

Love That Dog

A play based on the book by Sharon Creech

Adapted by Andrew Frank and Jason Howard

The play takes place over one year. It is performed by one actor, who never leaves the stage, with numerous projections and sounds effects. The stage is set up as two distinct areas, Jack's bedroom and his classroom.

In the bedroom area there is a desk, a desk chair, some shelves, and a place to store clothes for Jack to change into, as the year progresses. A notebook, pencils and a book of poetry are on the desk. Jack also has a backpack which he brings back and forth from his room to school.

In the school area, one classroom chair, facing the audience.

Upstage, between the two areas, is a large projection screen. The screen will be used for projections as described, both when Jack is in his bedroom and the classroom. The background for the screen when in Jack's bedroom is a window blind, in the classroom, it changes to a cork board.

There are three basic "positions" for Jack:

- 1. Alone in his bedroom talking to himself and to the audience,*
- 2. Pre-Class, in the classroom area, talking privately to his teacher but still in ear shot of other students getting settled in class,*
- 3. In Class where he is talking to the teacher or other students in a public way.*

Sound is used to punctuate the movement of place and time as well as to signal projections. The goal is to create a rhythm, as well as a cinematic visual quality, to work within the episodic structure of the narrative. A ding sound will be used to both open and close scenes.

Scene one

A "DING" sounds at the same time as "September 13th" is projected

A "DING"

(Lights up. Jack is in his bedroom, sitting on his desk. He is playing a video game with great excitement. He wins, he loses, he wins, he loses, until an alarm goes off on his cell phone, signaling that he has to get back to his homework. He sits on his desk chair and reluctantly opens his poetry book. He looks directly at the

audience.)

JACK

I don't want to, because boys don't write poetry. Girls do.

DING – Lights out

DING - PROJECTION "September 21"

DING – Lights up

JACK

(Hands on his head in exasperation.)

I tried . . . Can't do it . . . Brain's empty.

DING – Lights out

DING – PROJECTION: "September 27"

DING – Lights up

JACK

(Reads, trying to make sense of the poem.)

The Red Wheelbarrow by William Carlos Williams

So much depends

Upon

A red wheel

Barrow

Glazed with rain

Water

Besides the white

Chickens.

So much depends

Upon

A red wheel

Barrow

Glazed with rain

Water

Besides the white
Chickens.

DING – Lights out

DING – PROJECTION - “Later That Night”

DING – Lights up still in his bedroom

JACK

(Pacing.)

I don’t understand the poem about the red wheelbarrow and the white chickens and why so much depends upon them. If that is a poem about the red wheelbarrow and the white chickens then any words can be a poem.

(He has an idea, opens his notebook and writes.)

You’ve just got to – watch this –
Make
Short
Lines.

THE LAST THREE LINES ARE PROJECTED AS HE WRITES THEM. THEN, AFTER A PAUSE JACK SITS AT HIS DESK TO COMPOSE THE BLUE CAR POEM, WHICH IS ALSO PROJECTED AS HE WRITES IT.

*So much depends
Upon*

CAR SCREECHING SOUNDS FAINTLY IN THE BACKGROUND

*A blue car
Splattered with mud
Speeding down the road.*

DING – LIGHTS OUT

DING – PROJECTION – “October 4”

DING – LIGHTS UP – PRE-CLASS

JACK

(To his teacher, doesn’t want the other kids to hear.)

Do you promise not to read it out loud? Do you promise not to put it on the board? Okay, here it is, but I don’t like it.

(Jack hands her the poem and sits in his chair.)

DING – THE POEM IS PROJECTED ON THE BOARD OF THE CLASSROOM

*WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A PEN, AS WE WATCH WRITING APPEAR ON
THE POEM IN RED INK.*

(The writing is the teacher's comments.)

"WHY DOES SO MUCH DEPEND UPON A BLUE CAR?"

JACK

(Responding to teacher.)

What do you mean – why does so much depend upon a blue car? You didn't say before that I had to tell why. The wheelbarrow guy didn't tell why.

