



GRETTEL!

MARCH 6 – APRIL 5, 2020

A NOTE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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preparing for the play

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GRETEL!

Dear Educators and Parents,

Her mother is gone. Her father is absent. Her stepmother and stepsister berate her and waste all of their food. But with a gift from her mother and hope in her heart, Gretel heads into the wilderness to find Baba Yaga – and discovers more than she could have ever imagined. With live folk rock music and a style that embraces the storytelling nature of theater – this musical for the entire family is not to be missed.

Enclosed in this enrichment guide is a range of materials and activities intended to help you discover connections within the play through the curricula. It is our hope that you will use the experience of attending the theater and seeing GRETEL! with your students as a teaching tool. Use this guide to best serve your children— pick and choose, or adapt, any of these suggestions for discussions or activities. We encourage you to take advantage of the enclosed student worksheets—please feel free to photocopy the sheets for your students, or the entire guide for the benefit of other teachers.

Enjoy the show!



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First Stage Policies

- The use of recording equipment and cameras are not permitted during the performance.
- Food, drink, candy and gum are not permitted during the performance.
- Electronic devices are not permitted in the theater space.
- Should a student become ill, suffer an injury or have another problem, please escort him or her out of the theater space.
- In the unlikely event of a general emergency, the theater lights will go on and the stage manager will come on stage to inform the audience of the problem. Remain in your seats, visually locate the nearest exit and wait for the stage manager to guide your group from the theater.

Seating for people with special needs: If you have special seating needs for any student(s) and did not indicate your need when you ordered your tickets, please call our Assistant Patron Services Manager at (414) 267-2962. Our knowledge of your needs will enable us to serve you better upon your arrival to the theater.

Setting the Stage Synopsis

A young girl named Gretel is born to her mother and father. As she grows up, she dreams of having a brother. Her father is a salesman who is always trying to sell people things that they don't need and is often away from home. Gretel and her mother spend their days together in the woods, until her mother grows ill. She gives Gretel a small comb, her kerchief, and a doll who shares the name of the brother that Gretel never had. Her mother whispers the name of the doll too quietly for Gretel to understand, and then passes away. ("My Child") Gretel gives the doll a crumb to eat and a drop of water to drink and it comes to life, telling her that she must guess it's name in order for them to reveal it.

Gretel's father marries a cruel woman who has a mean daughter named Malfusa. Gretel's father goes away on business and leaves Gretel alone where she is bossed around by the pair and forced to do all of the housework. ("Chores") The doll helps Gretel complete her chores in the night, however Malfusa and her mother eat all of the food they prepare and use all of the supplies in the house. Afraid of starving, Gretel demands that they do something about it. To save themselves, Malfusa and her mother send Gretel to retrieve the Skull of Undying Light and food from an evil witch in the woods named Baba Yaga. ("Baba Yaga")

Gretel sets off early the next morning and sees three Horsemen: one white, one red, and one black. ("Horsemen") She is stopped by the Black Horseman who escorts her through the woods towards Baba Yaga's home. Then suddenly, with dawn approaching, the Black Horseman jumps into a rushing river and floats away.

As the sun rises, Gretel hears a voice through the trees shouting "Make way for the witch!" as a storm begins to rise. She tries to run to safety, but is picked up by a cyclone that forms from the clouds. She lands in a yard filled with bones and skulls at the steps of a cottage supported by a pair of chicken feet. Baba Yaga emerges out of the hut and discovers Gretel. She chooses to spare the girl's life and puts Gretel to work doing chores for her. She warns Gretel to not feed or give any water to a goose that is chained up near the house no matter how loud they squawk.

With the doll on her shoulder, Gretel works around the house all morning. Feeling guilty, Gretel gives food and water to the goose who chases the doll around the yard. Baba Yaga returns and inspects Gretel's work- she is impressed and swallows her dinner whole. Gretel asks Baba Yaga for the Skull of Undying Light, but is told that she must complete three impossible tasks before she will receive it.

The next morning, Gretel discovers the Doll has stayed up through the night and prepared Baba Yaga a large breakfast. Gretel asks Baba Yaga who the three horsemen are and she explains that they are all part of the cycle of time. ("Ouroboros") Baba Yaga gives Gretel her first impossible task: to lift her iron cauldron into the sky. Gretel struggles, and Baba Yaga tells her that she must use her anger as fuel to make it rise. ("Fuel") Thinking of Malfusa and her stepmother inspires her anger and Gretel lifts the cauldron. The two hop inside and fly the cauldron to Gretel's home, where she instructs her to kill her stepmother and Malfusa. Gretel instead chooses to burn down the root cellar saying she wants them to suffer greater and starve. However, the root cellar is empty, and Gretel has chosen to save their lives. She has tricked Baba Yaga...or so she thinks.

