

CHILD'S PLAY TOURING THEATRE

WOW! Writing Our World

Study Guide for Teachers



Local sponsors have scheduled Child's Play Touring Theatre to perform for your students in a few months, and we thought you might like to know more about us and what we do. To help make this a fun and motivational experience, we have provided materials to assist you and your students in the preparation and follow up of the show.

What is Child's Play Touring Theatre?

Child's Play Touring Theatre is a professional traveling theatre for young audiences that performs stories and poems written by children, transforming young writers' manuscripts into plays, songs, and dances. Every year, the company performs the works of hundreds of young poets, essayists, playwrights and short story writers from classrooms just like yours.

Child's Play combines the imagination of children and the craftsmanship of professional theatre artists. Using characters, narration and dialogue created by young authors, the actors of Child's Play Touring Theatre add songs, mime, music, sound effects, props and costumes to fashion a complete show. A lively pace, energetic performances, and lots of audience participation keep the children involved throughout the presentation.

A Child's Play performance can spark the writing program in your classroom, as well as open doors to discussion, writing, and theatre activities. As children watch our actors performing literature written by other children, they become very excited about their own potential as writers. They say, "I can do that too!"

What can I do to prepare for the show...

- The best way for you to prepare your students for a Child's Play performance is to let them know that this is a show written by kids - kids just like them!
- Talk about the vocabulary of the theatre. Discuss the roles of the actors, a musical director, the set, a script, etc.
- Ask how many students have seen a play. Have them share their experiences.
- Let the children know that they should feel free to clap if they like the actors or something that happens on the stage. At this performance, they will be asked to sing along, make movements, or even come on stage to help the actors.

After the performance...

Following you will find a few suggestions for follow-up activities in your classroom. There are also actual activity sheets included that can be copied and passed out to the children.

WOW!

Children of the world, sharing their lives, their struggles and their dreams.

WOW! (Writing Our World) is an exciting initiative that aims to increase global awareness for children across America and internationally.

By participating in WOW!, children throughout the world can submit stories and poems that illustrate their own personal lives, dreams and aspirations. Children are encouraged to explore their lives and beliefs, as well as those of children in other countries and cultures, to understand and celebrate the differences and the universal commonalities of children throughout the world.

The show opens with a rousing song encouraging imagination - written by a child in the United Kingdom, which is followed by poems and short stories written by children from Australia, China, India, Norway, Singapore, USA, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Uplifting audience participation creates even more fun and excitement in this magical, musical, multicultural journey!

GETTING STARTED

Understanding Culture:

- What is meant by “culture”? Discuss the definition of the word “culture”. Ask children to tell what they know about any other cultures. Have any been to another country? How were children’s lives different there? How were they similar?
- Ask the class to give examples of things that make up American culture (food, music, clothes, government, etc.). Are all people in the U.S. the same? Discuss the concept of “sub-cultures” – i.e. immigrants from different countries/religions, combining with American culture.

Multicultural Calendar:

- Divide the class into 12 groups – one for each month of the year. Ask each group to select a different ethnic or religious culture to learn about. Students should research their chosen culture using library materials, internet etc. They should then complete their ‘month calendar’ with the important dates for their culture. The month pages can also be decorated with cultural photographs and illustrations. Students can report back to the class about the culture they researched, and the completed twelve pages can then be put together to form a class ‘Multicultural Calendar’.

Your Cultural Community:

- Discuss the different cultures that make up your own country and community. Ask children to tell the class about their own history, family and customs. What things are most important to them and why?

Planet WOW:

- a) Role Play: Your town is being wiped out by a tidal wave. Your only chance of survival is to get onto a space shuttle that is leaving for a new planet. Unfortunately, the space shuttle is one seat short. Ask students to discuss ways around this problem. Students then have two minutes each to present reasons as to why their character should be allowed on board.
- b) Imagine/suggest what your planet will look like. Think up a name for your planet.
- c) Ask students to imagine they are exploring the planet where they have just arrived. Write down all the things they see. Suddenly, they meet an alien! They can see the alien, but he can't see them. Describe what the alien is doing, wearing, what he/she looks like. (You may like to make masks of your alien.)
- d) You are now going to formally meet your alien. How do you greet each other? How do humans greet each other? Students can demonstrate their 'greeting' in pairs.
- e) Create an alien language. In pairs, students should choose two sounds each. Using only these sounds, improvise a short scene about either someone being lost or someone buying a hat. The rest of the class should comment on how easy/hard the scenes were to understand. Why? (Use of body language, facial expressions, etc.)
- f) Finish the exercise by discussing ways the two groups (humans and aliens) will be able to get along – teaching each other their language, customs, etc.

