

The Doll Adventure

The Doll Adventure (SVT, Sweden) is a delightful series about two 7-year-old girls, Anna and Ellinor, and their doll, Matilda Persson.

Waking up one morning after a sleepover, the girls determine that the doll is ‘sick’ (cf. screenshot 1), and set out to make medicine for her. Mixing ingredients in the kitchen (cf. screenshot 2), they use a syringe to force the ‘medicine’ into the doll’s mouth (cf. screenshot 3). Although warned by the mother that putting medicine into the doll will simply make her moldy, the girls continue to give her more and more until the doll begins to spit it out (cf. screenshot 4). First hiding the doll in the trash (cf. screenshot 5), then working to clean up the mess while lying to the mother about what they’ve done, the girls at last decide to ‘operate’ to cure the doll (cf. screenshot 6). Finally getting the doll cleaned up (cf. screenshot 7), the girls present her to the mother, smelling of the mother’s favorite perfume. In the end, they announce that the doll is well at last (cf. screenshot 8). But, is she really?

The Doll Adventure was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 finalists in the Up to 6 Fiction category.

International experts’ opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *The Doll Adventure* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012. Most experts expressed a real enjoyment of the film, and an appreciation for the girls’ imagination and sense of adventure in their play with the doll.

“I thought it was the best portrayal of girls in the whole festival. It was absolutely brilliant!” (male expert, UK)

“The girls had motivations that were constantly regenerating. There was the desire to experiment, and a unique take on girlhood that I don’t think we’ve seen before. This program really reflects girls’ spirits.” (female expert, USA)

“I found it so liberating to see naughty girls who were not tomboys.” (female expert, Germany)

Many experts also reflected on the ambiguity of naughtiness in the film, but felt that these two girls showed just the “right amount”, since they were not being maliciously naughty. Although they disobeyed the mother, they were doing it in a spirit of imagination and invention.

“I think there was a nurturing quality to [their naughtiness]. They weren’t doing it to resist rules.” (female expert, USA)

“It was only when they didn’t listen to their mother – they knew they weren’t listening. But they knew they were answering to a ‘higher power’, and that was interesting.” (female expert, USA)

“They didn’t even stand out to me as naughty girls for what they were doing because I thought, well, they’re experimenting. They’re adventurers! They’re sort of nurturing the doll.” (female expert, USA)



Ill. 1: Anna and Ellinor decide the doll is sick



Ill. 2: Mixing up some “medicine” in the kitchen



Ill. 3: Feeding the “medicine” to the doll



Ill. 4: Matilda the doll spits out the medicine



Ill. 5: Searching for the doll after hiding her in the trash bin



Ill. 6: The girls prepare to “operate” on the doll



Ill. 7: Cleaning the doll inside and out



Ill. 8: Proving to mom that the doll is clean

Many experts commented on the age of the girls in the film, noting that although they were very good actresses, they seemed to be too old for the target age group. Some experts also noted the events in the film, concerned that some of them might be age inappropriate, or would not be acceptable in their home countries.

“It’s a weird one for us in the UK. We wouldn’t be able to show the program for a number of reasons – the girls handling scissors and going into the medicine cabinet, or the mother going out to get breakfast and leaving them in the house on their own. I really enjoyed it but I didn’t feel it was quite appropriate for 3- to 6-year-olds.” (female expert, UK)

Most of the experts commented on the sense of reality of the story – that it accurately portrayed the way that girls really play.

“It’s such a simple, normal everyday kind of story. I think that’s sort of how we all wanted to play as girls.” (female expert, Germany)

“It was one of the few shows where girls were being girls rather than being girls to be looked at.” (female expert, UK)

“It’s a new twist on a classic children’s story: it seems like a good idea, but the farther you go, the more you dig yourself a hole.” (female expert, USA)

Across all of the panels, experts agreed that the film was charming and fun, and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

“It was a brilliant portrayal of naughtiness that is immersed in a child’s world that you could take on different levels.” (female expert, Switzerland)

“I have to say that I liked the Swedish *Doll Adventure* so much. I didn’t have anything to do with [making] it, but I love it!” (male expert, Sweden)

Margaret Lundberg (University of Washington, Tacoma, USA)

Screenshots from *The Doll Adventure* © SVT, Sweden

Target Audience 6.97	Idea 7.68	Script 7.50	Realization 7.55
Average Score per Category by experts’ voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			