

# ***Make-Believe Twins***

*A Best Friends Story*

by **J.D. Newman**

**PREVIEW PAGES**



**Newport, Maine**

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## **OTHER BOOKS BY J.D. NEWMAN:**

*Sandy and the Weird Sisters* -- Book 1 in the *Sandy Hunter Saga* (Leicester Bay Books, now a play with its premiere at The Open Eye Theatre in Margaretville, NY in October 2016)

*Sandy and the Dance of Faith* -- Book 2 in the *Sandy Hunter Saga* is coming in 2019 from Leicester Bay Books

## **PUBLISHED PLAYS BY J.D. NEWMAN:**

**All's Well That Ends Well** (Leicester Bay Theatricals)

**Awakening Galatea** (LBT)

**Crowns and Commoners** (LBT)

**DeGruchy's Mantle** (LBT)

**The Doctor In Spite of Himself** (LBT)

**Gathering Grimm** (LBT)

**The Gypsy Tree** (Coming Soon to Leicester Bay Theatricals)

**Land of Oz** (LBT)

**Liberation** [1-act] (LBT)

**Much Ado About Nothing** (LBT)

**Olympus On the Moon** [1-act] (LBT)

**Puzzles** (LBT)

**The Yearning Season** (LBT)

**Sandy And The Weird Sisters** -- a play by J.D. Newman (LBT)

## **OTHER PLAYS BY J.D. NEWMAN:**

**The Man Behind The Curtain** (a one-man play about L. Frank Baum)

**Whirligig** (adapted from Paul Fleischman's novel) Published by YOUTHPlays

**Here Lies the Librarian** (adapted from Richard Peck's novel) Rights Unavailable.

**A Year Down Yonder** (adapted from Richard Peck's novel) Rights Unavailable.

**Princess Academy** (adapted from Shannon Hale's novel) Rights Unavailable.

**The Voyage of the Bassett** (adapted from the illustrated story book of James C. Christensen) Rights Unavailable.

**The Secret School** (adapted from Avi's novel) Dramatic Publishing

**The Winter's Tale** (adapted and edited from Shakespeare) Eldridge Plays and Musicals

**The Tempest** (adapted and edited from Shakespeare) Eldridge Plays and Musicals

## ***DEDICATION***

To my real twins, Aaron and Evan

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### ***GREATNESS IN MAGNA, UTAH***

When I was seven years old, my mother would tell me, “Life isn’t a race.” When she wasn’t listening, my dad would whisper that it was. I believed my father.

Even as a first-grader, I felt that I had to do better than everyone else. Grown-ups would say I just had to do my best. I knew better.

I grew up in Magna, Utah, on the west side of the Salt Lake Valley. Our teachers told us that Magna meant “great” and I thought that our town got its name from the great things around us. The smokestack at our copper smelter was the tallest tower in the world. To the south, the copper pit mine was the largest hole in the world. To the north, on the Salt Flats, the world’s fastest cars broke land speed records. Living in Magna

made me want to be greatest, at something.

However, most people in the valley didn't think that Magna was so great. Visitors said that its water tasted oily, and it did, but when I was growing up, I thought that was how water was supposed to taste. We noticed the brine stink from the Great Salt Lake, but that only happened a few times a year. People said our copper mill was polluting the air but my dad, who worked there, said that cars made more smoke than our smokestack.

A lot of our parents worked at the mill, but Magna also had Hercules, a place that made dynamite and rockets. That brought scientists and engineers to our community, including the father of the only new student in my first-grade class: Janet Ashton.

Before Janet arrived, I was the greatest reader in our grade. That's not bragging; it was a fact. On the first day of first-grade, when we walked into the classroom, the teacher had penciled on our nametags the number of the book we had reached in the Sullivan Reader series. My nametag said "Book 6;" no one else was any further than Book 3.

The Sullivan reading program let us learn at our

own speed. My mom, who served on the PTA, thought that the program was good education. It was the seventies, 1973 to be exact, and Mom said it was about time that schools treated students as individuals. She said it kept slower readers, like my sister Alison, from being dragged along, and let faster readers, like me, move ahead.

I was proud of how fast I got through the Sullivan Readers. As a boy, I wasn't great at sports, and reading let me be great at something else.

The books started with letters that grew into words that grew into sentences that grew into stories. Most of the questions were yes-and-no, fill-in-the-letter, and fill-in-the-blank. The answers were right there in the gray column on the left side of every page. A student could peek at the answers by looking under his cardboard slider before he wrote down the answer. However, if he did, all his classmates would call him a cheater. Our teacher was supposed to check the answers we wrote down in our spiral notebooks. She never did; I know because I tested her.

When my parents were in first grade, they read about Dick and Jane. When we were in first grade, we



read about Sam and Ann. The kids in our books had one-syllable names with short vowel sounds; the authors thought long vowels would confuse us

It seemed to me that Sam and Ann were twins, although it never said so in the books. I always thought it would be fun to have a twin sister, more fun than having a little sister like Alison. She was the boss of the playground at school and the boss of the television at home. I was shy about speaking up, but Alison spoke enough for both of us. She was a talker and I was a reader.