THE BIG RACE or WHY ANIMALS LIVE ALL OVER AFRICA

By: Danny, Nick and Ryan, Grade 4
Green Acres School, Rockville, MD

This fable tells of five animals – a leopard, hippopotamus, lemur, lion, and cheetah – all living in a hut in Africa. The hut is too crowded for all of them, so an old man suggests a race to decide who should win the right to live in the hut. The animals are to race to the purple sands of Tanzania and the first one to return with a bag of sand is to be the winner. However... as the animals venture on this long trip, they each find a place along the way

that suits them perfectly, and they settle into new homes. With the hut now unoccupied, the man takes residence there.

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Display a world map. From Africa, have students identify such places as Tanzania and Madagascar. Ask students what they know or imagine Africa to be like.
- **Slow Motion Race:**
Have students write down an animal (could be human, too) on a piece of paper or flash card. Place all cards in a hat. In teams of 5 or 6 at a time (depends on the size of your classroom) have each student draw an animal from the hat. Each team, in turn, will do a *slow motion* race from one side of the room to the other (or around the room, depending on configuration of desks) as the animal on their card. Each student/animal moves in the slowest slow motion they can while still trying to actually win the race. Discuss the difference in motion of each animal, and how that affected the race. This is a great physical warm-up game, and the slow motion makes it doable in a classroom.
- Have students list the positive aspects of living in different areas of the world, i.e. weather, scenery, food, recreation/sports, technology, jobs, flora & fauna, the arts (theatre, dance, visual, music), housing, etc. Each student could be assigned or choose a different country to explore. Or, you could do these exercises using only Africa and America for a more focused exercise.
- Ask students to write where they would live if they didn't live here? What place would most suit their needs? Why?
- From where would you like to make a new friend? Why? What would be the things you would have in common? What could you learn from each other? Would you be able to visit each other? Where would you take your guest in order to show them a good time in America?

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- Give each child a different animal to research. Ask children to find out where this animal lives, his foods, and needs. Make a suitable habitat for the animal out of playdoh.
- Make animal masks using cardboard, egg cartons and paint. Children may then like to create their own play using their masks.
- Make 'purple sand' using sand and food dye.

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Divide students into groups to research different areas of Africa. Ask students to report to class on their assigned areas – the geography, climate, animals, and people who live there.
- Discuss what is meant by ‘habitat’? What are the differences between ‘needs’ and ‘wants’? What are the ‘needs’ of humans? How are these needs met/not met in different countries?
- Research the various types of housing in different countries and areas. Are there reasons for the particular architectures and structures?

SMALL

By: The children of India

Small tells of how little things work to make up bigger things – drops of water make an ocean, soil particles build a mountain, each day makes up a part of history... We are reminded to value the small things...

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Identify India on your world map. Discuss what students know about India and how they picture it. Find out more about India from library books and the Internet.
- Discuss what is meant by ‘ritual’. Ask students to identify rituals in their own lives or those they know about.
- With the students, brainstorm a list of the things you/they do every day, i.e., brush your teeth, feed the dog, eat breakfast. Is there something you eat every morning? Is there anything that is done in your home that would be considered a daily ritual? How about at school – pledge of allegiance, line up for lunch, exercises in gym class, etc?
- Have students work in groups or pairs to create a classroom ritual. It could be as simple as pencil sharpening, or as silly as turning around three times and cheering before sitting at your desk. Choose one for the whole class to do every day for a week.
- Ask students if any have had experiences of moving house/school, and to describe their feelings/fears around this experience. What things did they do to help adjust to their new surroundings?
- **10 Second Objects:**
 - a) Divide class into groups of 5. Each group works simultaneously. (You may need to push desks together to give each group an area to create). The teacher/facilitator calls out an object, i.e. clock, race car, key,

flower, computer, see-saw, coat rack, table, tooth brush, shoe, etc. The teacher then begins counting backwards from 10.

- b) The group must create the object by working together, with each person becoming a part of the object being created. It's fun to see the different ways the objects are made and the students love the time limit element.
- c) When you hit 0, have each group freeze – then they may look around and see the many variations of the object their classmates have created. Then quickly name another object and begin counting. Play as long as you like. This is a good game for getting students to work together. The time limit creates a team spirit where there is no time to disagree.

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- Ask children for suggestions of other 'small' things that can build to become something bigger – i.e. bricks into buildings, snowflakes into a snowman...
- Make flowers and trees out of colored paper and cardboard.
- Write a 'Bio-Poem'. Have children fill out the following to create their own poem:

I am (Name)
I see _____
I hear _____
I smell _____
I taste _____
I touch _____
I feel _____
I am (Name)

- Ask children to suggest different things they are able to do because they are small.

