The Yellow Boat

Authorized shortened version for performance in competitions.

The story of The Yellow Boat is a glorious affirmation of a child’s life and the strength and courage of all children.

Drama. By David Saar. Cast: 3m., 2w., plus 4 ensemble. (The number of actors in the ensemble may be increased or reduced.) The Yellow Boat is based on the true story of David and Sonja Saar’s son, Benjamin, who was born with congenital hemophilia and died in 1987 at the age of 8 of AIDS-related complications. A uniquely gifted visual artist, Benjamin’s buoyant imagination transformed his physical and emotional pain into a blaze of colors and shapes in his fanciful drawings and paintings. A Scandinavian folksong tells of three little boats: “One was blue, one was red and one was yellow as the sun. They sailed far out to sea. The blue one returned to the harbor. The red one sailed home, too. But the yellow boat sailed up to the sun.” Benjamin always concluded his bedtime ritual by saying, “Mom, you can be the red boat or the blue boat, but I am the yellow boat.” Benjamin’s remarkable voyage continues to touch audiences around the world. Recommended for children age 8 and older, parents, families and adults. Open stage with simple set pieces. Contemporary costumes. Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Music in book. No additional cutting is allowed. Code: Y31.

(Artwork: Benjamin Saar)
(Boy shifts his focus to Father and Mother. The scene "shifts" to a more realistic style.)

FATHER: You're what? This is great! It is really great, isn't it?
MOTHER: I've never felt so happy...
FATHER: Can you feel him yet?
MOTHER: No, but I know he's there.
FATHER: "Ha." We both said "he!"
MOTHER: I know.
FATHER: What does ... he feel like?
MOTHER: He feels like ... himself.

BOY: (The boy points to Mother and Father.) You will be my Mom. And you, my Dad. This is a story about us. And it takes ... #1: Forty-eight years, sixty-seven years, fourteen years ... #2: Ninety-six years, seventy-nine years, sixty-seven years ... #3: Fourteen days, four days, twenty-three days ... BOY: (stopping the time swirl with his announcement) It takes: eight years, four months, twenty-nine days ... That's enough!

(This launches a "birth dance" with Mother, Father, and Benjamin. As Benjamin names each color, chorus members swirl colored silks into the air, transforming the playing space into a swirl of color.)

I see ... red
I hear ... blue.
I feel ... purple.
I taste ... green.
I ... choose ... yellow.

(Mother gives birth to a small yellow doll that "becomes" the baby Benjamin. Mother and Father use the doll as baby while the actor playing Benjamin voices and reacts for him.)

FATHER: It's a boy!
MOTHER: A beautiful boy.

THE YELLOW BOAT (competition version)

MOTHER: The nurse says he's the most beautiful child she's ever seen.
FATHER: She says that to everyone!
MOTHER and FATHER: She's right.
MOTHER: He's small, and wise, and ... mine.
FATHER: And mine.

(Mom gives baby to Dad, who doesn't quite know what to do with him.)

MOTHER: That's it!
FATHER: What?
MOTHER: His name, "Benjamin." It works in lots of languages. Translate: Ben ... FATHER: "Son."
MOTHER: Ja ...
FATHER: "Yes."
MOTHER: Min ...
FATHER: "Mine." (Father cuddles his son and parents simultaneously translate his new name.)


(Benjamin begins to cry.)

MOTHER: This is a story about boats, and sails, and ... it takes place in a harbor ...
FATHER: ... far, far away ...
MOTHER: Now inside this harbor there were three boats. A red one. A blue one ... and a yellow one. They all sailed far out to sea, and the red one came back, and the blue one came back; but the yellow boat? The yellow boat sailed straight up to the sun. (Sings)

Busen lull, cook the kettle full, There sailed three boats from the harbor, The first was so blue, The second so red, The third was the color of the sun.
MOTHER and FATHER: Busen hall, cook the kettle full,  
There sailed three boats from the harbor,  
The blue carried hope,  
The red carried faith,  
The yellow filled itself with love.

FATHER: I sail the blue boat.
MOTHER: The red one's for me...

BENJAMIN: (The lullaby has almost put him to sleep.) I am the yellow boat.
MOTHER: I'll weave you a sail.
FATHER: I'll write you a world.

MOTHER and FATHER: Worktime!

(The Father and Mother separate to their individual "work space." The Mother weaves some of the colored silk ribbons, the Father works on a new story. The chorus is used to help create these work environments or assist in the creation of the work itself—they are "transformational potential." Each works to rhythms which weave together and separate. The intention of this movement/music beat is to show the parents at work and the baby Benjamin discovering that he has the power to interrupt that world. Use the following choral litanies to underscore the scene—or figure out another way to do it!)