That afternoon, Baba Yaga sends Gretel to fetch her water from a pond deep in the woods. She tells her that she must not drink a single drop of it no matter how thirsty she is. Gretel and the doll discover the pond, surrounded by feeding goats. The goats butt Gretel and chase the doll as she tries to fill the flask with water. She goes to take a sip, but the doll takes the water and drinks it all. The doll goes to speak, and reveals that it's voice has been transformed into a goat's. The water was cursed by Baba Yaga.

Gretel returns to Baba Yaga and demands that she give the doll it's voice back. Baba Yaga is furious that she brought a magic doll into her home and tosses it in the fire. She kicks Gretel out and gives her one final impossible task: to count all of the stars in the night sky. ("Survive")

On the verge of giving up, Gretel is joined in the woods by the Black Horseman who sends her into the sky amongst the stars. She is greeted by the voice of her mother who says that she has never left her and that she will always be with her in her heart.

Gretel returns to Baba Yaga's and frees the goose from its chain. She discovers that the goose is actually her father, who was transformed by Baba Yaga. Gretel refuses to return to their home with him, her stepmother, and Malfusa and says that she must go her own way. Her father rushes away through the woods.

Gretel enters the hut and confronts Baba Yaga, claiming that her task was truly impossible: that stars are beyond numbers. Baba Yaga demands that Gretel take the Skull of Undying Light and leave, but she refuses to go until her doll is given its voice back. She realizes that Baba Yaga has not lit the oven and she rescues the doll, lifts Baba Yaga's cauldron and flies away. Baba Yaga chases them with her broom. Gretel throws her mother's comb and kerchief, which she discovers have magical powers, to slow Baba Yaga down.

Gretel and the doll land at her home, having followed a trail of breadcrumbs from her pocket. Baba Yaga arrives and transforms Malfusa and her stepmother into pigs. She reveals to Gretel that she is her grandmother and asks her to join her as a witch to rule the countryside. Gretel is flattered, but says that she must find her own magic. As Baba Yaga flies away, she asks her to give her doll it's voice back. Baba Yaga says that she will do more than that and transforms the doll into a real boy, her brother: Hansel.



Pre-Show Questions

1. GRETEL! is an original folk musical based off of the Russian fairytale "Vasilisa the Beautiful" as well as "Hansel and Gretel". Have you ever read or seen any of these stories? What similarities do you think there might be between the play and the original stories? What differences might there be?
2. The subject of loss is present in the text. Have you ever lost something or someone very important to you? How did that make you feel? How did you cope with it? Did you have people there to support you during that challenging time? If so, what kind of people?

About The Playwrights

Taken directly from: <https://www.playscripts.com/playwrights/bios/1008>

Jason Tremblay was an Austin-based playwright, director, and musician. Recent national productions include: Katrina: The Girl Who Wanted Her Name Back at Adventure Stage (Chicago), Chicken and Ice Cream at the Moonwater Theatre Company (Fort Worth), Hosers at the Boulder Acting Group (Colorado), The Cleaning Lady at The Flying Leap Players (Minnesota), and West Texas Honey Bee Blues at the Offstage Theatre (Virginia). In Austin, his work has been presented by Rm 120 Theatre, Chick n' Dude productions, Austin Scriptworks, Fronterafest (Best of Fest), Out of Ink, The Moveable Feast, Theatre Silica, and Fusebox. He has completed commissions for Austin Scriptworks and the LMDA. He received an MFA in Playwriting from the University of Texas.

Taken directly from: <https://www.dramaticpublishing.com/authors/profile/view/url/suzan-zeder>

Suzan Zeder is one of the leading playwrights for young and family audiences in the United States. Her plays have been produced by professional, university and community theatres in all 50 states as well as internationally. She is a six-time winner of the Distinguished Play Award from the American Alliance of Theatre & Education, including 2015 awards for both Wiley and the Hairy Man (musical) and The Edge of Peace. Wiley and the Hairy Man (musical) was also the recipient of a Helen Hayes award for Best TYA production to Imagination Stage. She is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre and the Academy of Distinguished Teachers at the University of Texas at Austin, where she headed the playwriting program for 23 years. Zeder was the first holder of an Endowed Chair in Theatre for Youth and Playwriting in the United States. She now resides in Santa Fe, N.M.

About the Composers

Taken directly from: <http://otw2017.org/speaker/jennifer-hartman-luck/>

Jennifer Hartmann Luck is the Education & Outreach Director at the Paramount Theatre in Austin, TX. She spent three years in Los Angeles with P.L.A.Y., the Education Department at Center Theatre Group (The Ahmanson, Mark Taper Forum & Kirk Douglas Theatre). Prior to that she worked with Phoenix Theatre, Arizona Jewish Theatre Company, The Herberger Theatre Center, Biz Kids NYC, and The Children's Museum of Manhattan. She has also taught courses at Azusa Pacific University and the University of Texas. In 2009 she was named a Don and Elizabeth Doyle Fellow by AATE; recognized for her artistic ability in the area of Theatre for Youth. Jennifer is also a singer/songwriter and composer. She holds a BA in Theatre from Arizona State University and an MFA in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities from the University of Texas at Austin. She is a proud member of AATE, TYA/USA, and is currently on the Board of Directors for IPAY.

