

THE BUTTER BATTLE BRECHT

MARYANNE PICCOLO

Adapted from *The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Seuss

(originally published by Random House c 1981)

Cast of Characters

Boy Yook

Grandpa Yook

Chief Yookeroo

VanItch the Zook

A Zook

Head Yook Scientist

Yook Scientists

Yook Children

Daniel the Yook Dog

The Butter Up Band

A Yook Military Officer

The Narrators/ Storytellers (Yooks and Zooks)

Setting

In a far away land, not much different from ours. A large winding wall divides two communities, The Yooks and the Zook

** all roles EXCEPT Boy Yook and Grandpa Yook are intended to be split amongst many actors who are telling the story collectively in a Brechtian style. This can be achieved through directorial choices like switching and sharing costume pieces such as a hat.*

*This adaptation is intended to be performed by students for students

*It is intended for children in and around the 4th and 5th grade

A little boy, the smallest of all the Yook children is standing center stage. There are clumps people listening to the story he is about to tell. Everyone is dressed very simple and in the same manner. There are also clothing racks full on military and Seuss-like costume pieces. These are in place for characters to pull from throughout the piece.

BOY YOOK

On the last day of summer, ten hours before fall. My grandfather took me out to the Wall. For a while he stood silent. Then finally he said with a very bad shake of his very old head...

An actor pops up out of the crowd and grabs an item like a grandpa sweater from the rack than takes on the role of Grandpa.

GRANDPA YOOK

As you know, on this side of the Wall, we are Yooks. On the far other side of this Wall live the Zooks.

BOY YOOK

Then my grandfather said "It's high time that you knew of the terribly horrible thing that Zooks do..."

NARRATORS (ALL)

"In every Zook house, and in every Zook town, every Zook eats his bread with the butter side down!"

GRANDPA YOOK

"But we Yooks, as you know, when we breakfast or sup, spread our bread,"

NARRATOR

Grandpa said,

GRANDPA YOOK

with the butter side up. That's the right, honest way!"

NARRATOR

Grandpa gritted his teeth.

GRANDPA YOOK

so you can't trust a Zook who spreads bread underneath!

*Narrators grab several pieces of clothing and props to create this section of the story.
They take the action down center stage.*

NARRATOR

Every Zook must be watched! He has kinks in his soul! That's why, as a youth, I made watching my goal, watching Zooks for the Zook-Watching Border Patrol!"

NARRATOR

In those days, of course, the Wall wasn't so high, and I could look any Zook Square in the eye.

NARRATOR

If he dared to come close I could give him a twitch with my tough-tufted prickly Snick-Berry Switch.

VanItch appears with his slingshot.

NARRATOR

For a while that worked fine. All the Zooks stayed away and our country was safe. Then one terrible day a very rude Zook by the name of VanItch snuck up and slingshotted my Snick-Berry Switch!

Grandpa joins back into the story telling. Narrators switch their props and costumes to become new assigned characters.

GRANDPA YOOK

With my broken-off switch, with my head hung in shame, to the Chief Yookeroo in great sorrow I came.

The Chief appears in an outrageously highly decorated uniform and an oversized hat.

NARRATOR/ CHIEF YOOKEROO

But our Leader just smiled. He said, "You're not to blame. And those Zooks will be sorry they started this game. "We'll dress you right up in a fancier suit! We'll give you a

fancier slingshot to shoot!"

The Narrators dress Grandpa in a fancier outfit and give him a better slingshot.

NARRATOR

And he ordered the Boys in the Back Room to figger how to build me some sort of a triple-sling jigger.

NARRATOR

With my Tripe-Sling Jigger I sure felt much bigger.

NARRATOR

I marched to the Wall with great vim and great vigor, right up to VanItch with my hand on the trigger.

GRANDPA YOOK

"I'll have no more nonsense," I said with a frown,

NARRATORS (ALL)

"from Zooks who eat bread with the butter side down!"

For a brief moment we are taken into the world of the Zooks through the next section of narration and choice of costumes and props. Everything seems to have a darker tone.