#2 & #3: Shuttle, Beat. Shuttle, Beat. Shuttle, Beat. Shuttle Beat.  
(Repeat)

(Repeat)

(Benjamin starts to cry.)

BENJAMIN: One day she sees something funny.
MOTHER: Look at this bruise. It seems to hurt him if I touch it.
FATHER: It's just a bruise. Stop worrying.
BENJAMIN: I cry. (He does.) Loud. Lota! They worry! (He cries more.)

MOTHER and FATHER: Call the Doctor! (The boat piece becomes the ambulance. Benjamin draws as he tells.)

BENJAMIN: I'm going to the hospital in an ambulance. Big siren! Fast. Neat! Then... Doctors!

(DOCTORS enter with clip boards and whisk the baby away from the parents. They are robotic, clinical; the parents are left waiting outside, over hearing what is being said.)

DOCTOR #1: Hematocrit every two hours.
MOTHER: What? What does that mean?
DOCTOR #2: Two pints whole blood...
FATHER: What's wrong?
DOCTOR #3: ... and a CAT Scan.
FATHER: What are you testing?
DOCTOR #4: Wait here, please. Just a few more tests...

DOCTOR #1: I don't understand all this bleeding. (The doctors cross to Benjamin, who hands them a piece of drawing paper. Each "reads" the test result, says "Hmmm..." and passes it to the next, until it reaches Doctor #1.)

BENJAMIN: Then they figure it out.

DOCTOR #1: Blood tests confirm that your son has... Classic hemophilia, Type A.

BENJAMIN: It means my blood isn't like everyone else's. It's missing the "Stop Bleeding Stuff." So, when I get a cut or bump inside, it doesn't stop bleeding. It just keeps dribbling and drabbling... like a leaky faucet.

MOTHER: What do we do?
DOCTOR #1: We'll begin the infusion procedure immediately.
DOCTOR #4: Order up... one hundred and sixty units of Factor 8.
FATHER: What does that do?

(#8 and #8 swirl red ribbons into the air, the separate blood sources that are then "mixed" to create the factor.)

BENJAMIN: (To audience) It's this really great stuff that works like a bunch of plugs to stop the bleeding. It's really strong because lots of people's blood gets mixed up to make it.

MOTHER: Where does it come from?
THE YELLOW BOAT (competition version)

DOCTOR #4: From thousands of blood donors. Excuse me. We have to inject him with the factor!

(The infusion process is set up with a long length of knotted ribbons. This is the Factor 8 which is infused into the doll’s body. Two chorus members control the ribbon’s movement in such a way that it looks like the stream of red is being infused into the doll’s body. One doctor holds the doll, another holds the syringe and guides the blood line into the doll.)

BENJAMIN: (As he draws it.) The first time they poke me, I cry. Poke! (The doctor with the syringe “pokes” the doll, searching for a vein.) Owww... 

DOCTOR #4: Once more.

BENJAMIN: Poke! Owww... 

DOCTOR #4: Bullseye! (The infusion process begins.)

MOTHER: He’s stopped crying.

DOCTOR #4: Everything is under control.

FATHER: How often will he need to go through this?

DOCTOR #4: Whenever he has a bleed.

MOTHER: Is it safe? That... Factor?

DOCTOR #4: Factor 8 is completely safe. Almost finished. Done.

FATHER: Are you sure he’ll be okay?

DOCTOR #4: He can do anything any other child can, with just a few precautions. Trust me. He’ll have a normal life. (The “baby” is returned to the parents. All except the family exit. Benjamin transitions from babyhood to young boyhood.)

(Benjamin awakes, and watches the surrounding activity, perhaps joining in, or getting in the way, and then, tired of no one paying attention to him, starts to cry.)

MOTHER: (Not wanting to interrupt her weaving.) Mamma’s right here. (To Father) Can you see what he needs?

FATHER: Yeah, sure. (He tries to ignore the crying for a beat, so Benjamin intensifies his efforts.) Okay, here’s the scoop. I’ll write the story, and you color it! (Father puts down assorted crayons, and returns to writing. Benjamin selects one crayon.)

BENJAMIN: Blue!

(A bluesy kind of music is heard and the chorus illustrates the color in movement as Benjamin colors.)

CHORUS: Cool, cooler, coolest blue. Smooth, soothing, blues... (Exploration of blue is interrupted by.)

BENJAMIN: (Holding up another crayon.) Green. (Change in sound as he colors and the chorus explores “a mean kind of green” in movement.)

CHORUS: It’s a mean kind of green,
Like a scream in a dream,
Like a...

BENJAMIN: Ghost... on Halloween... (The chorus becomes a drawing on the wall. At this point Mother sees what he’s doing and rushes over.)

