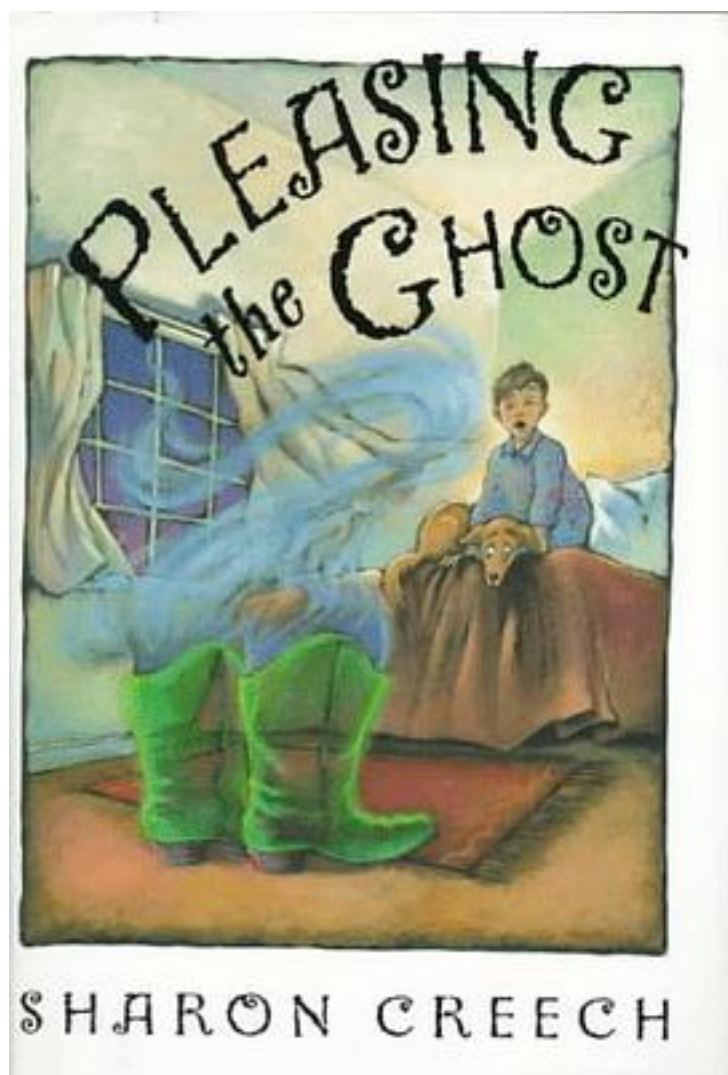


# Pleasing the Ghost



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From Publishers Weekly This simultaneously sensitive and ridiculous romp by a Newbery-winning author (Walk Two Moons) begins as spunky nine-year-old Dennis explains that ghosts keep visiting him in his bedroom? "a constant parade of ghosts, but never the one I really want." Pining for his late father, Dennis instead finds himself host to a motley crew of spirits, in particular his Uncle Arvie. Arvie wants Dennis to help his widow, Aunt Julia, discover the gifts and money he has left hidden for her in his house. Unfortunately, a stroke he suffered before his death prevents him from finding the appropriate vocabulary to convey his meaning. Kids will enjoy deciphering Arvie's speech: "Good carpet, Dinosaur!" translates as "Good morning, Dennis!"; Aunt Julia's oily suitor and Billy, the class bully, are "beany boogers." Dennis's much-missed father? his "pepperoni"? never does appear, but the boy finds common ground and a possible friendship with Billy, also fatherless. Arvie's earnest affection for Julia and Dennis makes him a role model as well as a clown, and Creech's attention to nuances of feeling grounds this light tale in emotional truth. Ages 8-12. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. From School Library Journal Grade 3-5-A disappointing tale about a boy led on a treasure hunt by a ghost. Dennis, nine, has received a parade of spectral visitors since his father's death, though none, alas, is the one he wishes to see. Occasionally, the boy recognizes deceased family members, including his late Uncle Arvie, who wishes to pass on messages to his widow, Julia. Because Arvie's speech was garbled in life by a severe stroke, helping him communicate is no easy task for Dennis. Ultimately, however, Arvie leads him to a small fortune, which will ensure Julia's lifelong comfort. In a subplot, Dennis proves to a disbelieving classmate that his ability to see ghosts is real. This story falls short on several fronts. Character development is particularly ineffective. Dennis, for example, is so easily absorbed in Arvie's affairs that it is difficult, if not impossible, to perceive him as a boy grieving for his father. While linguistic problems are caused by strokes, Arvie's nonsense syllables seem exaggerated to the point of caricature, thus creating an offensive effect. Billy, Dennis's classmate who also lost his father, thinks Dennis is making fun of him with his talk of ghosts, and in retaliation, smashes several windows in his home. In a tale obviously meant to be lighthearted, Billy's anger seems extreme and inappropriate. The ending reflects Dennis's hopes of someday seeing his father's ghost, but by this point, readers may not care enough about him to wonder whether or not it ever happens. Mary Jo Drungil, Niles Public Library District, IL Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. See all Editorial Reviews"

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目录:

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标签

评论

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[Pleasing the Ghost 下载链接1](#)

书评

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[Pleasing the Ghost 下载链接1](#)