Taken directly from: <https://austinchambermusic.org/people/nora-karakousoglou/>

A native of Athens, Greece, Nora Karakousoglou is an active performer and teacher, working in the United States and Europe. She completed her undergraduate work at Cleveland State University, her Master of Music as well as a Graduate Performance Diploma at the Boston Conservatory, and earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Texas at Austin in 2016, where she studied with professor Bion Tsang. She has collaborated in chamber music settings with Joseph Silverstein, Lynn Chang and Judith Gordon, has performed numerous solo recitals, and has appeared as a soloist with the Boston Conservatory String Ensemble and the Thessaloniki State Orchestra, among others. She serves as cello faculty and is an artist in residence at the Armstrong Community Music School (ACMS), which allows her to participate in ACMS' extensive community outreach programs throughout the city of Austin. At ACMS she has created and established an Advanced Musicianship Program which she teaches with violinist and duo partner, Sonja Larson. Nora frequently performs with Local Opera Local Artists (LOLA), Liz Cass and Rebecca Herman's opera project. She has collaborated with Dr. Michelle Schumann, artistic director of the Austin Chamber Music Center, and has participated in the Victoria Bach Festival, in Victoria, TX.

Nora is the recipient of the Hellenic-American Women's Award in Chicago, as well as achievement awards and competition prizes in Greece and abroad. She has participated in masterclasses with artists Jorja Fleezanis, Stephen Doane, Ralph Kirshbaum, David Ying, Daret Adkins and Pamela Frank. Nora has earned a Soloist Diploma from the Athens Conservatory, the First Prize in Cello Performance and Chamber Music from the ENM d'Aulnay-sous-bois in France, as well as a Medaille d'Or in Formation Musicale (music theory studies). In her free time, Nora likes to cook, go fishing and hiking, and to speak English with a heavy Greek accent.

Vasilisa the Beautiful

CLASSROOM LANGUAGE ARTS/READING INFORMATION

Taken directly from: <http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/textonly117-baba-yaga-and-vasilisa-the-fair.html>

A long time ago there lived a merchant and his wife; they had one child, a girl called Vasilisa. One day the mother placed a little doll in the child's hands, she said, "My child, I am dying. Take this doll as my blessing. Always keep it with you and never show it to anybody. If anything bad happens to you, give the doll food and ask her for guidance." Shortly afterwards the mother died.

The Merchant soon became lonely and decided to marry again. He married a widow he thought would be a good mother but both she and her two daughters were envious of Vasilisa's beauty. They gave her heavy outdoor work to do, so she would grow thin and her face turn ugly in the wind and the sun.

Despite this, Vasilisa became more beautiful every day. For each day she gave her doll food and asked for advice. Having finished eating, the doll would help with the tasks and even bring Vasilisa herbs to prevent sunburn.

As the years passed, Vasilisa grew ever more beautiful as her stepmother's hatred of her intensified.

Then, whilst Vasilisa's father was away on business, the stepmother moved the family to the edge of a dense birch forest. This was not just any birch forest, for in this forest lived the terrifying witch, Baba-Yaga. A witch who ate people like others ate chicken.

Every day, the stepmother sent Vasilisa into the forest, but the girl always returned safe and sound with the guidance of her magic doll. Then one night, the stepmother crept around the house and extinguished all the candles. As the last candle failed, she said in a loud voice.

"It's impossible to finish our work in the darkness. Somebody must go to Baba-Yaga and ask for a light."

"I'm not going," said the first stepdaughter, who was stitching lace. "I can see my needle."

"And I'm not going," said the second stepdaughter, who was knitting stockings, "I can see my needle."

So Vasilisa was thrown out into the dark forbidding forest. Despite her fear, she fed her magic doll and asked for its advice.

"Don't be afraid, Vasilisa," said the doll. "Go to Baba-Yaga and ask her to give you a light."

All that night, Vasilisa walked nervously through the forest holding the doll who guided her path. Then suddenly, she saw a horseman rushing by. His face and clothes were white and he was riding a white horse. As he passed the first light of dawn appeared across the sky. Then, another horseman came by. His face and clothes were red and he was riding a red horse. As he passed the sun began to rise. Vasilisa had never seen such strange men and she was very surprised.

She walked all day, until at last she came to Baba-Yaga's hut, which stood forbidding on its large chicken legs. A fence made of human bones surrounded the hut. It was crowned with human skulls. The gate had a sharp set of teeth that served as a lock. Vasilisa was terribly afraid.