MOTHER: Oh Benjamin, not on the walls! (Then looks more closely at the wall, assessing...) Oh...! (Pusher joins her.)

FATHER: Oh...?

FATHER and MOTHER: (Appreciative) Oh... Benjamin...

MOTHER: That’s a very nice drawing... but it would be so much nicer on a piece of paper... (She hands him a sheet of paper. With her finger she defines the space of the paper. The Chorus drawing dissolves.) Here. Draw here. (Mother helps Benjamin draw a long line on the paper.) You can draw a nice, long line that connects from here to here, and from here to here.

BENJAMIN: Line?

MOTHER: Line. (Benjamin takes the crayon and draws a line.) Lovely! (Mother returns to her work. Benjamin begins to explore the concept.)

BENJAMIN: Line! Line here. Here; line, Here; line, Here; line, Here; line! (Benjamin suddenly draws a long line right off the paper. Suddenly discovering another dimension, he abandons the paper and moves into the third and fourth dimension, moving through space as he explores “line.” The chorus illustrates his “line exploration” with colored elastics which they manipulate to create visible lines and shapes in space.)

#3: S-p-i-c-a-l.

BENJAMIN: Line!
#2: Straight!

BENJAMIN: Line.

#1: Angle?

BENJAMIN: Linel

#4: Squiggle!

BENJAMIN: Linel (Benjamin is delighted by his line drawings and his explorations grow bolder and bolder. Finally Father notices.)

FATHER: (To Mother) Look, look what he's doing!

MOTHER: Those aren't just scribbles, those are shapes!

MOTHER: Lines and shapes for a . . .

MOTHER and FATHER: Picture!

BENJAMIN: Picture of . . . a tree! (Chorus uses elastics to make an evergreen.) A heart, (Chorus makes a heart shape that "beats.") A bow and arrow. (Chorus makes a bow and arrow which is "shot" through the heart.) A boat... a yellow boat, sailing up to the sun.

BENJAMIN: Mom, Dad, look at me! Let's play . . . on the boat. . . (The boat is moved center stage and they all come on board.) Come on Dad! Let's go explore. All aboard the yellow boat. Destination . . . to Flower Island! Hoist the sails!

FATHER: Aye, aye, Captain.

BENJAMIN: Hoist the anchor!

MOTHER: Aye, aye, Captain.

BENJAMIN: Set sail for Flower Island. Okay, We're there. (He accidentally falls and bumps his knee.)

FATHER: Are you all right?

MOTHER: I think it's swelling.

BENJAMIN: Darn, I think I need a shot!

MOTHER and FATHER: Hospital time.

(They move to the hospital and the infusion procedure is set up.)

BENJAMIN: It hurts, but I don't cry. Much. (It takes numerous attempts before they find a vein. Doctor #4 attempts a "poke.") Ow oui!

DOCTOR #4: Now remember, watch this tube. When it fills with blood we'll stop all this poking! (Pokey.)

BENJAMIN: Owwwwww!

FATHER: (Giving him crayons as a diversion.) Look! Crayons!

DOCTOR #4: One more try. (Pokey.)

BENJAMIN: Ow!

MOTHER: Use the crayon, color what you feel!

BENJAMIN: (He begins to use the crayon as a vehicle for "escape.") Red. Red. Red... !

CHORUS: . Pokey, pokey, pokey!

DOCTOR #4: Bull's eye!

(With the "bull's eye," Benjamin pulls away from the infusion action and launches into the story, drawing it three-dimensionally in the space around the continuing infusion scene.)

BENJAMIN: My drawing. The Factor 8 Train. (The infusion ends.)

DOCTOR #4: Good job, partner. You held still just the way you should.

BENJAMIN: I know. But next time you should do better than four pokes!

(To the doctor gives him a big sucker and the medical staff exits.)

BENJAMIN: Time for school.

TEACHER #3: Come and join us. Class, this is Benjamin. (The kids immediately react to the newcomer, checking him out. The teacher sees this and adopts a strategy to help break the ice.) Today's assignment is "Me Drawings." Drawings of you! And you, and you. . . (pointing to each child)

KIDS #1, #2, #3, BENJAMIN: And you and you and you!

KIDS #3: I'm pink.
THE YELLOW BOAT (competition version)

BENJAMIN: I'm yellow.

EDDY: I'm green.

BENJAMIN: That's cool!

(The kids draw.)

BENJAMIN: Any shape we want?

TEACHER: Any shape you are.

EDDY: Any color we like?

TEACHER: Any color you feel.

BENJAMIN: I feel purple. I see red. I hear blue. I taste green. I am... having a good time here.

TEACHER: Benjamin, will you share your drawing with us?