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Show students a small piece of a painting (i.e. an impressionist painting) and ask them what they see (paint spots, brushstrokes, bits of color...). Then show the full painting/picture. Discuss how something is often unidentifiable until we see the 'full picture'.
- **Market Day:** This exercise is done over a series of days. You'll need play money and art supplies.
 - a) Begin by discussing the value of the various objects in your classroom. Why is chalk important? How often do you use the map or globe? Is there a sufficient supply of pencils? Do you ever have a party in your

classroom with treats? How important is that? What is the importance of desks?

- b) Brainstorm a list of aesthetic things of value that students could make, i.e. pictures-drawing/painting, paper flowers, paper hats, clay sculptures, etc. What are the supplies you will need to make these things? How much would you need to charge to cover your costs and make a profit? Price the things in the classroom and the handmade items, keeping in mind how many you plan to sell.
- c) In groups of 3 or 4, choose an item to sell. Create an advertisement (a slogan, a song, a short scene like a commercial, or a poster) to sell the chosen product. Share them with the class.
- d) Organization time! Groups gather, make or bring from home, the actual items they plan to sell. (This can take a day or more – up to you.)
- e) Each group has a “booth” (desks arranged together) to display and vend their product. Groups set up their booths and display their product.
- f) Two people man the booth and are given a till of play money to begin the market day and give change. The others are given play money to spend at other booths. Each group begins with the same amount of money. The shopping begins. Set time limit (a matter of minutes, a class period, or longer – it’s up to you). When the time is up, each group gets back together and assesses their day.
 - How much did they make on their product?
 - How much did they spend?
 - What did they buy from others on Market Day?
 - Did they spend more than they made?
 - Would they be able to buy more materials to make more of their product?
- g) Ask children to bring in samples of any coins they have from different countries. Compare these samples to samples of American money. What pictures are on the coins? What colors? What do they represent? Stick samples of coins on their appropriate countries on your map.

THE THREE DRAGONS

By Havard, Age 13

Norway

A poor man is enamored of a beautiful princess. He is also enamored of riches and gold. When a witch promises him a golden reward for retrieving her magic necklace from a tree, he accepts. But... when he falls inside the hollow tree he discovers that it is

inhabited by dragons who were once princes until they fell into the same trap set by the witch. The only way to save them is to find the necklace and break it. The man finds three rooms with treasure chests – in the third is the magic necklace, guarded by a three-headed dragon. The man must make a choice – take the gold, OR the magic necklace which will break the witch’s curse...

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Find Norway on your map. Ask children what they know/imagine about Norway and other countries in Scandinavia.
- Brainstorm a list of popular fairytales and fables. Discuss the moral at the end of each. (Be nice, choose well, don’t be greedy, consider others, etc.)

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- After brainstorming important things, put the list on flash cards and place them in a hat. Have a student pull one from the hat. As a class, create a story about a character who wants the thing they have drawn, and tell how they go about getting it. What characters “want” creates action in your story. Any barriers to getting what they want creates the problem in the story. Finally, the solution will decide whether or not they get what they want.
- Make a ‘magic’ necklace out of macaroni, beads, and paints.

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Discuss the choices each character makes in these stories. When a magical character shows up, like a witch or goblin, it usually means anything is possible. But the catch is, when anything is possible, you have to choose wisely. How does each choice the characters make affect the outcome of the story? What are the consequences of each character’s actions?
- Brainstorm, as a class, a list of things important to them – material things and/or spiritual things such as love, laughter. Each student makes their own list from most important to least important. Students can choose one thing off their list and write about a character who wants that one thing more than anything else in the world. In telling how they go about getting it, they will find that what a character “wants” creates the action of a story. What keeps the character from getting what it wants creates the problem. Finally, the solution determines whether or not they get what they want. (Some characters get what they want...others get what they deserve.)
- Write your own version of a myth or fairytale.

THE DEEP BLUE SEA

By Chloe, Age 9

Australia

Written from the point of view of the sea, this piece portrays the sea's importance to animal life, plant life, and humans. It is a lyrical reminder to treasure and protect this important part of the earth.

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Find Australia on your map. Ask students what they know about this country/continent.
- Point out the four oceans on the world map. Ask children who has been to the ocean/beach. What are their images?
- Create an Environment - or - “Where Are We?”
 - a) Brainstorm environments with your students. Make a list on the board. Any types of environment are good to use. Mountains, lakes, rivers, desert, a zoo, park or playground, a museum, city street, circus, school, grocery store, restaurant, camp site, baseball game, beauty shop - these are just some examples.
 - b) In groups of four or five, have students discuss all the elements of their chosen or assigned environment. They can practice their environment.
 - c) Each group has a turn to show their environment to the rest of the class. They should enter the scene one at a time, each student adding on to the environment until their whole scene is created.