CLASS BELL RINGS. THE POEM DISAPPEARS.

(To the teacher.)

It's not my turn. Is it?

(Jack stands, opens his book and reads to the class in a monotone.)

Stopping by woods on a snowy evening by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though.
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farm house near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

(Jack has been speeding up the reading. The teacher tells him to slow down.)

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake
The only other sounds the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep.

DING – Lights out

DING - PROJECTION: October 17

DING - Lights up in Jack's bedroom

JACK

(He bounces a ball, and throws it in the air and catches it as he speaks.)

What was up with the snowy woods poem we read today? Why doesn't the person just keep going if he has so many miles to go before he sleeps? And why do I have to tell more about the blue car splattered with mud speeding down the road? I don't want to write about that blue car that had miles to go before it slept. So many miles to go in such a hurry.

DING – Lights out

DING – PROJECTION: October 24

DING – Lights up in his bedroom

JACK

(Seated at his desk.)

I'm sorry to say I did not really understand the "tiger, tiger, burning bright" poem, but at least it sounded good in my ears.

(He starts to read the poem, taping his pencil in time with the rhythm. Halfway through, he grabs another pencil and now he's beating the rhythm as if his desk is a drum, with great enjoyment.)

The Tiger by William Blake

Tiger! Tiger! Burning bright
In the forest of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry!

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

Tiger! Tiger! Burning bright
In the forest of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry!

BEAT. HE IS INSPIRED.

What about the blue car with tiger sounds?

THE WRITING IS PROJECTED AS WE HEAR IT.

*Blue car, blue car, shining bright
In the darkness of the night
Who could see you speeding by
Like a comet in the sky?*

HE REPEATS THE FIRST STANZA, TAPPING OUT THE RHYTHM, THEN:

*I could see you in the night
Blue car, blue car, shining bright
I could see you speeding by
Like a comet in the sky.*

The tiger sounds are still in my ears like drums beat, beat, beating...beat, beat, beating...beat, beat, beating.

DING – Lights out

DING – PROJECTION: “October 31”

DING – Lights up – Pre-class time

JACK

Yes, you can put the two blue car poems on the board only if you don't put my name on them.

DING – PROJECTION

(The poems are both projected on the board.)

JACK

They look nice typed up like that on blue paper on a yellow board, but still don't tell anyone who wrote them, okay?

DING

(“Anonymous” is projected onto the poem.)

JACK

And what does anon-y-mous mean? Is it good?

DING – Lights out

DING - PROJECTION - November 9

DING – Lights up in class

JACK

(Responding to the teacher.)

*CLEARLY AWARE HE IS IN PUBLIC AND TRYING TO MAKE THE OTHER
KIDS LAUGH TOWARDS THE END.*

I don't have any pets so I can't write about one, especially I can't write a poem about one. *(BEAT)* Yes, I used to have a pet. I don't want to write about it. You're going to ask me "why not?" Right? *(BEAT)* Pretend I still have that pet? Can't I make up a pet - a different one? Like a tiger? Snail? Worm? Flea? *(BEAT)* What? My turn again? Seriously?

(Jack stands and reads, monotone at first and then with more and more animation as he relates to the poem.)

Dog by Valerie Worth

Under a maple tree
The dog lies down
Lulls his limp
Tongue yawns
Rests his long chin
Carefully between
Front paws
Looks up alert
Chops with heavy
Jaws at a slow fly
Blinks, rolls
On his side
Sighs closes
His eyes: sleeps
All afternoon
In his loose skin.

DING – Lights out

DING - PROJECTON – LATER THAT NIGHT

DING – Lights up in Jack's bedroom

JACK

Those small poems we read today were okay. When they are small like that you can read a whole bunch in a short time and then in your head are all the pictures of all the

small things from all the small poems. I especially like the dog in the dog poem because that's just how

STARTING TO WRITE SOME OF THIS DOWN. IT IS PROJECTED AS HANDWRITTEN AS HE WRITES.