GRANDPA YOOK

VanItch looked quite sickly. He ran off quite quickly.

NARRATOR

I'm unhappy to say he came back the next day in a spiffy new suit with a big new machine, and he snarled as he said, looking frightfully mean, you may fling those hard rocks with your Triple-Sling Jigger.

NARRATOR/ VANITCH

But I, also, now have my hand on a trigger! My wonderful weapon, the Jigger-Rock Snatchem, will fling 'em right back just as quick as we catch 'em.

NARRATOR/ ZOOK

We'll have no more nonsense. We'll take no more gupp from you Yooks who eat bread with the butter side up!"

Grandpa and The Chief cross down giving time for the Zooks to clear behind them. There is a brief moment where they seem to be having a heart to heart.

GRANDPA YOOK

"I have failed, sir," I sobbed as I made my report to the Chief Yookeroo in the headquarters fort. He just laughed.

NARRATOR/ CHIEF YOOKEROO

"You've done nothing at all of the sort. Our slingshots have failed. That was old-fashioned stuff. Slingshots, dear boy, are not modern enough. "All we need is some newfangled kind of gun.

Grandpa and the Chief are interrupted by a zany parade of scientists and inventors.

NARRATORS/ YOOK SCIENTISTS

My Boys in the Back Room have already begun to think up a walloping whizz-zinger one! My Bright Boys are thinking. They're on the right track. They'll think one up quick and we'll send you right back!"

NARRATOR/ CHIEF YOOKEROO

They thought up a great one! They certainly did. They thought up a gun called the Kick-a-Poo Kid,

Yook children appear and take joy in describing the powerful Poo-a-Doo because it sounds really icky! They also introduce the four-legged character Daniel.

NARRATORS/ YOOK CHILDREN

which they loaded with powerful Poo-a-Doo Powder and ants' eggs and bees' legs and dried-fried clam chowder. And they carefully trained a real smart dog-named Daniel to serve as our country's first gun-toting spaniel.

Daniel appears with a collar and a big name tag.

GRANDPA YOOK

Then Daniel, the Kick-a-Poo Spaniel, and I marched back toward the Wall with our heads held up high while everyone cheered and their cheers filled the sky:

NARRATORS (ALL)

Fight! Fight for the Butter side up! Do or die!"

DANIEL THE YOOK DOG

Well . . . We didn't do. And we didn't quite die.

GRANDPA YOOK

But we sure did get worsted, poor Daniel and I. VanItch was there too! And he said, the old pig...

NARRATOR/ VANITCH

"The Boys in my Back Room invented this rig called the Eight-Nozzled, Elephant-Toted Boom-Blitz. It shoots high-explosive sour cherry stone pits and will put your dumb Kick-a-Poo Kid on the fritz!"

GRANDPA YOOK

Poor Daniel and I were scared out of our wits!

This Narration section is told through great-big gesture to match the colorful explosive words.

NARRATOR

Once more, by VanItch I was bested and beat. Once again I limped home from the Wall in defeat. I dragged and I sagged and my spirits were low, as low as I thought that they ever could go,

NARRATOR

when I heard a Boom-Bah!

NARRATOR

And a Diddle-dee-Dill!

NARRATORS (ALL)

And our Butter-Up Band marched up over the hill!

The band appears with festive flags, streamers and some musical instruments.

GRANDPA YOOK

The Chief Yookeroo had sent them to meet me along with the Right-Sid-Up Song Girls to greet me. They sang:

THE BUTTER UP BAND (ALL)

~~"Oh, be faithful! Believe in thy butter!"~~

And we lifted his spirits right out of the gutter!

The Chief, military officers and scientists all appear to award and honor Grandpa

CHIEF YOOKEROO

"My boy," smiled the Chief Yookeroo, "we've just voted and made you a general!"

An officer presents Grandpa with his new uniform and helps him put it on.

YOOK MILITARY OFFICER

You've been promoted. Your pretty new uniform's ready. Get in it! The Big War is coming. You're going to begin it! And what's more, this time you are certain to win it.

