

Children's Literature Reviews

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The littlest grape stomper

by Alan Madison ; illustrated by Giselle Potter.

[Contributor biographical information](#)

[Publisher description](#)

New York : Schwartz & Wade Books, 2007.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill.; 28 cm.

Annotations:

Having twelve toes has always caused problems for young Sixto, but especially when Boss Nova Boombatz lures him into the town of Ear's business of making grape juice when he would rather just play.

Horn Book Guide:

Fall 2007 Picture Books Rating 4, Recommended, with minor flaws.

Reading Measurement Programs:

Accelerated Reader

Interest Level Lower Grade

Book Level 4.9

Accelerated Reader Points **0.5**

Reviews:

Carolyn Mott Ford (Children's Literature)

Little Sixto was born in the town of Ear in the Your valley, an area well known for its wonderfully tasty grape juice. Sixto, as his name implies, was born with six toes on each foot. While this made it difficult for the lad to find comfortable shoes, the extra digits did make him a natural for stomping grapes. When Bossa Nova Boombatz, the head of the grape business, saw Sixto at play, he immediately put him to work in a wooden barrel. Sixto did so well he became eligible for the Grape Juicing Hall of Fame, but the Boss took advantage of him and Sixto soon became tired of all work and no play. For his final job, Sixto was placed in a huge barrel. The Boss, however, had outsmarted himself for, when the plug was removed, the grape juice swept him away. What became of all that grape juice? Why, everyone has heard of the Grape Lakes. That play on words is one of many in this rather unusual tale. 2007, Schwartz & Wade Books/Random House, \$16.99. Ages 4 to 8.

Gwynne Spencer (Children's Literature)

Sixto not only has huge feet, he has six toes on each foot. He can kick a ball like nobody else and he can really stomp grapes. Sixto's town (the village of Ear in the Valley of Your) is known for its grape juice; he is in the right place at the right time to fulfill his destiny. But along comes the bad guy, Mr. Boss Boombatz, who virtually enslaves Sixto and makes him stomp bigger and bigger vats full of grapes so Boombatz can get rich. When the final huge container of juice is filled, and Sixto is trapped inside, fate intervenes, Sixto kicks loose the gigantic vat's cork, and the vat empties across the land creating the Grape Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior; Mr. Boombatz is never seen or heard from again. It is in the tradition of Paul Bunyan, and has some suitably goofy illustrations that keep it light and funny. Throughout the story, we expect to see naked Sixto climbing out of a wine barrel, but he always has his Fruit of the Looms on, which is a relief. This could be the basis of a "tall tale" creative writing exercise for older kids who want to combine a food-producing region and some geographic feature with a small but determined hero who brings it all to pass. Who knows? It might be a

whole new genre. 2007, Schwartz & Wade Books/Random House, \$16.99. Ages 4 to 10.

Kirkus (Kirkus Reviews, January 15, 2007 (Vol. 75, No. 2))

A fey piece of whimsy takes a lighthearted look at child labor. The village of Ear, nestled in the Your Valley, is famed for the excellence of its hand—er, foot—stomped grape juice. Into Ear is born Sixto, named because he has six toes on each foot. When Boss Nova Boombatz spies those extra toes, he quickly sees their possibilities and puts polite little Sixto (who would really rather play) to work as a grape stomper, building ever-bigger vats to nudge Sixto's efforts into the record books. Potter has fun with the text, giving Boombatz a distinctly Mafioso air and dyeing Sixto and the other grape stompers a delicate shade of purple. All the characters wear her trademark old-people faces, giving all the Earians an appealingly ageless appearance. Madison's resolution is as silly as the premise itself: A deluge of juice, stomped by Sixto in an enormous cistern, floods the Your Valley, creating the Grape Lakes and sweeping Boombatz away. Kids will enjoy both Sixto's triumph and the overall goofiness of this small tall tale. 2007, Schwartz & Wade/Random, 40p, \$16.99. Category: Picture book. Ages 4 to 8. © 2007 Kirkus Reviews/VNU eMedia, Inc. All rights reserved.

Hope Morrison (The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, May 2007 (Vol. 60, No. 9))

The village of Ear is famous for its delicious grape juice, so when Boss Nova Boombatz, C.E.O. of "all things grape," spots young Sixto Poblano's six-toed feet, he is bound and determined to get the boy stomping grapes for him. Sixto does in fact have a particular propensity ("because his spare toes made his feet so worldly wide, all the juicy grapes were now grape juicy"), which Boombatz is delighted to exploit despite the boy's repeated requests to go back to a life of playing kickball with his friends. In the end, Sixto pulls a fast one on Boombatz and drains forty days worth of grape juice from a gigantic vat, forming "the five Grape Lakes" and sending Boombatz swimming for the rest of his days. This unusual tall tale is a little overlong, with a lot of telling for its modest plot, but it is loaded with alliteration and playful language that make it a fine candidate for a boisterous readaloud. Sixto is as effective as a beloved hero as Boombatz is as an all-business and no-humanity villain type. Potter's characteristic illustrative style renders the fine citizens of Ear attractive and slightly fantastical, and while the children often look more like small bodies with adult heads, there is great variety of expression. Fields of blue and green predominate the compositions, all perfectly juxtaposed with the juicy purples of the titular fruit. Young spectators will likely find it difficult getting past the hilarity of the front cover, which depicts Sixto in his underwear stomping a vat of grapes, but, really, what better outfit for such a sticky job? Review Code: R -- Recommended. (c) Copyright 2006, The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. 2007, Schwartz & Wade, 32p., \$18.99 and \$16.99. Ages 5-8 yrs.

Horn Book (The Horn Book Guide, Fall 2007)

Because of his extra digits, twelve-toed Sixto becomes the best grape-stomper in his village of Ear; his exploitation by the villain boss Boombatz and ultimate triumph are classic stuff. The wordplay here is imaginative and skilled, but some plot devices strain credulity even for a tall tale. Quirky, exaggerated mixed-media art suits the story. Category: Picture Books. 2007, Random/Schwartz & Wade, 32pp, 16.99, 18.99. *Ages 4 to 9*. Rating: 4: Recommended, with minor flaws.

Guinn Smith (The Lorgnette - Heart of Texas Reviews (Vol. 20, No. 4))

This book is about a little boy, Sixto Poblano, who was born with six toes on each foot. He lives in a village that is known for making scrumptious grape juice. Sixto counts his toes every morning, and he always has six toes. He isn't happy with his extra toes at all. He has a hard time finding shoes that fit, and he often trips because of the sixth toe. However, it does come in handy when he is playing kickball with his friends. Boss Nova Boombatz, the head of all things grape, sees Sixto playing kickball and gets an idea. He will have Sixto come and stomp grapes into grape juice. Sixto is very good at this, but he does miss his friends. Boombatz keeps giving him bigger and bigger jobs until one day, Sixto can't get out of the barrel because it is so big. When Boombatz opens the massive cork to taste the juice, Sixto pushes his way right out of the barrel, and a river of grape juice rushes out and sweeps everything away. Boombatz was never heard from again. And this is how the "Grape" Lakes were formed long, long ago. Fiction. Grades 1-5. 2007, Schwartz & Wade Books, Unpaged., \$16.99. Ages 6 to 11.

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