BENJAMIN: This is my blue stomach and my yellow hat, and these are my bones, and they're dancing inside my body. And this is my knee where I had a bleed, and...

KID #3: I don't see any blood.

BENJAMIN: No, it's on the inside. See, it bleeds on the inside, here and here, and gets all red and hot and squishy...

EDDY: Cool!

BENJAMIN: Then I go to the doctor. I get a shot of Factor 8, and the bleed stops, and then I get a sucker. (The kids voice approval. Time shift, playtime.)

BENJAMIN, EDDY, KID #1, KID #3: Reees!

KID #3: So what do you want to do?

BENJAMIN: I have an idea. We can go on the Yellow Boat.

KID #3: Boats are boring.

BENJAMIN: This is a Yellow Boat!

EDDY: And it can fly!

KID #3: Cool.

BENJAMIN: Here, I'll draw it for you.

KID #3: Drawing? Drawing's boring.

BENJAMIN: C'mon aboard. Okay, hoist the sails, hoist the anchor. (He draws.) You're supposed to say, "Aye, aye, Captain."

KID #3: Storm up ahead!

BENJAMIN: We can fly! Start special hydraulic-powered flyers. (He draws as the kids become a flying boat, complete with sound effects. They begin to fly. Kid #3 grabs the crayon and draws in the air.)

KID #3: Land ho.

(Benjamin climbs off boat, but falls.)

EDDY: Benjamin, you all right?

BENJAMIN: I'm fine.

EDDY: Safe! (The boat vanishes as the game ends.)

KID #3: That was fun. Let's do it again tomorrow.

(Mother enters.)

MOTHER: What are you doing?

BENJAMIN: I'm drawing.

MOTHER: How's your knee?

BENJAMIN: Oh... fine.

MOTHER: Can you straighten it? (She examines his knee. It hurts.) I'll call the hospital.

BENJAMIN: I don't have time for that; I'm working on this map...

MOTHER: You can take it along.

BENJAMIN: Oh. Okay. (Mother and Benjamin shift location and the infusion procedure begins. He draws throughout. During this infusion we see the red "blood" tinged with another colored contaminant: the HIV virus. Benjamin continues his monologue as he draws.) When you open this door, the skeleton is waiting with buckets of poison... lemonade. Drink it, you turn into... a ghost! So don't drink it! Ahhhhhhhhhhh!
MOTHER: They're all done. You can finish that up at home. \(\text{They return home. Time shift.}\)


\(\text{(Chorus becomes "The Modia." There is a sense of their "information" invading the personal space of the family. The parents do not react directly to the announcements, but are affected by their presence.)}\)

#1: Doctors alarmed by mystery illness.

MOTHER: I've just got this feeling... .

FATHER: You worry too much.

#2: Immune deficiency linked to infant deaths.

MOTHER: Doctor says his weight is down, and he's a little anemic.

FATHER: Maybe it's a growth spurt?

#3: Transmitted by the exchange of body fluids... .

FATHER: Maybe it's the flu, everybody in his class has an upset stomach and diarrhea.

MOTHER: But he's had it over a week.

#4: Officials insist blood supply is 100% safe!

#1: Eighty-three year old grandmother dies of AIDS?

#2: Cause of infection unknown.

BENJAMIN: And my head turns tired. And my legs turn tired. And my fingers... even my drawing is tired.

#3: Cases of AIDS reported in California.

MOTHER: Something's wrong, I just know it. It's like a spark has gone out of him... . Don't you think he should be tested?

#2: New York.

FATHER: Tested for what?

#1: Pennsylvania, Arizona, Texas.

MOTHER: Tested for everything!

DOCTOR #1: Your son... has tested... positive for the AIDS virus. I'm very sorry. We'll do everything that we can. \(\text{He exits.}\)

MOTHER: How do we tell him?

FATHER: The right words will come. \(\text{They move to Benjamin.}\) Uh, Benjamin, we need to talk.

BENJAMIN: About your meeting with the doctor, yesterday?

MOTHER: Yes. He did a couple of special tests. And he found something in your blood that shouldn't be there.

FATHER: A kind of bug-a virus.

BENJAMIN: AIDS?

FATHER: How do you know... ?

BENJAMIN: TV.

MOTHER: No. Not AIDS. Not AIDS... But they found a little bit of the virus that can lead to the disease.

BENJAMIN: How did I get it?

FATHER: Some of the blood that makes the factor must have had some of the virus in it.

BENJAMIN: Will I be all right?

FATHER: Yes.

MOTHER: I promise you.

FATHER: We're right here. \(\text{Benjamin moves away from his parents to assimilate the news.}\) We're going to get some answers! \(\text{The parents move to Doctor \#4. The following scenes should swirl around the space as the parents try to get some control of the situation, but it doesn't happen.)}\) What about this AZT?

