off! Go your own way!

Prince: This way suits me.

Jemmy: Well, don't follow me, I've no idea where I'm going.

Prince: (whispers) Hear that?

Betsy: Tunia! Pet-Pet-Petunia! (holding rope and jar of honey) Pet-Pet-Petunia! Come here, darlin'! Come to Betsy:

Betsy: (hears Prince and Jemmy) Petunia! Smell the honey? Come feast yourself, Pet!

Jemmy: Miss?

Betsy: My eyes! Who are you?

Jemmy: Lost. Would you know which way to the river?

Betsy: Course I do. Ain't we headin' for the fair, me and Petunia? Have you seen him?

Jemmy: Petunia?

Betsy: Got loose, he did. My dancing bear. World Famous!

Jemmy: Scared me out of my skin, back there.

(Betsy goes towards where Jemmy points)

Jemmy: Hey! Where's the river?

Betsy: Where it's always been, due south!

Jemmy: Which way is south?

Betsy: Straight on! (points)

Jemmy: You certain?

Betsy: Certain I'm certain. Didn't Pa always say I had a head like a compass?

(Betsy leaves, looking for Petunia)

Scene Five, Outdoors, continued

Jemmy: Soon as I can, I aim to give you the slip. You'll be on your own.

Prince: (look at Jemmy, look down, say nothing)

Jemmy: You can fend for your own self, can't you?

Prince: Of course I can! I don't need flocks of servants to fetch and carry for me.

Jemmy: It's settled, then.

Prince: Settled! Skip off anytime you like.

(Jemmy pick up cardboard; pounce on it)

Prince: That's trash. What are you doing?

Jemmy: Mudlarking.

Prince: What?

Jemmy: I've got to eat, don't I? If I can collect enough driftwood, I can see it as firewood.

(more walking action)

Jemmy: It's not my worry.

Prince: What isn't?

Jemmy: You, that's what. If you get hungry enough, you'll scramble back to the castle.

Prince: (pick up cardboard) Is this worth anything?

Jemmy: Yes.

(both pick up more pieces of cardboard)

Jemmy: Look at this cage! With this, I can catch rats.

(Jemmy and Prince act like they year something when the whip sounds)

Jemmy: Look at the hot potato man's wagon!

Captain Nips: Pull, gents! Be good lads. It's me own fault, not leadin' you around this bog. Me eyesight ain't what it was, is it, old tars?

Jemmy: Sir? Would you take on a passenger? Here, let me set these barrel staves under the wheels to help you go.

Captain Nips: Don't mind if I do, I'm late for the fair as it is.

(Prince, sit on floor and watch what is going on, make no move like you can get on the wagon.)

Jemmy: You must be carrying a heavy load. Try again, Cap'n!

Captain Nips: Hop in, lad.

(Wagon rolls on and Jemmy looks back at the Prince who is sad and left behind.)

Jemmy: Stop, Cap'n! We left me friend behind. (Wave Prince to join the wagon. Prince smiles, but only a second. Everyone act scared as now Cutwater and Billy are holding guns to all!)

Cutwater: Stand and deliver!

Jemmy: Remember, it's me they're after, not you. Tell 'em we split up. Tell 'em I swam the river.

Cutwater and Billy: Stand and deliver, I said.

Captain Nips: And I heard you. Deliver what? Potatoes? Scurvy rascals? Help yourselves.

Billy: Hang your potatoes! Deliver us some information and you can be off. We're after two runaway apprentices.

Captain Nips: Apprentice highwaymen?

Cutwater: Our affair. Girl with a bear said she saw 'em streakin' for the river. You carrying passengers?

Cutwater: Gone one! The whipping boy, it is! Where's your master, eh?

Prince: Swam the river.

Billy: Swam the river! Faw! He'd need scales and fins. (Billy looks, finds Jemmy, and grabs him.)

Billy: Here's the potato we're after!

Captain Nips: Good bye!

Billy: Tricked me, did you? Flummoxed me with your fancy quill-scratchin'!

Jemmy: Sir?

Billy: A gold sack or two would have satisfied me and Cutwater. But you were so greedy!

Jemmy: You've got it all wrong. I swear it!

Billy: Aye, enough plunder to burden us directly to the gallows, eh? Well, here's a whipping you won't never forget.

Cutwater: Here's the whipping boy. You said it'll go powerful worse for us if we thrash the prince himself. Go to it.

Jemmy: Lay down the whip. Don't you have an ounce of sense between you!

Billy: Nobody tricks me and gets away with it. (Pretend to whip the prince.)

Narrator: Jemmy held his breath. He knew what it felt like. He saw that Prince Brat had set his jaws, just as he used to do.

Cutwater: Harder! You didn't raise a peep out of him.

Billy: (pretend to whip harder)

Cutwater: He must have a hide like an elephant. He don't feel a thing.

Billy: He'll feel this!

Jemmy: Bawl out! Holler and cry out! I won't tell anyone!

Betsy: Ruffian! What are you doing to that poor boy?

Cutwater: No business of yours!

Betsy: Stop it! Sick 'em, Petunia, go get 'em!

(The bear scares Cutwater and Billy, and they run away.)

Betsy: Good boy, Petunia! That'll do, darlin'. The lowdown bullies! Laying stripes on a boy's back.

Prince: Rein in your beast.

Betsy: Oh, don't be afraid of Petunia. Gentle as a kittle, he is. Here, let me tend to your poor hide.

Prince: No.

Betsy: Give us a look.

Prince: Thank you, no.

Betsy: Lumme! Ain't you the brave one! Must sting something dreadful.

Jemmy: Steady on your legs?

Prince: Steady.

Jemmy: Let's be on our way. They're sure to be back after us.

Betsy: Not if you travel with me, me and Petunia.

Narrator: So the boys traveled with Petunia. They had more adventures. Later, they have to travel through sewers again to outrun Billy and Cutwater, who have realized they whipped the real Prince. Bats got Cutwater and Billy in the sewer, though. The King had a price on Jemmy head, but when the boys finally returned to the castle, the King thanked Jemmy.

King: One more thing! If you every fun away again, take me with you!

Narrator: In the days that followed, ballad sellers began to cry out new and final verses to the notorious life of Hold-Your-Nose-Billy and his partner, Cutwater. An old rat-catcher had seen them flee from the sewer. And he'd seen them stow away aboard a ship raising its sails for a long voyage. It was a convict ship bound for a speck of an island in distant waters. A convict island.

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Narrator: The end, and lesson to all: Do you lessons or you might be very sorry!