

## CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW TEMPLATE

**Bibliographic Information** (author, title, publisher, copyright date, number of pages, and ISBN number):

*Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*, by Simms Taback. Viking, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0670878553.

**Selection Sources** (list any that recommend your book):

- Best Books for Children (9th edition, 2010) p. 643 (# 12679)
- Literature and the Child (Cullinan and Galda), 2002, p. 12-13, 83, 85, 87
- A to Zoo (2006), p. 1233
- The Children's Literature Lover's Book of Lists (2004), p. 214
- Children's Catalog (19th edition, 2006), p. 1020
- Caldecott Winner, 2000

**Reading Level** (specific age or grade):

Lexile: BR (Beginning Reading) 0

**Interest Level** (range):

Grades 1-4. The concept is fairly straightforward and cumulative (which is good for the younger readers, but the “something of nothing” would appeal to older kids. By fifth grade, this picture book folktale may seem childish to many.

**Appeal Factors:**

Tone: feel-good: the light-hearted approach to adversity and loss

Writing style: engaging: folklore rolls easily off the tongue and the folk-style illustrations mirror this

**Plot Synopsis (<100 words):**

When Joseph's overcoat becomes old and worn, he reinvents it as a jacket. As Joseph goes to the fair, dances at weddings, sings in the choir, and visits his sister, his jacket wears out as well and he recycles it into smaller and smaller items of clothing until he has only enough cloth for a button. When Joseph loses the button, he decides to write a book about it, proving the adage “you can always make something out of nothing.”

**Critical Review (<150 words)** (including quotes from your review sources):

Children and adults alike will enjoy this creative picture book that *School Library Journal* hails as “bursting at the seams with ingenuity and creative spirit.” The words, adapted from a Yiddish folk song, feature a rhythmic repetition that will be welcome for young readers and listeners. Taback uses vivid mixed-media artwork to convey a comforting sense of tradition and hominess, appropriate for this story of repurposing. The jam-packed images, while sometimes overwhelming, help bring the simple story to fun, kitschy life with what *Publishers Weekly* calls an “abundance of visual humor.” Readers will delight in finding small hidden treasures, such as miniature photographs and newspaper headlines (“Fiddler on Roof Falls off Roof”). Well-placed die-cuts provide hints as to what the overcoat will turn into with each reinvention. This item, which *Booklist* calls “a true example of accomplished bookmaking,” would be perfect for one-on-one reading or small-group story time.

**Review Sources** (list at least two):

- *Booklist*, Jan. 1, 2000, p. 936
- *School Library Journal*, Jan. 2000, p112
- *Publishers Weekly*, Nov. 1, 1999, p82.