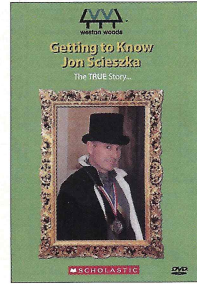


### Getting to Know Jon Scieszka ★★★1/2

(2013) 26 min. DVD: \$39.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57040-9.

This delightful portrait of children's book author Jon Scieszka begins with Scieszka's visit with a group of second-grade kids at a library (where he pretends to be a guy named "Bob" introducing the real writer). The author of *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs*, *Knucklehead: Tall Tales and Almost True Stories of Growing Up* and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Fairytales*, Scieszka—a certificated teacher—is an entertaining and committed force for the promotion of reading and education for today's youngsters. Here he weighs in on the difficulty of getting boys to read (his solution: offer more male voices in book selections, e.g., as with Roald Dahl) and the challenges of making math and science fun. Scieszka also talks about his life growing up in Flint, MI, with five brothers and how he shifted gears as a developing adult fiction author to writing children's books, all based on his experiences in the classroom. Scieszka makes fun of himself for not doing anything visually interesting when he's writing at a keyboard, and he's remarkably frank about raising a son who, he believes, has never actually read one of his books. Including a read-along option and a bonus featurette with comments from some of Scieszka's friends, this fine portrait of a beloved children's author is highly recommended. Aud: E, P. (T. Keogh)



focuses on loving one another. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

### Alive Inside ★★★

(2014) 78 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

You might think a documentary set in modern hospital-style nursing homes would be depressing. Not so with Michael Rossato-Bennett's *Alive Inside*, which celebrates the salutary impact of music on patients afflicted with dementia. At the story's center is New York social worker Dan Cohen, who raises funds to provide nursing homes with iPods for distribution to residents suffering from Alzheimer's and other forms of mental debilitation. Cohen's investigations revealed that even residents who were almost completely uncommunicative could be rejuvenated by hearing the songs they loved. But while the project's cost would amount to far less than many prescribed medications, Cohen found that bureaucratic red tape was an insurmountable obstacle, so he began seeking donations to fund Music and Memory, which has provided iPods to nursing homes in a growing number of states. *Alive Inside* captures amazing sequences of people responding almost miraculously to the sound of music—an apparently somnolent man becomes voluble in response to what he hears through the headphones, while a woman abandons her walker and begins dancing, as does an elderly veteran strapped into a wheelchair. And a woman who is still living in her own home reacts excitedly as her playlist is added to the device. All of this material is joyously inspiring, even if the accompanying narration is frequently banal and cliché-ridden. Still, despite its shortcomings, the film provides a welcome glimpse of an alternative/additional treatment for the ever-growing number of older Americans suffering from dementia. Extras include a director's audio commentary, deleted scenes, a Q&A with Cohen, and an interview with Rossato-Bennett. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### Daughters of Dolma ★★★1/2

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). DRA. Kino Lorber Edu.

*Daughters of Dolma* centers on how the lives of young Tibetan Buddhist nuns in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley blend the old (ancient rituals, religious study) and the new (horror movies, Facebook). The documentary looks at three generations inside the walls of remote religious institutions, but filmmaker Adam

to different languages while also focusing on key non-English words and phrases, this entry from the long-running *Rock 'N Learn* series takes viewers on an animated tour of a fun, futuristic house, pointing out everyday objects, numbers, and colors in—depending on the option chosen from the menu—English, German, Italian, Mandarin, Chinese, and Spanish, with the same range of available subtitles. After a while, adjectives and verbs are added to the simple nouns, creating short sentences (e.g., "Go up the stairs.") and word combinations ("seven red balloons"). Youngsters will appreciate the cartoon characters (giggling kids, a mischievous armadillo), who are charming in any language. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (T. Keogh)

### Separate Is Never Equal ★★★

(2014) 16 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-689-6.

Narrated by Adriana Sananes, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2014 picture book by author and illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh looks at the 1946 civil rights school battle *Mendez vs. Westminster* (which took place nearly a decade before *Brown v. Board of Education*). *Separate Is Never Equal* follows young Sylvia Mendez, the daughter of a California field-working Mexican citizen father and Puerto Rican mother (who later holds down the family farm of asparagus, chiles, and tomatoes once the lawsuit is underway). Sylvia and her siblings are denied entry to a prosperous nearby Orange County public school because of their darker skin, and when Sylvia's dad objects to school officials, "no one would give him a satisfactory answer." Mr. Mendez works to gather signatures to file a petition for equality for all of the children (although some neighbors don't want to rock the boat). Covering both the subsequent trial

(in which education professionals practically lied about the supposed lack of basic aptitude, language skills, and even cleanliness of the Hispanic children) and the aftermath (the NAACP and other group organizations became involved), this inspirational program reminds viewers that "when you fight for justice, others will follow." DVD extras include a read-along option and an audio segment with notes on the history of the case and Sylvia Mendez's later life. Recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### VeggieTales: Beauty and the Beet

★★★

(2014) 45 min. DVD: \$14.98. Big Idea Productions (avail. from most distributors).

This latest entry in the long-running Christian children's series serves up an extremely loose interpretation of the classic fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast*. After the Veggie Tones family band cleans up at the Greensburg talent show, the group tours vegetable-themed locales such as Spinachusettes, Squashington, Oklahoma, and Caulifornia—all leading up to a big show at the famed Vegetable Square Garden. Pressing ahead through a treacherous snowstorm on their tour bus, the band finds themselves trapped at the near-empty Beet's Alpine Suites. Although some staff members are thrilled to see the Veggie Tones, crotchety owner Finnigan J. Beet III is not impressed and wants the cash-strapped musicians to earn their keep while waiting for the roads to be cleared...perhaps by helping save the reputation of the lagging resort by sprucing up their floor show? Centering on the bond between lead singer sweet potato daughter Mirabelle (voiced by *American Idol* contestant Kellie Pickler) and the not-so-bad-on-the-inside Beet, the story features several twangy tunes with a theme set to 1 John 4:11, which