

# Once Upon a Time – The Chalk Boy

*Once Upon a Time – The Chalk Boy* (ABS-CBN Corporation, Philippines) is a dramatic program about Fordy, who is forced to move with his family to the countryside from the city to take care of his grandfather (cf. screenshot 1). Fordy is not exactly happy leaving his friends behind and dealing with his grandfather's moodiness (cf. screenshot 2, 3). Fordy thinks his grandfather Eugenio is strict for he admonishes him for not eating his vegetables (cf. screenshot 4). We learn that his grandfather simply wants Fordy and his brother to learn to value food for it was scarce during the war when he was a little boy. One afternoon, Fordy stumbles upon a hidden storage room and discovers a magical living and talking drawing of a boy named Enyong (cf. screenshot 5). It was drawn by his grandfather when he was a young boy during the Japanese occupation in World War II. The drawing gives Fordy a better understanding of his grandfather (cf. screenshot 6) and soon, Fordy befriends the young boy. When a typhoon forces Fordy and his family to evacuate their home, Fordy tries to save Enyong, but the flood erases Enyong forever (cf. screenshot 7). As the typhoon subsides, Fordy continues his friendship with the real Enyong, his grandfather (cf. screenshot 8).

*Once Upon a Time – The Chalk Boy* was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 finalists in the 7-11 Fiction category and was awarded the Prize of the Children's Jury.

## International experts' opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *Once Upon a Time – The Chalk Boy* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012. The program was well received in the discussions. The presence of a grandfather character in the program was particularly liked by many. They saw it as an endearing presence that is not often seen in many programs. Some experts also noted that the grandfather character was not a one-dimensional grumpy character. In addition, the portrayal of loving parents, as opposed to absentee or junkie parents as seen in some programs, was also seen as a refreshing change.

"I thought the way the grandfather was depicted was very nice because you don't often see grandparents included in programs. It was nice to see the grandchild and grandson relationship develop." (female expert, Australia)

"You can learn something about respect from it. I think it was the best program I saw today." (male expert, Norway)

"I liked it. It's nice to see a family that was together and not one with a drug addict." (male expert, Canada)

"I loved the family values it taught." (female expert, Ghana)

"Amazing. It was a lovely story." (female expert, Portugal)

Another aspect of the program that impressed the experts was the production value of the drama, specifically the acting and the animation style.



Ill. 1: Fordy is uprooted from the city to the countryside



Ill. 2: Fordy shares with his older brother his wish



Ill. 3: Grandfather Eugenio reminds Fordy to show respect to elders



Ill. 4: Fordy is reminded by his grandfather to not waste food



Ill. 5: Fordy meets Enyong, the Chalk Boy



Ill. 6: Enyong tells Fordy the importance of food



Ill. 7: Enyong is wiped out after the typhoon



Ill. 8: Fordy tells his grandfather that they should make a kite

“I liked it very much. It was gentle and touching. The boy was a very good actor.” (male expert, Germany)

“He was a great actor. When he went to the shadow with the drawing, you could feel his emotion.” (female expert, UK)

“It had a high production value. I liked the animation where they used chalk drawings.” (female expert, Ghana)

The discussion also moved to the issue of cultural differences, especially the way the respect for elders was portrayed in the film. Some experts wondered if this value was something predominant only in Asian cultures.

“It was unusual (for me) to see that kind of respect for grandparents. It’s not European.” (male expert, Germany)

“The way they greet their parents and grandparents – I find it very charming.” (male expert, Sweden)

“There was a lovely moment in the film when the grandfather ate the food his grandson drew for him. I thought it was about a growing friendship that turned into respect. It was understanding born out of respect, not duty. I think that’s a universal story.” (male expert, UK)

“I’d like to see more stories like this in the West. Germany needs more stories like this.” (female expert, Germany)

“We don’t see many stories with this kind of moral about friendships between generations made in Europe.” (male expert, Sweden)

“With an aging population, it’s something that really has to be considered. The relationship between children and their grandparents is going to be a strong issue, particularly in Europe.” (male expert, UK)

A heartwarming story and an endearing message truly made *Once Upon a Time – The Chalk Boy* stand out. The Children’s Jury also agreed as they bestowed the program the grand prize in the 7-11 Fiction category. Overall, the program proves that respect for elders, for their stories and experiences, is a value appreciated around the world.

*Karen Palomo (Centennial College, Toronto, Canada)*

Screenshots from *Once Upon a Time – The Chalk Boy* © ABS-CBN Corporation, Philippines

Target Audience 7.54	Idea 7.72	Script 7.00	Realization 7.51
Average Score per Category by experts’ voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			

**Winner of PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012 Prize of the Children’s Jury**