DOCTOR #2: I don't know.

\(\text{(They move away from the doctor to Healer \#3.)}\)

HEALER #3: Two quarts of clover tea daily, and wear this crystal.

FATHER: Will that help?
HEALER #8: I don't know.

DOCTOR #1: Technically it's not AIDS. He has the virus but none of the diseases that the government posts as markers.

MOTHER: He has the disease? But not the disease.

DOCTOR #1: Yes and no.

FATHER: What do we do?

DOCTOR #1: I don't know. Appointment next week: Wednesday, nine-thirty.

HEALER #8: Appointment Friday at one.

DOCTOR #4: I don't know. Appointment on Thursday, three o'clock.

DOCTORS and HEALER: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know...

(This builds to their exit, leaving parents totally bewildered.)

BENJAMIN: Nobody knows anything, except me, and all I know is that no one knows anything!

FATHER: (To Mother) It's going to be all right... but we're going to need help on this one. We've got a lot of friends. (The chorus enters as parents. They greet Mom and Dad. Benjamin returns to his drawing.) Thank you all for coming on such short notice. We need to ask for some help. Lots of help, actually.

(Their responses overlap.)

#3: Sure, anything. Anything at all.

#1: Whatever we can do to help.

#2: Just ask.

MOTHER: What he needs, what we need, is to try to have as normal a life as possible.

#4: (Backing away) Hey, what are friends for?

FATHER: So, how about we take all the kids to the movies Friday night?

(A large sheet of plastic is unfurled, forming a barrier between Benjamin and everyone else. He tries to contact his friends through the plastic, but parents pull them away.)

#1: Anything.

#2: Anything at all.

MOTHER: The pool is open, we could take the kids swimming?

#3: Whatever we can do...

#4: ...just ask.

MOTHER: We're going camping this weekend, how about...

#1: Just ask.

MOTHER: A sleepover?

#2: Just ask.

#3: Just ask.

#4: Just ask.

MOTHER: I AM asking!
(Time shift.)

BENJAMIN: Today is my birthday and I'm seven, and I'm having a party.

(Eddy enters with a box wrapped in paper, and works on tying a bow around it.)

EDDY: This is so great. He'll never guess what this is 'til it pops out in his face.

EDDY’S MOTHER: Finish up quickly, and I'll drop it off on my way to the grocery store.

EDDY: You can just drop me off for the party...

EDDY’S MOTHER: I can't do that. I'm sorry Eddy, but you can't go to that party!

EDDY: But he's my best friend. (They exit.)

BENJAMIN: No one's coming? Not even Eddy?

(Time shift. Teacher #3 enters.)

TEACHER: The board met last night. I'm afraid Benjamin won't be able to attend school here anymore. We're just not set up to handle this sort of thing. He'll have to leave.

MOTHER: Can he stay to the end of the week? Just another day?

TEACHER: I'll see... if I can help you find a tutor...

BENJAMIN: Why can't I go to school?

MOTHER: I don't know.

BENJAMIN: Why won't anyone come to play with me?

FATHER: We're here to play with you.

MOTHER: What would you like to play?

BENJAMIN: Nothing.

MOTHER: Benjamin. Would you like some juice?

FATHER: It's like he's slipped away...

MOTHER: How about a sandwich?

FATHER: You're got to eat something so you can get better.
THE YELLOW BOAT (competition version)

DOCTOR #1: ... evening.

BOTH: And how are we feeling today? Hmmm? *(There is no answer.)*

FATHER: It's like another country.

MOTHER: Not a single soft thing in this whole place. *(The parents move toward the room but are intercepted by the doctors.)*

DOCTOR #1: Caution! Blood precautions!

DOCTOR #4: Gowns, masks, gloves!

MOTHER: I'm his mother! Benjamin, these doctors need to do some tests...

*(Benjamin turns away, shutting them all out.)*

FATHER: Help us with this... they need you to swallow this little plastic tube...

DOCTOR #1: Please cough,

DOCTOR #4: Open your mouth,

DOCTOR #1: Just relax...

DOCTOR #4: Breathe.

BENJAMIN: Leave me alone. Just leave me alone!

*(The adults move away.)*

FATHER: Tell me what we're fighting. AIDS, depression, what?

DOCTOR #4: All of it.

*(Exit doctors, enter Joy.)*

JOY: Hi, I'm Joy, the Child Life Specialist on this wing.

MOTHER: Another doctor?

JOY: Not exactly. The doctors work with the sick parts; my specialty is the well parts. My work is play.

FATHER: There's not much of that around here.

JOY: I'll try to change that. I'm here to work with Benjamin to try to make some sense out of this place.

