

From The Brothers Grimm II: *Willa: An American Snow White*

Language Arts, Literature, U.S. Cultures

Davenport 2000

English SOL 2.8, 3.6, 4.4, 5.5, 6.4, 7.5, 8.3, 9.3, 10.3, 11.3, 12.3

4 25-minute programs for grades 2 – Adult

Year to Year Renewal of “Tape and Keep” Rights

Duplication Rights Included

Winner of the 1998 American Library Association's Carnegie Medal for "Best Children's Video"

Willa: An American Snow White: is divided into four 25 minute programs with pre and post film commentary by the director Tom Davenport.

In this classic tale of envy, death, and redemption, Willa runs away with a traveling medicine show. Can her eccentric new friends protect her in the final clash with her evil stepmother? Certainly, in this Shakespeare-haunted tale, "things are not what they seem."

101. Part One: As the film opens, famous stage actress Regina Worthington arrives at her husband's opulent but oppressive Victorian estate with her faithful servant Otto and a mysterious antique mirror. With her career in decline, Regina becomes intensely jealous of her charming stepdaughter, Willa, who has her own fascination with Shakespeare and the theater.

102. Part Two: When Willa's beauty threatens to upstage Regina at an elegant party, Regina orders Otto to kill Willa. But instead, the soft-hearted butler lets Willa go and then returns to an increasingly unstable Regina.

After a miserable night in the forest, Willa meets three oddball entertainers who are traveling around rural America peddling Chief Tonka's Elixir of Life, a dubious and highly flammable patent medicine. The leader of the medicine show is an Englishman called Dr. Alfonzo, a failed Shakespearean actor. With him are his friends Chief Tonka and a dancing dwarf named Billy Bugg.

The traveling show becomes an ideal outlet for Willa's dramatic and musical skills, and the crowds for the medicine show get bigger. As part of the medicine show, Alfonzo decides to perform a melodrama based on "Snow White" to sell Chief Tonka's Elixir, which is supposed to restore youth and beauty.

103. Part Three: Everything goes well until in their travels they come across an idealistic young man named Toby Blythe-Wooster whose magic motion picture show is more popular than the medicine show.

Willa writes home to let Otto know that she is getting along all right, but Regina intercepts the letter and kills Otto for failing to carry out her order.

Meanwhile Toby and Willa fall in love despite the opposition of Alfonzo, who catches the two young lovers rehearsing the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*.

104. Part Four: Regina locates the medicine show, knocks out Chief Tonka, and disguises herself as the Evil Queen in the *Snow White* melodrama. On stage, Regina substitutes a poisoned apple for the benign stage prop, and Willa collapses, apparently dead.

Fearing the authorities, the medicine show men flee to a hideout deep in the woods. Alfonzo blames himself for Willa's death and becomes deeply depressed. Eventually Billy and Tonka decide to bury Willa, but just before they do, Toby returns. In his desperation, Toby gives Willa a dose of the Elixir of Life. For once, the tonic works and Willa coughs up the poisoned apple. Grateful for Toby's rescue, Alfonzo decides to incorporate Toby and his motion pictures into the medicine show.

Toby is projecting a film of Willa dancing when Regina returns again. Drunk on the tonic, she ascends the stage and illuminated by Willa's projected image, she enacts the final tomb scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to

a jeering crowd. In a crazed final act, she pours the highly flammable elixir over herself and drops the half empty bottle into the footlights where it explodes, burning her to death.

Willa and Toby invite Alfonzo, Tonka, and Billy to go west with them, but the medicine show men say that they prefer their itinerant life. Toby and Willa head toward California for a bright future in the motion picture business.