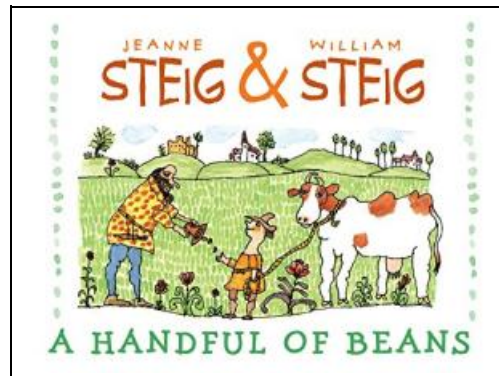


A Handful of Beans (Hardback)



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Reviews

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(Jaiden Turcotte DDS)

A HANDFUL OF BEANS (HARDBACK)



ATHENEUM BOOKS, 2016. Hardback. Condition: New. William Steig (illustrator). Language: English . Brand New Book. With its modest yet mischievous title an entirely fitting harbinger of the tone and tales to come, *A Handful of Beans* is an ample demonstration that, yes, we can use another Jack and the Beanstalk (and another Rumpelstiltskin, Beauty and the Beast, Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, and The Frog Prince). While fairy-tale parodies and updates are perhaps too much with us these days, Jeanne Steig goes the trend one better in her homely retellings, adding the gentlest touches of wit without ever betraying the story: after the king sees what Rumpelstiltskin has spun the first night, for example, he says to the miller s daughter, My, my, what a lovely surprise. We must do this again. Steig also provides illuminating detail. When Hansel and Gretel go to sleep in the witch s house, it is under sheets as soft as a spider s web, and Red Riding Hood s wolf is a suave seducer: But see here, my girl. Violets are blooming, finches are singing, the sun is tickling the little green leaves, and here you are, tramping along as if you were late for school. Why don t you look around you a bit, and enjoy the world? As you can easily see, these tales would be great fun for reading aloud, and occasionally bits of verse, beautifully scanned, provide an incantatory charm of their own: Pardon me, Mistress, the door is so small, / I could never squeeze into the oven at all. William Steig s line-and-watercolor illustrations, four or five per story, are humble and funny, and the book s compact size is just right for a little one-on-one session in cultural literacy.



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