My yellow dog
Used to lie down
With his tongue all limp
And his chin
Between
His paws
And how he'd sometimes
Chomp at a fly
And then sleep
In his loose skin just like that poet Miss. Valerie Worth Says In her small
Dog poem.

DING – Lights out

DING - PROJECTION – December 4

DING – Lights up pre-class

JACK

(To the teacher.)

Why do you want to type up what I wrote about reading the small poems? It's not really a poem, is it? (BEAT) I guess you can put it on the board if you want to but don't put my name on it in case other people think it is not a poem.

DING - THE POEM IS PROJECTED WITH A PICTURE OF A YELLOW DOG

JACK

I guess it does look like a poem when you see it typed up like that. But I think maybe it would look better if there was more space between the lines, like how I wrote it the first time. And I liked the picture of the yellow dog you put beside it, but that's not how my yellow dog looked.

DING – Lights out

PROJECTION: TEACHER'S DOG MORPHS INTO JACK'S DOG, BARKS, AND WALKS OUT OF THE FRAME.

DING – PROJECTION – JANUARY 10

DING – Lights up in class & PROJECTION – “The Pasture by Robert Frost”

(Jack has turned his chair around so it is now facing the board.)

A VIDEO OF A HAND WRITING WITH NOISY SOUND EFFECTS LIKE A MARKER ON A WHITE BOARD . . . “EVERYONE READ TOGETHER . . .”

JACK

“The Pasture by Robert Frost.”

THE WORDS ARE PROJECTED SO THE AUDIENCE CAN READ ALONG. WE ANTICIPATE THE AUDIENCE DOES NOT FOLLOW ALONG AT FIRST. A SECOND VIDEO SHOWS A MORE ANIMATED HAND UNDERLINING AND CIRCLING THE WORDS “EVERYONE READ TOGETHER.

JACK AND THE AUDIENCE

**I’m going out to clean the pasture spring
I’ll only stop to rake the leaves away**

JACK

(Turns around, speaks directly to the audience.)

Everyone is supposed to say the poem,

(He points toward the back of the theater.)

Even you back there.

(He continues to read with the audience.)

I shan’t be gone long – you come too.

**I’m going out to fetch the little calf
And wait to watch the water clear I may.
That’s standing by the mother, it’s so young.
It totters when she licks it with her tongue
I shan’t be gone long – you come too.**

DING – Lights transition to MAGICAL ADDRESS - to the audience.

JACK

(Jack is back in his bedroom.)

I really, really, really did not get the pasture poem we read today. I mean, somebody’s going out to the pasture to clean the spring and to get the little tottery calf while he’s out there and he isn’t going to be gone long and he wants YOU (who is you?) to come too. I mean, really. And Miss Stretchberry said that Mr. Robert Frost who wrote about the pasture was also the one who wrote about those snowy woods and the miles to go before he sleeps. Well! I think Mr. Robert Frost has a little...

(As he speaks the words below, they are projected as if Jack “throws” them on the board.)

Too
Much
Time
On his
Hands.

DING – Lights out

DING - PROJECTON – JANUARY 17

DING – Lights up in Jack’s bedroom.

JACK

The blue car and the small poem thing . . . on the board, typed up . . . they looked like poems . . . and the other kids were looking at them and they were thinking they really are poems . . . and they were all saying, “who wrote that?”

JACK STARTS WRITING IN HIS BOOK. THE POEM IS PROJECTED BEHIND HIM AS HE SPEAKS. JACK BEGINS WRITING, BUT QUICKLY JUST SPEAKS THE POEM TO THE AUDIENCE.

We were going for a drive
And my father said
We won’t be gone long
You come too
And so I went
And we drove and drove
Until we stopped at a
Red brick building
With a sign
In blue letters...
ANIMAL PROTECTION SHELTER.

(Words are projected on the screen.)

And inside we walked
Down a long cement path
Past cages
With all kinds of
Dogs
Big and small
Fat and skinny
Some of them
Hiding in the corner