

# Small Potatoes

*Small Potatoes* (Little Airplane Productions, USA) is a short animation series. The “Small Potatoes” are a band of 4 singing potatoes (cf. screenshot 1) traveling the world making music (cf. screenshot 2) and making friends. Each song in the series celebrates a different musical genre, from Classical to Reggae, and from Hip Hop to Flamenco. The main characters on the series are Olaf, Nate, Chip and Ruby (cf. screenshot 3). They are 4 singing potatoes created to represent the honesty and humanity of preschool children everywhere (cf. screenshot 4). In their own words,

“Short Potato,  
Tall Potato,  
Light or dark,  
We’re all potatoes at heart.”

In this episode, the “Small Potatoes” explore the concept of imagination (cf. screenshot 5). They sing about imagination in a gentle pop song accompanied by sitar sounds (cf. screenshot 6), discuss imagination (cf. screenshot 7) and all the while imagine through travel, song and music (cf. screenshot 8).

*Small Potatoes* was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012 finalists in the Up to 6 Fiction category.

## International experts’ opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *Small Potatoes* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012. Many of the international experts liked *Small Potatoes* very much, pointing out especially the music and songs. Some experts thought the music and songs were the best in the Up to 6 age category. One expert described it as “beautifully touching, lovely... great fun... totally brilliant.” (male expert, UK)

Many experts also agreed that the program was fun and sweet, had great visuals, and that the use of music was appropriate for this age group. Some of the experts liked the use of potatoes as main characters of a show. One of the experts found the potatoes to be “emotionally touching” (female expert, Korea). Another expert thought it was “just nice to make such characters” with vegetables, which are “no beauties at all”, saying that she found it to be “very charming.” (female expert, Germany)

One of the most discussed aspects of *Small Potatoes*, which the experts praised, was the use of children’s voices in the program. One expert said he likes “peer-to-peer communication” and that in this case “the standard was very high” (male expert, Netherlands). Another expert from Canada pointed out the use of children’s voices in the music.

A female expert from the UK wondered whether the children in the program, discussing the episode’s theme of imagination, were really children. “Was this really them? Their opinions?” she asked, mentioning their level of articulation and vocabulary, but also added that “it was lovely to hear that language” as it may help to develop language skills in young viewers.



Ill. 1: “Small Potatoes” sing their theme song



Ill. 2: Potato singing with background music



Ill. 3: “Small Potatoes” take a bath



Ill. 4: "We're all potatoes"

The use of humor in *Small Potatoes* was also discussed. One of the experts thought *Small Potatoes* has "a fantastic sense of humor." While he pointed out that it is easy in humor for preschoolers "to concentrate on gags and getting a laugh," that is not "the full story". The potatoes, he continued, "they're going 'I'm a potato,'" and that is a "wonderful sense of humor... kids can watch that and feel that without necessarily having to roll around the floor laughing" (male expert, UK). Another expert reacted to this comment saying "there were some lovely moments where you just smiled... you didn't do a belly laugh, you just smiled." (male expert, UK)



Ill. 5: A small potato talking about imagination

Another point of discussion raised by the experts was whether *Small Potatoes* fell in the Fiction, or Non-Fiction, category. Some experts pointed out that potatoes are fictional characters, while others pointed to the idea of music and singing, and the presentation of musical instruments as non-fiction. There was also discussion about whether there was a story to the program. One of the experts said that "fiction to me is a story. And this wasn't a story. It was potatoes singing." (female expert, UK)



Ill. 6: Singing about imagination

Another expert said he thinks it depends on how you view non-fiction: "If you see non-fiction as presentation of factual information," he said, then "there's no factual information here." He added that "the story is within the song." (male expert, UK)

Lastly, there was some discussion among the experts on the theme of imagination. Some of the experts thought the program was not very "imaginative", in the sense that there was much talking about imagination, but little doing it. One of the experts said she thinks "it's really hard talking about imagination... it's one of those things you can do but you can't really talk about doing." She said she thinks "you have to just get right to the imagining." (female expert, USA)



Ill. 7: "You can create things in your mind"

*Erga Lemish (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA)*



Ill. 8: Imagining through song

Screenshots from *Small Potatoes* © Little Airplane Productions, USA

Target Audience 7.95	Idea 7.98	Script 7.28	Realization 8.03
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			