MOTHER: Good luck.

FATHER: He won't eat, he won't talk... He won't even draw.

JOY: Is that something he likes to do? Drawing?

MOTHER: He used to draw all the time.

FATHER: He's just not Benjamin if he's not drawing.

JOY: That's good to know. Why don't you two get a cup of coffee? *(She pulls a crayon from her pack.)* Just let me have a look for a well part. *(They exit.* Earth to Benjamin. Joy calling. Want to play? Tell you what. Whenever you want me to disappear, just flick your hand, like this. I'm gone. *(Benjamin flicks his hand. She withdraws, then returns.)* I'm back. *(Benjamin flicks his hand again. Joy says goodbye on the kawoo, and exits.)*

Returns. Tries the train whistle. Flicks. *(She withdraws.)* I'm gone. *(Then returns slowly... and whispers:)* I'm back. *(She tries the duck call and Benjamin almost flicks, then changes his mind. It's a small victory.)* You don't need to talk. I can just sit here with you. *(She pulls a small cloth doll and set of markers out of her backpack.)* I have some work to do. I want to make this doll for a boy here in the hospital. He hates being here, what with the shots and the medicines. But this doll needs a name. Can you think of a good name?

BENJAMIN: No.

JOY: No is an excellent name! No needs some hair. What color should it be? *(No response.)* Brown? Nah. Purple. *(This choice tugs at a tiny bit of interest in Benjamin. He watches as Joy colors the hair.)* How about his eyes? *(She offers him some crayons to choose from and after some hesitation, he chooses an orange one.)* Orange.

BENJAMIN: Except when he cries. His tears are red.

JOY: Red tears...! And his mouth? *(She colors as he chooses.)*

BENJAMIN: Mad green.

JOY: And his eyebrows are...?

BENJAMIN: Yellow. Scared yellow.

JOY: So his mouth is mad, and his eyes are scared, and his red tears are so very sad. And he feels...?

BENJAMIN: Alone.
THE YELLOW BOAT (competition version)

JOY: Isn't it amazing how you can have so many people in and out of here and still feel so all alone? (Done.) TAH-DAH!

BENJAMIN: BEUUuwwww!

JOY: So I'm not good at faces. Okay. I have to go. Maybe No can come back tomorrow? (He shrugs. Maybe. She exits. Time shift.)

BENJAMIN: And Joy comes back tomorrow. (Whistle) And the next tomorrow (Whistle) And the next. (Whistle) She lets me talk when I want to and she doesn't make me say 'I'm fine' if I don't feel like it. She tells me about hospital things, so I know what's going on...

(Time shift. Enter Doctor, parents, and Joy.)

DOCTOR #1: I've ordered up an endoscopy... a stomach test. We'll set it up for the morning.

BENJAMIN: Why do they want to look at yucky stomach stuff?

JOY: So they can figure out the right yucky medicines. I don't think it will hurt. But you can yell 'Stop!' if it does. So are you ready to help them?

BENJAMIN: Maybe. (Joy exits. Time shift.) One night, as a surprise, Joy sticks glow-in-the-dark stars on the ceiling over my bed, and another day, she paints a picture right on my window, so when the sun shines through it in the afternoon, it turns the white wall into colors. (Time shift. Mother enters, followed by Eddy.)

MOTHER: Benjamin? Look who's here.

BENJAMIN: Eddy!! (Exit Mom)

EDDY: So. What's all this stuff?

BENJAMIN: This is my remote control for my very own TV, and this makes my bed go up and down...

EDDY: Cool.

BENJAMIN: And see this tube stuck in my chest?

EDDY: Whoa!

BENJAMIN: It's for medicine so the doctors don't have to keep giving me shots. If I had a couple of bolts, I'd look just like Frankenstein.

EDDY: I could bring you some Frankenstein bolts. They stick right to your head.

BENJAMIN: No way!

EDDY: Way! So what's it like to be in here.

BENJAMIN: It's okay. But they never leave you alone.

EDDY: Does it hurt?

BENJAMIN: Yeah.

EDDY: Do you cry?

BENJAMIN: No. Sometimes. Were you scared to come see me?

EDDY: No. A little. I never knew anyone, who... you know...

BENJAMIN: Was sick...? Had AIDS?

EDDY: Yeah.

BENJAMIN: Why didn't you come to my birthday?

EDDY: My Mom said no.

BENJAMIN: So why'd she let you come now?

EDDY: I dunno. She read a bunch of stuff and she changed her mind. You want to draw or something?

BENJAMIN: I'm a little tired...

EDDY: I'd better go then; they said I shouldn't stay too long.

BENJAMIN: I'm glad you came. Will you come back?