Suddenly, another horseman galloped by. His face and clothes were black and he was riding a black horse. He rode through the gates and disappeared. As he passed, night descended.

As the sky darkened the eyes of the skulls began to glow. Their light illuminated the forest. Vasilisa trembled, she wanted to run but her legs would not move. Almost immediately she heard a hideous noise. The earth shook, the trees groaned and there was Baba-Yaga, riding in her mortar. She stopped and sniffed the air.

"I smell a human!" she cried. "Who is here?"

Vasilisa stepped forward, trembling with fear. She said, "I am, Vasilisa. My stepmother sent me to you to ask for a light."

"I know of her," Baba-Yaga replied. "Stay with me for a while. If you work well, I will give you light. If you do not, I will cook you and eat you."

Baba-Yaga commanded the gates to open and rode in. Vasilisa followed and the gates closed fast behind her.

As they entered the hut, Baba-Yaga ordered Vasilisa to bring her what was on the stove. There was enough food to feed ten men; then from the cupboard she collected kvas, mead, beer and wine. Baba-Yaga ate and drank everything. She left Vasilisa nothing but a crust of bread.

"I'm tired," Baba-Yaga said. "Tomorrow, Vasilisa, you must clean the yard, sweep the hut, cook the supper and wash the linen."

"Then," she added, "You must go to the corn bin and separate seed by seed the mildewed corn from the good corn, and mind that you remove all the black bits. If you don't complete these tasks I will eat you."

Soon Baba-Yaga started snoring, her long nose rattled against the roof of the hut. Vasilisa took her doll out of her pocket, gave it a crust of bread and said, "Please help me. Baba-Yaga has given me an impossible task to do and if I fail she will eat me."

The doll replied, "Don't be afraid, Vasilisa, eat your supper and go to bed. Mornings are wiser than evenings."

Although Vasilisa woke early the next morning, Baba-Yaga was already up. Vasilisa went to the corn bin and found the doll picking out the last black bits. The other tasks were also fulfilled. The doll said, "All you have to do now is prepare the supper and after that you can rest." Vasilisa thanked the doll and went to prepare supper. She cooked the food, laid the table and waited.

As the skulls' eyes began to shine, the trees groaned, the earth trembled, and there was Baba-Yaga.

"Have you done what I told you?" she asked Vasilisa.

"See for yourself," replied the girl.

Baba-Yaga was very upset, for she wanted to eat the girl but the tasks were all completed. Hiding her anger, she said, "Very good," and then cried loudly, "My faithful servants grind the wheat!"

From nowhere three pairs of hands appeared. They took the wheat and vanished.

Baba-Yaga ate the supper and said to Vasilisa, "Tomorrow you must do the same tasks and then you must go to the store room and sort out the dirt from the poppy seeds."

The next morning Baba-Yaga again rode off in her mortar. Vasilisa, with the help of her doll, finished the tasks. In the evening the old woman came back and checked everything over. Three pairs of hands appeared. They took the bin of poppy seeds and vanished.

Baba-Yaga sat down to eat.

"Why," she said, "do you sit there so quiet and still?"

"I'm afraid to speak," said Vasilisa, "would you mind if I asked you some questions?"

"Ask if you want," said Baba-Yaga, "but remember that not every question has a good answer."

Vasilisa hesitated, "It's just that on my way here I saw a white horseman. Who was he?"

"That was my Bright Day," answered Baba-Yaga.

Vasilisa continued, "Then I saw a red horseman. Who was he?"

"That was my Red Sun," answered Baba-Yaga.

"And then a black horseman overtook me whilst I was standing outside your gate. Who was he?"

“That was my Black Midnight,” answered Baba-Yaga. “These horsemen are my faithful servants. Have you further questions?”

Vasilisa remembered the three pairs of hands but remained quiet.

“Now I have a question for you. How have you managed to carry out all the work so quickly?”

Vasilisa replied, “My mother’s blessing helped me.”

“I knew it,” said Baba-Yaga. “You’d better be gone. I will not have people with blessings in my home.”

With that, the old woman pushed Vasilisa out of the hut and through the gate.

Then she took one of the skulls, stuck it on the end of a stick and gave it to the girl, saying: “Here’s a light for your stepmother and her daughters. That’s what you came here for, isn’t it?”

She walked all day and by the evening she reached her home. As she approached the gates she was about to throw away the skull, but suddenly she heard a muffled voice say: “You must keep me, your stepmother and her daughters have need of me.”

The girl carried the skull into the house. As she entered, the skull fixed its eyes on the stepmother and her two daughters. Its eyes burnt them like fire. They tried to hide, but the piercing eyes followed them and never let them out of their sight. By morning nothing was left of the three women except three heaps of ash on the floor. Vasilisa was unharmed.