YOOK HEAD SCIENTIST

"My Boys in the Back Room have finally found how. Just wait till you see what they've pattered up now!"

YOOK SCIENTIST

In their great new machine you'll fly over the Wall and clobber those Butter-Down Zooks one and all!"

A large group of the Narrators ban together to create the new machine using props and their bodies.

NARRATOR

Those Boy in the Back Room sure knew how to putter! They made me a thing called the Utterly Sputter and I jumped aboard with my heart all aflutter and steered toward the land” of the Upside-Down Butter.

NARRATOR

This machine was so modern, so frightfully new, no one knew quite exactly just what it would do!

GRANDPA YOOK

But it had several faucets that sprinkled Blue Goo, which, somehow, would sprinkle the Zooks as I flew and gum up that upside-down butter they chew. I was racing pell-mell when I heard a voice yell...

NARRATOR/ VANITCH

If you sprinkle us Zooks, you'll get sprinkled as well!

GRANDPA YOOK

VanItch had a Sputter exactly like mine! And he yelled, My Blue-Gooer is working just fine!

NARRATOR/ VANITCH

And I'm here to say that if Yooks can goo Zooks you'd better forget it. 'Cause Zooks can goo Yooks!"

GRANDPA YOOK

I flew right back home and, as you may have guessed, I was downright despondent, disturbed, and depressed . And I saw, just as soon as I stepped back on land, so were all of the girls of the Butter-Up Band. The Chief Drum Majorette, Miz Yookie-Ann Sue, said,

THE BUTTER UP BAND

"That was a pretty sour flight that you flew. And the Chief Yookerooo has been looking for you!"

GRANDPA

I raced to his office. The place was a sight.

NARRATOR/ CHIEF YOOKEROO

have no fears," said the Chief. "Everything is all right. My Bright Back Room Boys have been brighter than bright. They've thought up a gadget that's Newer than New.

NARRATOR/ YOOK SCIENTIST

It is filled with mysterious Moo-Lacka-Moo and can blow all those Zooks clear to Salama-goo THEY'VE INVENTED THE BITSY BIG-BOY BOOMEROO!"

The Scientist presents Grandpa with a very small bomb, which looks like a red rubber ball.

NARRATOR/ YOOK HEAD SCIENTIST

You just run to the Wall like a nice little man." Drop this bomb on the Zooks just as fast as you can.

NARRATOR/ CHIEF YOOKEROO

I have ordered all Yooks to stay safe underground" while the Bitsy Big-Boy Boomer is around."

Everyone runs to take cover except Grandpa and Boy Yook. The Boy can see Grandpa but Grandpa cannot see he boy.

GRANDPA YOOK

As I raced for that Wall, with the bomb in my hand, I noticed that every last Yook in our land was obeying our Chief Yookeroo's grim command.

BOY YOOK

They were all bravely marching, with banners aflutter, down a hole! For their country!

(Everyone waves a small Yook flag but the audience cannot see any faces.)

And Right-Side-Up Butter!

That's when Grandfather found me! He grabbed me. He said,

GRANDPA YOOK

"You should be down that hole! And you're up here instead! But perhaps this is all for the

better, somehow. You will see me make history! Right HERE! AND RIGHT NOW!"

The Narrators reappear to create a large winding wall that divides the Yooks and the Zooks.

BOY YOOK

Grandpa leapt up that Wall with a loplous leap and he cleared his hoarse throat with a bopulous beep. He screamed, "Here's the end of that terrible town full of Zooks who eat bread with the butter side down!" And at that very instant we heard a klupp-klupp of feet on the Wall and old VanItch klupped up! The Boys in HIS Back Room had made him one too! In his fist was another Big-Boy Boomeroo!

VANITCH

"I'll blow you," he yelled, "into pork and wee beans! I'll butter-side-up you to small smithereens!"

BOY YOOK

"Grandpa! I shouted. "Be careful! Oh, gee! Who's going to drop it?

Will you . . . ? Or will he . . . ?

NARRATORS (ALL)

"Be patient," said Grandpa.

GRANDPA YOOK

"We'll see. We'll see."