

## Reconsideration Scenario #1

### How was this material brought to your attention?

“Children pulled it off the shelf for me to read to them.”

### Are you concerned about the item as a whole or a specific part?

“As a whole. Cute for adults...potentially horrifying story for a child (about a witch coming in a child’s bedroom and daddy cutting off her hand with a sword.”

### What specific objections do you have to the item?

Too scary...nightmare material. I have four kids ages 3-11...even my 9-year-old commented that is was inappropriate as she overheard the story.”

### SLJ Reviews 1990 April

Website: [www.cahners.com](http://www.cahners.com)

K-Gr 3-- In echoing Roald Dahl's delight in gruesome and gory detail, Utton has introduced an element into this picture book that may present difficulties for its young audience. George asks about a “horrible, brown, crinkly thing” pinned to the wall of his father's art studio. Reluctant to discuss it at first, Dad, at George's urging, launches into a hair-raising narrative of his encounter with a foul-smelling, warty witch who was hovering over the sleeping forms of George and his brother. To save his boys he grabbed the witch's “knotted neck,” but she threatened him with a “dagger of vipers.” Then their mother enters the room and cuts off the witch's hand with a sword. Dad ends his tale by telling George that he pinned the severed hand to his wall to remind himself to lock all the doors at night. George is understandably intimidated until his father admits that his story is pure invention and that the “witch's hand” is only a cluster of dry leaves. This ending may not be enough to calm the fears of young listeners. While the exuberant, expressive lines of the bold watercolor illustrations infuse the story with a comic flavor, they cannot neutralize the fact that the central theme of the story is disturbing. Traditionally, in folklore and fantasy fiction, witches who prey on children are thwarted by the children themselves. It is frightening to imagine being preyed upon while one is asleep, a situation that precludes having any power over evil. This sense of power is one of the comforts young children need when they read or hear about creatures from the darker side. --Carey Ayres, Port Washington Public Library, NY Copyright 1990 Cahners Business Information.

---

– OVER –

## **PW Reviews 1989 December #2**

**Website:** [www.cahners.com](http://www.cahners.com)

The power of stories to seem more true than reality is the theme of this clever first book from a British author/illustrator. To explain the appearance of “a horrible, brown crinkly thing pinned to the wall” of his art studio, George's father tells his son that in the middle of the night he heard the “slither-slither-pat-pat-cackle-cackle” of a witch coming to steal the children. Just as the witch was ready to stab George's father with a dagger of vipers, he was saved by George's mother, who cut off the witch's hand; his father has pinned it to the wall “to remind me to lock all the doors at night.” When George's father admits that the “hand” is just a leaf and his tale of horror “just a story,” George laughs and says, “Why, you rotten fibber!” Although the story's ending may seem unsatisfactorily abrupt, Utton's suitably silly text and slapdash watercolors skillfully blend fright and humor into a story that retains its excitement even when the reader, like George, knows it can't be true. Ages 3-up. (Dec.) Copyright 1989 Cahners Business Information.