She buried the skull in the garden and went to find shelter in the nearest town. Here she lodged with an old woman.

One day the old woman gave Vasilisa some flax. With it Vasilisa spun the most beautiful

thread, so fine it was like hair. Then she weaved the thread into the most exquisite cloth. It was brilliant white, soft and so beautiful. Vasilisa gave it to the old woman and said: “Grandmother, you have been so kind to me, sell this cloth and keep the money.”

The old woman looked at it and said, “My child, this is too fine to sell. I am going to take it to the Tsar.”

So she brought it to the Tsar as a gift. The Tsar thanked the old woman and gave her many presents before sending her home.

Impressed with the beautiful cloth, the Tsar tried to find someone who could make shirts from it. However all the tailors declined the work, as the cloth was too fine for them to handle. In the end the Tsar called the old woman and said, “You must also know how to sew the cloth as you made it.”

The old woman replied, “No your Majesty. It was not my work. It was done by a girl I took in.”

So the Tsar asked the old woman to see if Vasilisa would make the garments. Vasilisa made the shirts and the old woman took them to the Tsar.

As she waited for the old woman to return, one of the Tsar’s servants entered. He said loudly, “His Majesty wishes to see the needlewoman who has made his wonderful clothes.” So Vasilisa went to the palace.

Vasilisa and the Tsar were captivated by each other and eventually they married.

When Vasilisa’s father returned, they invited both him and the old woman to come and live at the palace. Also at the palace was the little doll, for Vasilisa carried it around in her pocket until the day she died.

Creating A Tale

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Taken directly from: <http://simplymulticultural.com/2011/11/the-importance-of-folktales-from-around-the-world/>

DEFINITION: A folktale is a story that springs from the shared history of a particular community. This history is then passed down through storytelling – earlier oral, now including print. Many times, traditional folktales don't have an individual author; instead it is owned by the community. A folktale contains the entire culture of the community, which also differentiates it from other groups.

An important piece of folktales had to do with carrying on the ideas, truths, knowledge and beliefs of cultures and community. In the following activity, students will create a folktale based on the prompt that will highlight the origin of an imagined group of people, what they believe and how they have come to believe that.

1. As a class, ask students to think about something your school community believes in? Possibly the school mission, or the rules to practice Respectful, Responsible and Safe actions. Next, ask students to identify how people practice that belief. In what ways does that belief work as a positive for the school community?
2. Next, look at the setting and characters. Even though the story may explore beliefs in the school community, the class may choose to make the characters animals, or the story to take place in another location or time period. Brainstorm with students: Who are the characters in this story? Where do they live? How do they function as a society? (What jobs or responsibilities do they have?) What year does this folktale take place?
3. Finally, brainstorm with students: How did the characters come to appreciate this lesson? How did they act before understanding the lesson, and what obstacles stood in their way? What steps did it take for the characters to figure out the lesson?
4. Once the folktale outline has been created, with a clear Beginning, Middle and End, have the class begin writing the story. Students can write their interpretation of the collective folktale individually, or in small groups as a Write Around.

Place students into small groups of 4-5. Make sure group members arrange their desks or seating so that they are in a circular formation. Each student should begin with a blank piece of paper. Instruct all students to begin writing the beginning of the folktale – and let them know they will have two minutes to begin their story. At the end of two minutes, have all the students finish their sentence and then pass their paper to their left. The new writer will take two minutes to read the story so far, and then take another two minutes to continue writing the story – starting wherever the story has left off. Continue this cycle once or twice around the circle, helping guide students along the way to transition from the Beginning to the Middle to the End. The story should end with its original author. Allow the original author to read their story and then add any final notes or finishing touches. These stories can be read out loud to explore the multiple interpretations of the one folk tale and continue the tradition of storytelling these passed stories.

Found Object Puppetry

CLASSROOM THEATRE ARTS ACTIVITY

Taken directly from: <http://www.childdrama.com/found-object-puppets.html>

As I often tell my students, anything can be a puppet.
I try very hard to get them past their narrow ideas of what constitutes a puppet.