EDDY: I said I'd bring the bolts, didn't I? (They high five. Eddy exits. Time shift. Joy and doctors enter.)

JOY: Good morning...

BENJAMIN: . . . afternoon,

JOY: Evening! And how are we feeling today...

BENJAMIN and JOY: Hmmmnnn????

JOY: Remember when they took an x-ray of your insides? Well here it is! (She shows him an x-ray film.) That's you!
BENJAMIN: Well that's a pretty crummy picture. It's all gray. Gray is not what it feels like.

JOY: Then how does it feel?

BENJAMIN: When it hurts the worst, like last night? It's like... like... slow red spikes of hurt... Here and here. (He indicates on himself, then on the x-ray) It's not the right colors. The dark hurting part should be red!

DOCTOR #1: Good morning...

DOCTOR #4: ... afternoon...

DOCTOR #1: ... evening...

BOTH: And how are we feeling today, hmmm...

BENJAMIN: Red.

DOCTOR #1: I bet your pardon?

BENJAMIN: And black and blue, where he poked me yesterday.

DOCTOR #4: I needed these samples to help us prepare for exploratory surgery.

BENJAMIN: You're an explorer? Explorers don't wear white. White's boring.

JOY: Benjamin, why don't you tell the doctors about the pain?

DOCTOR #1: It would help us if you could.

BENJAMIN: It doesn't have words, it just feels! I can't tell them!

JOY: You could show them. (She holds out the x-ray and some crayons.) This could be a map. Color it to help them find the hurt!

BENJAMIN: (Seizing the crayons) A map? I'm good at maps. New Drawing! Journey to the Center of my Guts!

(The doctors and Joy become explorers.)

BENJAMIN: Command Central over to Field Team One. Do you read me?

JOY: Roger, Captain. How do we get in?

BENJAMIN: Through my mouth. I'll leave it open. (Benjamin draws his mouth as the doctors climb into his body. There is much movement, lighting, and sound support through this journey.) First stop? My lungs. Air world, feels blue.

DOCTOR #4: Lungs are clear. No problems.

BENJAMIN: Now gray, tighter... but orange is getting closer... burning orange!

DOCTOR #1: Looks like the small intestine.

BENJAMIN: Entering danger zone. Way farther down, where it really hurts. Sharp pains like... pins dripping acid, purple and green.

DOCTOR #1: Signs of infection ahead...

BENJAMIN: Scorched arrows. Shooting fire... that's where it's dark, hurting, red, red, red!!

DOCTOR #1: I had no idea it was this bad.

BOTH DOCTORS: It's EVERYWHERE!

JOY: What do we do?

BENJAMIN: Try the bazooka! Let 'em have it! (They fire a medical Bazooka.) It isn't working.

DOCTOR #4: We've got to get out of here.

JOY: Captain, request exit instructions.

BENJAMIN: Head for the lungs! I'll cough you out! (They resume the same positions as before beginning the Body Tour.)

JOY: Now that's an excellent map!

DOCTOR #1: Now we're ready for surgery. Thanks for your help. (The doctors salute and exit.)

JOY: So that's what it feels like. You sure are good at drawing.

BENJAMIN: Yeah. But I wish we could just erase it—just erase the hurt.

JOY: Me too. I'll see you tomorrow. (Joy exits. The doctors hook up some new equipment.)

BENJAMIN: After surgery, I get a little better. Everybody smiles. Then I get worse. No more smiles.

DOCTOR #4: Colostomy complete, but he's bleeding into the abdomen now.

BENJAMIN: There are about a million machines in my room now, like robots standing guard round my bed.
DOCTOR #1: His white blood count is dropping. We'll keep an eye on it.

BENJAMIN: I can hear machines and voices all night long; whispering to me.

(Enter parents. The monitors and machines whir. "Busen lull" plays softly. Mother and Father stroke his hair gently.)

MOTHER: So peaceful you can forget. Almost.

FATHER: Busen lull, cook the kettle full, There sailed three boats from the harbor, The blue carried hope, The red carried faith, The yellow filled itself with love.

(Time shift.)

BENJAMIN: Mom! Dad! Look! Come look! Look! No moon! It's so big.

MOTHER: So close.

FATHER: So bright. (They climb into bed with him.)

BENJAMIN: Dad, what will it feel like when I die?

FATHER: I... don't know.

BENJAMIN: Will it hurt?

FATHER: I don't know. Probably. Some.

MOTHER: I don't think more than now.

BENJAMIN: Where will I go?

FATHER: I don't know.

MOTHER: But it will be a new adventure.

BENJAMIN: Will you put me in a box? You know, what's left?

FATHER: What do you want us to do?

BENJAMIN: I really want to be home again.

