

'Piggley Winks' is fun, educational

Anne Navarro/CNS

NEW YORK — Charming, heart-warming and plenty of fun, PBS' animated series "Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks" fits the bill for parents seeking an educational show for their children and kids more interested in entertainment than education. The series airs 9-9:30 a.m. EDT Sundays on PBS (check local listings).

Cheerful and bright, "Jakers!" (an Irish expression of delight and amazement) tells of the exploits of a spunky young pig named Piggley Winks and his friends Dannan the Duck and Ferny the Bull on Raloo Farm in Ireland. Each episode opens and closes with an older Piggley Winks, a granddad to three rambunctious rural grandpigs, drawing the children away from their Gameboys and drawing out their imaginations.

He regales them with stories of his youthful shenanigans such as when he and his friends learn what mysterious things their teacher, "old Homework Hornsby," does on Saturday afternoon. While the plucky trio is off on escapades, Wiley the Sheep (dynamically voiced by Mel Brooks), who crossed the pond from the States to Raloo Farm, bosses around his fellow sheep, chiding them for bad behavior or rousing them to action — whatever action that might be on any given day.

Life on an Irish farm 50-plus years



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ago may seem like a somewhat dreary subject for American kids. But "Jakers!" proves the opposite. The stories are funny and gentle and the animation, from Mike Young Productions, is colorful and lively, as if characters from a beautiful picture book were leaping off the page.

Although the Irish brogues of the characters can be delightful to the American ear, they can also somewhat hinder understanding as a few jokes and funny lines are lost in the accent. However, the dialogue is peppered with words such as "brilliant" and "gorgeous," which anyone who has visited the Emerald Isle knows are staples in Irish conversation.

Each episode is followed by a brief live-action section entitled "Live & Learn" hosted by soccer star Cobi Jones, a three-time U.S. World Cup team member. These three-minute epilogues translate into concrete terms the lesson taught by the episode by spotlighting a diverse group of children who share amusing, and sometimes poignant, real-life stories.

TV Review

For example, in the episode entitled "Teacher Creature," the lesson is about keeping an open mind. The children in the epilogue try new foods, talk about playing a new sport and say that although they initially were apprehensive the experience turned out positively.

"Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks" brings out the best in Irish storytelling and intergenerational relationships, showing children the value of respecting their elders while presenting an enjoyable show that surely entertains as well as educates.

Navarro is a part-time reviewer for the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Kids' Chronicle

Answers from page B20:

1. seven, 2. four, 3. two, 4. three,
5. one, 6. six, 7. five

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