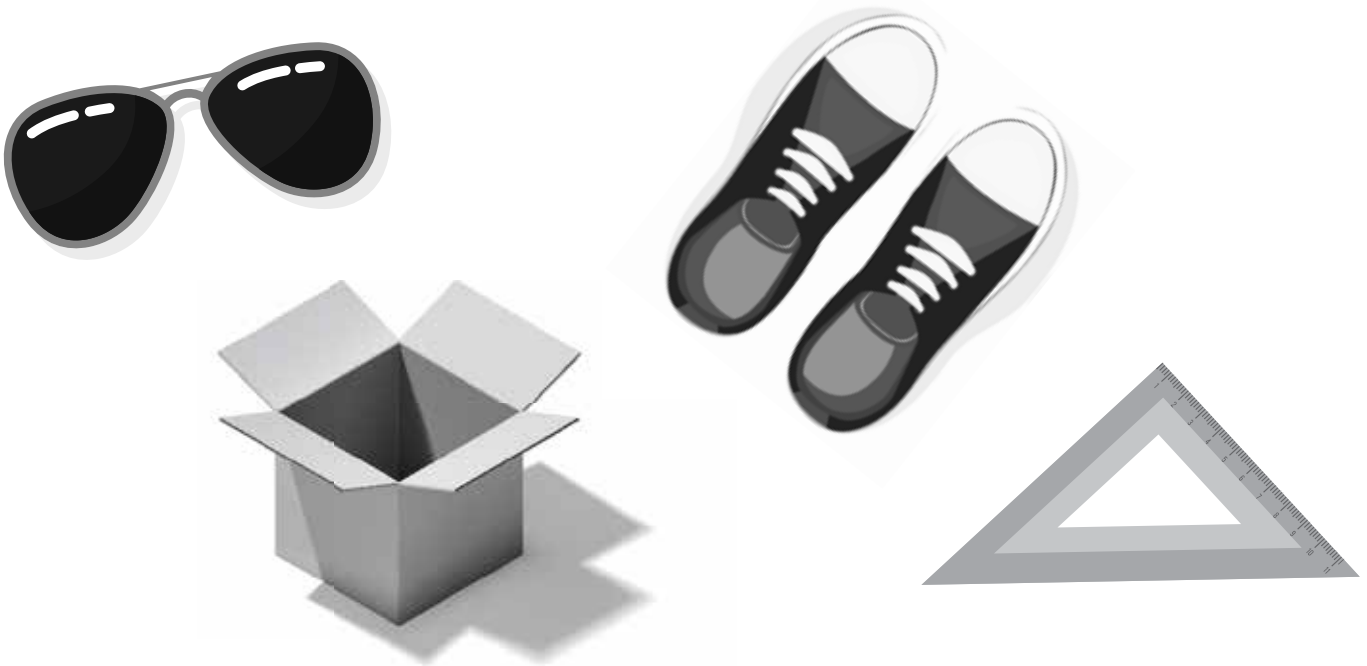
MATERIALS:

A collection of everyday items.
Some traditional puppets for show.

DISCUSSION

I usually begin the discussion by mentioning some things everyone knows are puppets--the Muppets, "Lamb Chop," etc. I bring out some of my own puppets and show them in action. I usually allow the students to handle some of the less fragile puppets themselves. So far we're all in agreement about what is a puppet.

But then I put the puppets away and bring out a collection of everyday items--for example, a pair of sunglasses, a small square cardboard box, a paper-punch, a shoe, a ruler. I lay these items in front of the students and say, "Are these puppets?"



Of course at first the children all say, "no," and laugh at the question. But then I pick up one of the items--say, the sunglasses--and begin to manipulate it so it becomes a character.

Note: If you have not been a puppeteer it is a good idea to practice this ahead of time, and to deliberately select objects you know you can manipulate successfully. This is a very individual thing, but I'll give you some hints. Sunglasses, with their bows spread wide, become a very convincing ant's head, complete with reflective eyes and two antennae. A shoe has a tongue and can talk, or it can use its laces like tentacles. The paper-punch can obviously become a barracuda. If it has a hinged lid, a cardboard box becomes a big-mouthed character with a ferocious appetite. (Mine is named "Stocky," because he used to contain a stock pot, and his schtick is box-related humor: "Hey, Stocky--what's your favorite food?" "Box lunch." "Who's your favorite actor?" "Bruce Boxleitner." "Where did you grow up?" "Boxborough.") A ruler behind a notebook becomes a shy character who keeps peeking out and darting back out of sight.

Children are normally delighted with the characters I create, and I often let them suggest other objects and try to "stump" me. (Don't make this offer unless you feel confident that they won't stump you, though.) I lead the conversation to the idea that anything can be a puppet if a person manipulates it, and creates a character from it. With older students I give them--or guide them to discover for themselves--the following definition: "A puppet is an inanimate object that is manipulated so as to appear animate." Obviously these big words won't work with younger students.

MAKING OUR OWN PUPPETS

Once the concept of creating puppet characters from everyday objects has been explored, I challenge each student to find an object and create a puppet from it. I discourage them from altering the objects in any way. (It is not necessary to paint eyes on a chair to make a character of it.) Depending on the age of the students and on the timing, I will either have them use objects they can find in my room, or I'll assign the project as "homework."

