



## The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

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A picture book version of the Millay poem, in which a poor boy's mother worries about giving him food and clothing for the winter.

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## **The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver By Edna St. Vincent Millay Bibliography**

- Rank: #2666339 in Books
- Published on: 1991-10-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.25" h x 9.25" w x .50" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 1 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

In Millay's disturbing poem, an unseen, adult narrator tells of his harsh childhood and how his widowed mother tried to stay cheerful for her son's sake. The two live in a bare room in the midst of a busy town, and the mother bemoans the fact that the boy has no suitable clothing. But as time passes, they suffer through a severe winter--and slowly starve. Their last possession is a "harp with a woman's head / Nobody would take, / For song or pity's sake." On Christmas Eve, the boy sees his mother weaving magnificent, child-size clothing in the harp strings. But in the morning light he finds her, "A smile about her lips, / And a light about her head, / And her hands in the harp strings / Frozen dead." The poem is an odd choice as the basis of a children's book, ending as it does with every child's worst fear. (A note by the poet's executor presents the verse as Millay's tribute to her own mother.) Peck's ( *The Silver Whistle* ) oil paintings present a pretty picture of poverty: the faun-like child has roses in his cheeks and a neat haircut throughout (though his mother lacks shears). It's difficult to imagine where this book will find an audience. Ages 5-up.

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#### From School Library Journal

Grade 6-9-- A penniless widow and her young son burn their furniture for heat during a fierce winter in a turn-of-the-century tenement. On Christmas Eve the boy cries himself to sleep, and the mother sits down at their one remaining possession, a harp. As she plays and sings through the bitter night, the harp weaves the extravagant "clothes of a king's son." By morning the mother is "frozen dead" beside this legacy of her love. Millay's sure ballad technique balances the poem's sentimentality. The understated bond between the pair is affecting, but younger readers may find the mother's passivity puzzling, if not frightening, and the concluding fantasy confusing. What can, in the poem, be taken metaphorically, is rendered quite literally in the pictures: there is a pile of clothing, as real as the dead (though rosy-cheeked) woman. Peck's oil paintings are as sober and restrained as the somewhat morbid subject demands. By not further romanticizing the poem, Peck counters its melodrama, but the realism of the pictures makes the fantasy jarring. Good in themselves, the illustrations diminish the symbolic dimension of the ballad. --Patricia Dooley, University of Washington, Seattle

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#### From Kirkus Reviews

This haunting tragic fantasy--about a poor boy whose mother dies while weaving him of ``the clothes of a king's son,/Just my size," on a harp that ``Nobody would take,/For song or pity's sake"--was the title poem in Millay's Pulitzer-winning collection (1923). The current concern for poverty-trapped children makes the verse's powerful plea especially timely, with its dramatic appeal and mesmerizing rhythm--skillfully varied with an occasional heartstopping extra line. Peck's austere paintings are an appropriate visualization, setting the scene in a drab city with sober inhabitants but focusing on the two central figures in their bare tenement. The colors are somber, but the love between mother and son glows like the glints of color in the mother's miraculous last gift to her beloved child. An intelligent note about Millay's relationship with her own mother is included. (Poetry/Picture book. 5+) -- *Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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#### From reader reviews:

**Evelyn Spencer:**

Do you considered one of people who can't read enjoyable if the sentence chained inside the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver book is readable by simply you who hate the straight word style. You will find the info here are arrange for enjoyable reading through experience without leaving perhaps decrease the knowledge that want to offer to you. The writer associated with The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver content conveys thinking easily to understand by many individuals. The printed and e-book are not different in the articles but it just different by means of it. So , do you nevertheless thinking The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

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