*Audience rules: Watch quietly until the facilitator/teacher says “The end.” They may not shout out where they think the other group is. When the scene is over, the first thing the audience must do is clap. Then they may raise their hands and guess what the environment was.

*After each scene, discuss how the class knew where they were. Notice the activity of each player, and how all the elements added up to make a “whole”.

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- Ask children if they have ever tasted water from the ocean. How does it taste? Why does tap water and ocean water taste different?
- Discuss the different kinds of fish and plants that live in the water. Why are some animals and plants able to live under water? Why do you think fish can float to the top of the water and not sink to the bottom of the ocean?
- **Experiment:** 1.) Place an egg in a glass of tap water, and another in a glass of tap water with salt added to it. (Eggs in salt water float, while eggs in tap water

sink...) 2.) Place a piece of plant into a jar of water. Observe plant in regular light; then shine a flashlight on the jar for a couple of minutes – children will be able to observe oxygen bubbles floating to the surface of the jar. Discuss the results of these experiments and ask children what they think would happen if someone pollutes the water.

- Make an ‘underwater collage’. Use blue paint and blue cellophane; then get children to make their own fish, sea animals and plants to include in the collage.

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Discuss the different types of pollution – chemical, thermal, ecological. Point out the differences in pollution that can be seen, and pollution that can’t be seen. If you are near any water – lake, river, ocean etc. – you may like to take students on a field trip to observe and document examples of pollution. Ask children for suggestions of ways that pollution can be avoided.
- Divide students into small groups and assign each group a different type of sea life. Ask them to research such things as habitat, environment and food needs, and what sort of things would be harmful. Groups can present this information to the class.

EL DIA DE LOS MUEARTOS (DAY OF THE DEAD)

By The Purepecha Children

Community of San Isidro, Los Reyes

A colorful and musical portrayal of a fiesta that bears great importance for this community. The story tells of the use of symbolism – such as monarch butterflies representing spirits – and describes the rituals and traditions used to celebrate this day of remembrance.

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Ask children to tell about any fiestas, parades or celebrations they have seen or been involved in. What were they for?
- Discuss American holidays and celebrations and those of ethnic communities. Ask children to share the ways in which their family celebrates holidays.
- Brainstorm a list of celebrations, rituals, and ceremonies such as weddings, birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, graduations, Olympic opening ceremonies, Christmas, Hanukkah, etc.

(These all incorporate elements of theatre. They all have some of the following: props, costumes, song, dance, parades or processions, lines to learn or recite, staging, lighting, etc...)

- Working in groups, have students choose a ceremony to act out. Each group goes one at a time to share with the class. (These short scenes should last under two minutes.) After each, discuss the theatrical elements, i.e., the Happy Birthday song, the hats and blowers, the candle on the cake, the wedding costumes, the graduation robes, etc...
- After each group has had their turn, have the groups work together to create a fictional celebration or ceremony, i.e., The “Day of the Tissue Box” or “The Celebration of the Pencil Sharpener”.
 - What would happen on this day?
 - Is there a parade of any kind?
 - Do people wear anything special on this day?
 - Is there a party?
 - What about a song or chant?
 - Are there props that symbolize something special? (like the Olympic torch?)
 - How about a certain greeting?
- When they have created their fictional celebrations, have them share them with the class.

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- Ask children to tell about their favorite holiday. Why is it their favorite? How do they celebrate? Make a painting of your favorite holiday celebration.
- Suggest to the class that they create their own ‘holiday’. What will it be called? What will it celebrate? Brainstorm details for your ‘class holiday’ – music, food, decorations, games. Make a greeting card for your holiday!

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Discuss the use of imagery/symbolism in this story. The monarch butterflies represent spirits – can you think of such examples in holidays or celebrations you know?
- Discuss why it is important to remember/honor people and happenings of history or cultural significance?
- Divide class into groups and assign each a country/culture to research. In particular, ask students to report back on such things as food, resources, and significant festivities. (If you haven’t already made a ‘multicultural calendar’ from the “Getting Started” section, you may like to include that also.)

Critiques and Reviews

Encourage your students to become theatre critics. They can write reviews of our show for an assignment or just for fun. Think about publishing opposing viewpoints in a school newsletter. And of course, we're always thrilled to receive constructive criticism from our toughest audience! Send stories, drawings, letters, and reviews to:

CHILD'S PLAY TOURING THEATRE

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For more information contact Child's Play at (773) 235-8911

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Write a Review

Today we went to a show by Child's Play Touring Theatre. Fill in the blanks to tell all about the show. Draw pictures in the boxes to show what you saw and did.

Today we went to a _____

One thing I saw was _____

We also saw _____

My favorite person was _____

The part I didn't like was _____

My favorite part was _____

Written and drawn by _____

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