MANIPULATING THE PUPPETS

It is important when doing a project like this not to skimp on the actual manipulation of the puppets. I usually spend a whole class period working with my students on character and story, on manipulating their invented characters and interacting with others. I suggest that they allow the nature of the chosen object to help them determine the personality of the puppet. (Which is lazier--an old bedroom slipper or a high-heeled shoe? How is the attitude of a pair of pliers different from the attitude of an oven mitt?) Again, the answers to these questions will vary enormously depending on the age and sophistication of the students. With high school acting students, this exercise can lead to valuable insights into character and characterization. It's even more effective for playwriting students. You will want to experiment with this project, to see what works for you.

A Storytelling Festival

LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

*Taken from: <http://www.proteacher.com/cgi-bin/outsidelife.cgi?id=6008&external=http://www.eduplace.com/ss/act/story.html&original=http://www.proteacher.com/070163.shtml&title=A%20Storytelling%20Festival>,
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1. Introduce students to fairytales and folktales from different cultures by reading one to the class.
 - a. Explain that many of these stories were created by storytellers who passed them on to others orally, not in writing. Only later were they written down.
 - b. Tell students that they are going to become oral storytellers themselves. They will choose a story to learn and then present the story as part of a storytelling festival.
2. Divide students into storytelling teams. Provide books of legends, folktales and fairytales for students to use, as well as internet access if possible, and give students time to do research and choose a story. Remind students that their stories will be performed and that they might want to choose a story that lends itself to a dramatic reading or presentation. (Note: You might want to review the groups' choices.)
3. The group should study the story and make a plan for how they would like to perform, or "tell," it.
 - a. For example, students may want to assign different parts of the story to each group member or have one group member act out a part or play an instrument, etc. No scripts are allowed while storytelling, so the group should know the beginning, middle, and end of its story.
 - b. Encourage students to be creative about their presentations. Some students may want to add music and props, some may be able to incorporate costumes or rhythmic movements.
4. Allow enough rehearsal time for each group. Hold the performances in the classroom, and make it a festive occasion by creating a relaxed and celebratory mood in the room.
 - a. Critique each presentation in a constructive manner by having the students in the audience share the moments of the performance that stuck out for them, and then allowing them to ask any questions they may have regarding the story or the performance. No personal opinions should be shared, and questions and comments should remain positive and inquisitive, not derogatory or judgmental..

