**Gabby Drama Queen**
Written by Joyce Grant
Illustrated by Jan Dolby
Fitzhenry & Whiteside
32 pages
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Grades JK to 2

When Gabby and her friend, Roy, decide to put on a play in the back yard, she grabs her special storybook of useful letters and throws it on the grass. Out bounce letters to help them build a S-T-A-G-E. Roy wants to be a swordfish and fashions a fine costume. Determined that the play should take place in a royal court, Gabby isn’t enthusiastic about his idea until he gathers enough letters to make her a C-R-O-W-N. From there, they continue to use the alphabet for set construction and present their brief--but grandiously titled--play, “The Perils of Queen Gabriella,” for their neighbour, Mrs. Oldham. One last assemblage of letters results in tea and crumpets for all.

A book like this could seem didactic, but *Gabby Drama Queen* is definitely not. Author, Joyce Grant, has written a playful story that is a really fine read aloud and, in the process, an enjoyable way to learn a little phonics.

There are also activities at the back of the book, such as a challenge to find the bird on every page, a lesson in how to draw Roy, a board game of blended consonants, and an explanation of the medicine wheel on Roy’s t-shirt.

Illustrator, Jan Dolby, fills the pages with lively colour, goofy action, and tumbling letters in a textured digital collage. Gabby’s wild red braids, springing out at various angles, often reflect her emotions. The crazily coloured bird hides among the chaos of the back yard game. A nice touch is the cheerfully exuberant Roy with his black hair and medicine wheel shirt; it is good to see a First Nations character incorporated seamlessly into a story. (And older readers will not be surprised to learn that Mrs. Oldham with her glasses and crazy hair was inspired by the comedian Phyllis Diller.)

This is the second *Gabby* book from the team of Grant and Dolby. Here's hoping we can look forward to more fun from enthusiastic Gabby and her special storybook of useful letters.

Gillian O’Reilly is the editor of *Canadian Children’s Book News*. She is the author of *Slangalicious: Where We Got That Crazy Lingo* and the co-author of *The Great Number Rumble: A Story of Math in Surprising Places*. 