I planned to complete all 21 of the Sullivan Readers before the end of first-grade; I wondered what I'd read when I finished them. No one in kindergarten could beat me in reading and no one had ever tried. However, in first-grade, Janet made it a race.

She came from Florida where her dad had worked on the moon rockets and where they used a different reading program. Janet had been a good reader there, so Mrs. Simon started her in Book 4. By the end of September, she was catching up with me.

Janet sat next to me at the front of the class. Although we never spoke, she always looked to see

where I was in my book, and I always looked to see where she was in hers. Janet might catch up with me, but she wasn't going to leave me behind. I wished Janet would try to be great at something else, but you can't be the greatest unless someone else could be greater.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### ***RUNNING BEHIND***

Janet didn't talk much with the other girls in the class, and the girls didn't talk to the boys. Janet didn't fuss about her clothes or her hair or her jewelry, and she didn't giggle about which girl liked which boy.

After Janet's introduction the first day, when she said her father was a rocket scientist, the other girls started calling her "Interplanet Janet," after the Schoolhouse Rock cartoon. The boys thought rockets were cool; the girls thought they were something to tease Janet about.

For a while, Janet played with a group of girls who checked out plastic beaded jump-ropes as they went out to morning recess. They showed her their jump-rope tricks, and once they taught her, she went home and practiced till she could do them better than they

did. Within a week, Janet could cross hands, turn around, twirl the rope in front of her, and jump back in. A few girls tried to out-do her, but Janet bested them every time, so they let her practice alone.

On the playground, if the other kids were playing king-ball, I crawled around on the jungle gym or on the new playscape we called “the poles and tires.” King-ball was sort of like double dodge-ball. It was invented by Jimmy King’s older brothers, who were star athletes at Cyprus High School. How great would it be to have other people play your game when you’re gone!

From the jungle gym, I watched Janet practicing by herself. “Interplanet Janet” was in a world of her own. I thought that being the best at something would earn me friends. Dad introduced me to all his high school friends and they all said that he was the best runner that Cyprus High had ever known. However, being the best at jump-rope didn’t earn Janet any friends, and being the best at reading didn’t earn me any.

I was pretty good at most playground games, but I wasn’t great at any of them. I could work my way to the serving square in four-square and I kicked a fair

number of home-runs in base-soccer. I was even decent at what we called “variation football,” especially on defense. I wasn’t great at catching the Nerf football when it was thrown to us by the other team, but I could tag out another kid who did. I liked winning by myself in something like reading, but it felt even better to be part of a winning team.

One day, as I pushed through the metal doors to the playground, I looked for Janet. Even though I didn’t talk to her, I always noticed what she was doing. I counted eight girls with the class’s eight jump-ropes. Most of them didn’t really like jumping rope, but if they could keep Janet from getting a rope, she couldn’t show them up.

I looked across the blacktop and spotted Janet at the yellow starting line that had been painted on the asphalt for the fifty-yard dash. She was wearing her sneakers but was also wearing a dress. Even so, she was crouched like a runner for the start of a race. Janet stared back at me and smiled.

My dad had taught me how to run. I could beat any first-grade boy in the fifty-yard dash, but I had nothing to gain from running against a girl, and everything to

lose. She had nothing to lose from racing a boy, and everything to gain if she won.

Janet arched her back as if she was waiting for the starter pistol. Other students were looking at her and she was still looking at me. The only thing worse than losing to a girl would be refusing to race her. I lined up next to Janet. Someone called “on your mark, get set, go!” and we were off.

If I went easy on a girl, no one would go easy on me. I cross the yellow line five paces ahead of Janet. She should have stopped and shaken my hand, but Janet kept running.

I stayed close to her up to the first curve of the oval that surrounded the playground, but Janet kept going. I fell further behind as we rounded the second curve. I gained on her in the straightaway and almost caught her... almost. She beat me in the quarter-mile run by more than I beat her in the 50-yard-dash. After we crossed the finish line, Janet held out her hand. I had to shake her hand, to be a good sport, but I chose to smile.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR





**Dr. J.D. Newman** is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Utah Valley University. He served as Director of UVU's Theatre for Youth and Education (TYE) Center for nine years and now serves as Chair of the Department of Theatrical Arts. Dr. Newman taught and directed theatre at Highland High School in Salt Lake City for eighteen years and served for a year as the artistic director of the Salt Lake School for the Performing Arts. He is a published author, novelist, and playwright and has performed his solo play about L. Frank Baum, *The Man Behind the Curtain*, throughout the United States. Dr. Newman has adapted plays from novels by Newbery medalists Avi, Paul Fleischman, Richard Peck, and Jean Lee Latham. Leicester Bay Books published his first novel, *Sandy and the Weird Sisters*, and will soon be publishing its sequel, *Sandy and the Dance of Faith*. His academic book, *Playwriting In Schools: Dramatic Navigation*, was recently published by Intellect.