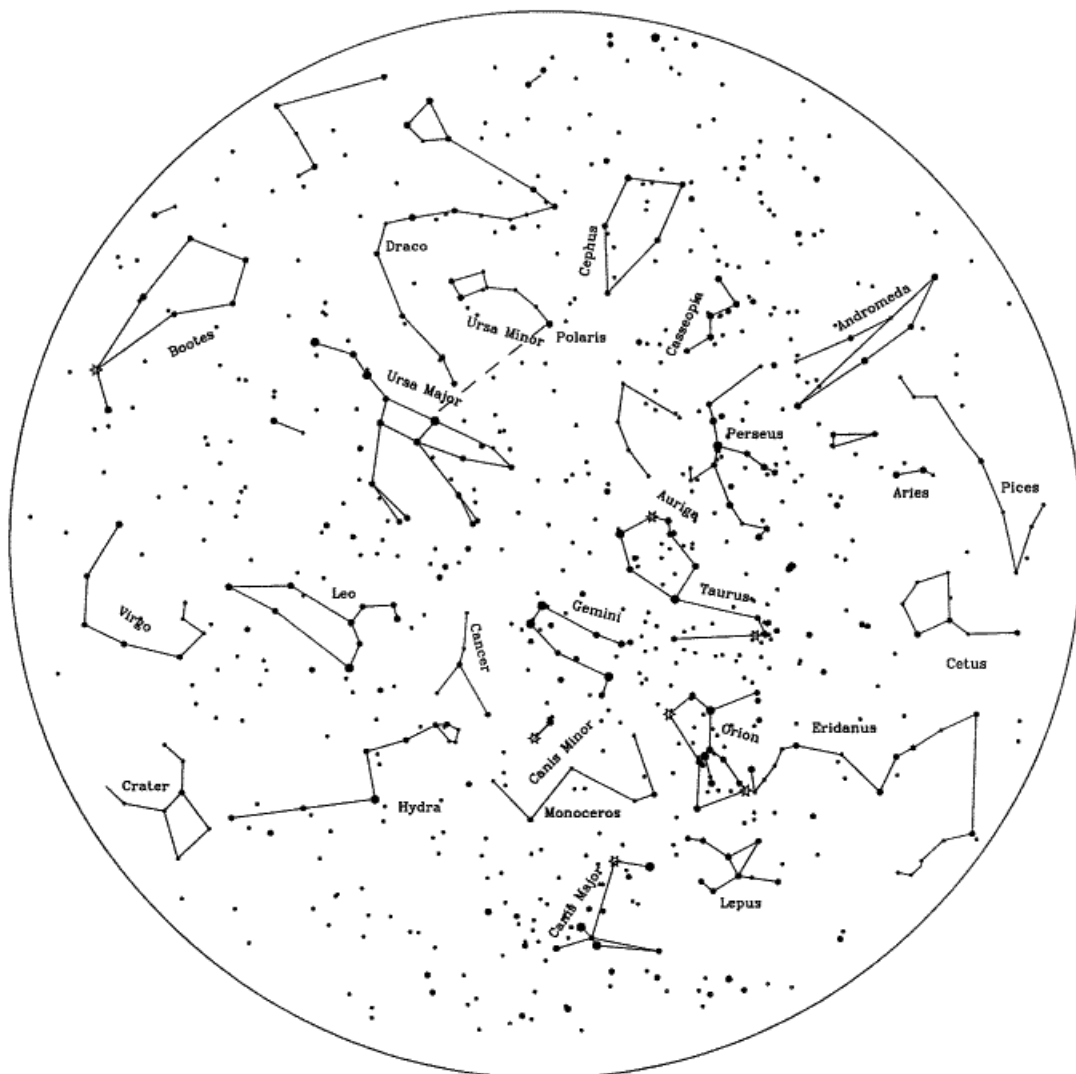


Written in the Stars

CLASSROOM SCIENCE INFORMATION

FACTS ABOUT STARS

- Stars are made of gas.
- There are too many stars to count. Scientists estimate that our galaxy may have over 100 billion stars!
- Stars live and die just like humans
- A large, explosive star death is called a Supernova.
- Many stars die quietly and cool down to become a white dwarf and finally a black dwarf.
- Star shapes are called constellations, which look like pictures in the sky. Sailors used them to guide them across the seas.
- The word constellation originates from Latin term meaning, “set with stars.”
- Hydra is the largest constellation by area taking up 3.16% of the sky.



The Growing Up Game: Choices And Challenges

HUMANITIES/SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Taken directly from: <http://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/detail/growing-up--choices--challenges-lesson-plan/>

MATERIALS

- Large poster board
- Heavy construction paper or card stock paper
- Colored pencils and markers
- Glue



ACTIVITY

1. Inform students that they will be creating a board game today, based on the premise of growing up, and the choices and challenges that go along with growing up, taking on more responsibilities, and reaching long term or immediate goals.
2. Place students in small groups, which they will be working in for this entire activity. First, have the groups list and compare favorite board games. Brainstorm common factors found in the games such as paths to follow, bonus or challenge cards, obstacles, rewards, consequences, game pieces, random number generators, and other attributes.
 - a. These brainstormed lists should be compiled and written down by one person in each group.
3. Next, ask groups to write a list of immediate and future goals for their life.
 - a. Think about six months to perhaps 20 years in the future.
 - b. Also list obstacles or challenges that might interfere with reaching those goals, such as the need to practice 3 hours a day or to go to college for eight years.
 - c. Create another list of possible rewards and consequences, such as an allowance increase or being grounded for a week.
4. Now, the groups must decide on the design of their game board.
 - a. How will players move from start to finish?
 - b. Encourage groups to sketch a number of ideas on scrap paper. Try different configurations to make sure everything will fit on the board.
5. Finally, groups must determine the basic rules for the game so they know what parts to make.
 - a. Use the lists you created to add another layer of fun to your game. Create reward and consequence cards connected to your challenges and obstacles.
6. Once the games are all finished, have each group explain and demonstrate playing their game in front of the class. Compare and contrast the features of the games, and allow this dialogue to spark a lengthier and more in depth conversation about the pros and cons, choices and challenges, and benefits and disadvantages to growing up.

Post-Show Questions

1. Gretel struggles with her stepmother and stepsister who treat her poorly and force her to do all of their chores. How do you define family? Is it always the people you are related to?
 2. The characters Gretel and her brother unconditionally look out for each other. They prove their loyalty to one another during the challenges they face together. Who is someone you care for? How do you prove that you care for one another? Can you recall a time when you helped this person through a difficult situation, or they helped you?
 3. All of our experiences—good and bad—teach us and change us in different ways . Think about experiences that have taught you the most about yourself and others . What were these experience and how did you become stronger and wiser because of them?
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Who Said It?

1. “Father, why does she smile with her voice and frown with her face?”
2. “I must go to the city to see if anyone needs water or air.”
3. “Come along, Gretel! I shall teach you which roots and berries to pick and which mushrooms will make you sicker than a fish in the desert.”
4. “Gretel, there are a few things we need done around the house.”
5. “I need a servant more than I need a snack!”
6. “Pray, child, why are there small white pebbles dribbling out of your pocket from time to time?”
7. “I may be magic, but even I can’t make something out of nothing!”
8. “Which is more painful-losing everything or having nothing?”
9. “Stars are beyond numbers because sometimes, something is only really seen after it is gone.”
10. “You heard what she said! You’d best get cracking, girl!”