

CHILD'S PLAY TOURING THEATRE

The Christmas That Almost Wasn't 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.

DINKY THE DANCING REINDEER

This is a story about a reindeer who loves to dance, but gets into trouble when she tries to juggle her dance lessons with sleigh rehearsal. At the last minute, Dinky the reindeer is able to solve her scheduling problems.

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Children have a lot of hobbies and interests. Have the students talk or write about their favorite activities, clubs and hobbies. Did they ever get involved in something they didn't like or felt they weren't good at? What activities do the students excel at?
- Discuss with the class things that Dinky could have done differently about her conflict between sleigh rehearsal and dance class. Could she have tried talking about it with Santa from the beginning?

Discussion and activities for Younger Students

- Dinky's name changes and she becomes Dancer. The students could write stories about the other reindeer, how they got their names, how they started working for Santa, etc.
- Have the children talk about a time when they felt like Dinky--a little confused, unsure and worried. What did they do about these feelings? What can they do when they feel this way?

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Dinky has a responsibility to attend her sleigh rehearsal every day. Have the students discuss and/or write about responsibilities that they have at home and at school. Have they ever shirked their responsibilities? What happened if they did?
- Dinky has a talent for dancing. Have the students talk about their different talents and suggest they put on a talent show.

HOW SANTA GOT WELL

Santa takes the wrong pill at Christmas time and becomes very ill. He won't be able to deliver presents on Christmas. But a note from a hungry boy compels Santa to leave his sick bed to bring food to the boy. Santa's illness is cured when the boy gives him a hug.

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Santa was very absent-minded when he accidentally took Rudolph's pills. Have the children discuss or write about a time when they were forgetful and made a mistake.
- Santa helps a young boy by bringing him food. Discuss the possibilities of helping starving people like Bobby. Perhaps start a classroom food drive and donate a box of food and clothing to the poor in the community.

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- Have the children talk about what they can do to make someone feel good during the holidays without buying them a present. Bobby simply gives Santa a hug. Possibilities - draw a picture or write a story for someone, say or do something helpful or nice.
- Ask the students to write about a close-call holiday catastrophe in their life. Has any crazy, funny things happened to them during this season? They could write about a favorite present or their best holiday ever.

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Bobby was a poor boy and his family was starving. Have the students discuss what they can do themselves to help people like Bobby.
- If the students were government leaders, what sort of programs would they develop to help the poor and homeless? The students could write about their ideas; draft a mock bill to pass in the legislature.

SANTA AND THE WITCH

A mean witch who hates Christmas moves to the North Pole. She finds the hustle and bustle of Santa's Christmas preparation unbearable. In retaliation she casts a sleeping spell on Santa to end Christmas for one hundred years.

Discussion and Activities for Everyone

- Have the students talk about why the witch may hate Christmas. Why is Christmas not a happy time for her? Do the students know anyone who doesn't like Christmas? What could they do to help that person change their mind?
- Elwood the Elf wants to show the witch the kindness and giving of the holiday season by bringing her a present. Have the students talk about things they can do to show their friends and family that they care and love them.

Discussion and Activities for Younger Students

- Have the children draw holiday cards or write stories to give as gifts to friends and family.
- Ask the students to talk about what the witch could have done instead of putting the spell on Santa to stop the crazy noise and bustle of his Christmas preparations.

Discussion and Activities for Older Students

- Have the students write and/or talk about different holiday cultures at this time of year. Not everyone celebrates Christmas or Chanukah. The students could also talk and write about special or unique celebrations and customs they observe in their own homes.

CRITIQUES AND REVIEWS

Encourage your students to become theatre critics. They can write their reviews of our show on the review sheets provided. It can be done as an assignment or just for fun.

Think about publishing opposing viewpoints in a school newsletter. And of course, we are 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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WWW.CPTT.ORG

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 _____

Write a Review

Today you saw a show by Child’s Play Touring Theatre. NOW’s your chance to review the show! Remember to include some of these elements in your review:

What did you think about the show? What was your favorite part? What was a part that you didn’t like? Who was your favorite actor or character? How did you feel about the sets and music? Get a quote from an audience member. Draw an illustration and give it a “caption” (catchy description).

THE CHILD’S PLAY TIMES

(Use other side if needed)

Written by _____