MOTHER: Then that's what we'll do.

BENJAMIN: Love you.

MOTHER and FATHER: Love you too.

BENJAMIN: And I'll always be your little boy.

MOTHER and FATHER: Always. (They tuck him in and exit. Enter Doctors.)

DOCTOR #1: Any change?

DOCTOR #4: Not for the better.

(Time shift. Enter Eddy.)

EDDY: Hey Benjamin. I got the bolts. See? I got some for me too...

BENJAMIN: Wow. Thanks Eddy. They're great.

EDDY: Wow, you've got a lot more stuff here now. What's it all for?

BENJAMIN: So I can get better.

EDDY: Will you get better? (Benjamin shrugs, "I don't know.") Are you going to... . (Benjamin shrugs, "Yeah, maybe.") I never knew anyone that was... well, you know... going to...

BENJAMIN: Die?

EDDY: Yeah.

BENJAMIN: Well now you do.

EDDY: I'm glad you're still my friend.

BENJAMIN: Me too.

EDDY: Benjamin. Can I have some of your Legos?

BENJAMIN: Sure, but not the castle.

EDDY: Deal. (Enter Doctors #4.) I'd better go. Will I see you later?

BENJAMIN: Sure. Sometime. Bye. (They do a very gentle high five. Exit Eddy. Time shift. Doctors hook up another IV pump then exit. Benjamin begins drawing, narrating as he goes.) New drawing. The Magic Garden. This is a yellow brick road, leading from the gangplank of my boat, all along a long, long, (Enter Joy)

JOY and BENJAMIN: long, long...
THE YELLOW BOAT (competition version)

BENJAMIN: ... rock wall. I walk and I walk, and my knee doesn't hurt a bit, and when I come to a gate, I meet a gardener. That's him. He tells me that the gate is locked but I can squeeze through the bars if I want to. Because on the other side is... (He draws a rainbow shape on the paper.)

JOY: What do you see?

BENJAMIN: See? Here. That is for Momma and Pappa. But later, You'll know. (He continues to draw as doctors move in and out of the room. There is a growing sense of crisis.) Then I get worse. Everybody carries worry into the room and sadness out.

DOCTOR #1: Tuberculosis present, but we don't know the strain.

BENJAMIN: The oxygen tube in my nose makes it so I can whistle! My heart starts doing a tap dance...

DOCTOR #4: Heart fibrillation. Get me an EKG!

BENJAMIN: And then I get worse, and everyone gets real serious.

DOCTOR #1: Gradual enlargement of his heart muscle...

DOCTOR #4: Liver function way off...

BENJAMIN: I sure hope heaven's not all white. 'Cause that would really be boring.

DOCTOR #4: It's like a brush fire. You stamp out sparks in one place, it flares up in another.

DOCTOR #1: Internal bleeding is out of control.

DOCTOR #4: It's just a matter of time. I'm so sorry.

BENJAMIN: The body part just can't keep up with the rest of me. So I tell it to let go. But I'm not alone. (Parents and Joy enter along with doctors.) Almost time for the Yellow Boat to set sail.

FATHER: We'll all sail together...

MOTHER: I'll hoist the sails, Joy can do the anchor...

BENJAMIN: No. This time I have to go by myself.

MOTHER: Is there anything you want?

BENJAMIN: Just be here close. And a Dr. Pepper.

FATHER: Reach up and tickle the ceiling stars... makes it easier to breathe.

(Benjamin reaches for the sky and then "releases" in the arms of his parents. Time stops. The doctors unhook the IV lines and Benjamin slowly pulls away from the bed, on his way someplace else. The focus of the others in the room remains on the body left behind. Benjamin watches the scene he has just left.)

BENJAMIN: I see red.
I hear blue.
I feel purple.
I taste green.
I am yellow.

(Music underscores the last drawing as we are taken to the "inside of a rainbow.")

Last Drawing. The Captain decides that it's time for the Yellow Boat to set sail. I sail on the path the sun makes on the water. Then, the boat shoots up, straight up to the sun. (He signs the final picture.)

B-E-N-J-A-M-I-N. Benjamin! (beat) Always! (He jumps onto the boat, which is slowly surrounded by the unfurling rays of the sun. He has set sail. Music. Blackout.)

THE END
THE YELLOW BOAT

Byssan Lull

Music - Evert Taube & Alan Ruch
English lyric - David Sear

MOTHER:

Byssan lull, cook the kettle full. There sailed three boats from the
harbor. The first was so blue, The second so red, The

MOTHER & FATHER:

third was the color of the sun. Byssan lull, cook the kettle full. There
sailed three boats from the harbor. The blue carried hope, The
red carried faith, The yellow filled itself with love.