

Imagination Makers Theater Company

TEACHER'S GUIDE

for

*6 FABLES— OLD AND NEW*7

Imagination Makers Theater Company
2590 Walnut Street, Suite 3
Boulder, Colorado 80027
www.imaginationmakers.org

TEACHER'S FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do you have any materials to help prepare my class for the play?

Yes, this Teacher's Guide contains suggestions for ways to prepare your students for the play, as well as follow-up activities and discussion questions. In a past season, a child was overheard talking to her mother after a performance. She said she was going to go home and become a writer! We hope you can use this play as a valuable inspiration to enhance *your* students' excitement about writing.

My students have never seen a play. What should I tell them?

We have included some basic guidelines on attending a theater performance under "Some Notes for Students" -- see p. 4.

I've gone to some really awful assemblies. How do I know this one will be good?

There is no guarantee you will like our play, but we do have a good track record of meeting the needs of students and teachers (this is our 28th year!). Last year on evaluation forms, 98% of teachers gave our plays ratings of "Outstanding" or "Very Good."

We receive these high ratings because the company employs experienced, professional directors and actors who enjoy performing for young people. The actors you will see in *Fables—Old and New* have college degrees in theater, and credentials that include not only theater for young audiences, but also critically acclaimed regional and local productions ranging from dinner theater to Shakespeare. We perform in schools because the mission of Imagination Makers is to give as many kids as possible a chance to see live theater--especially those who would not ordinarily have the opportunity to do so.

When should we arrive at the performance?

Please arrive at the gym 5-10 minutes before the performance start time. Your early arrival will insure that we can get everyone seated and ready to go in a timely fashion. Sometimes there is a second show at your school or we must go directly to another school to do a show. If your performance gets started late, it causes problems for those attending performances after yours.

May I take pictures during the show?

So that our audience (and the performers) can stay focused, we ask that you not take photographs during the show. For picture taking purposes, we will re-enact any part of the show after the performance.

Why don't you create separate plays for primary and intermediate grades?

While it is not financially viable for Imagination Makers to tour separate plays for primary and intermediate grades (it costs approximately \$20,000 to create a new play!), we have designed this play so that the emotional aspects are meaningful to all ages. Although we realize that not all content will appeal to all grade levels--some may be over the heads of the youngest students or seem "babyish" to the oldest--we do our best to balance the needs of students K-6. Our goal is that all grade levels find much of the material relevant, and that all audience members (including you!) will be thoroughly entertained.

Will there be an opportunity for my class to meet the performers?

Yes. The performers always stand outside the exit door so that they can greet your class as they leave the show. This is a great time for students to ask a quick question, make a comment or just say hello.

How can I let the company know what I thought of the performance?

You will receive an evaluation form from us at the performance. Please take a few minutes after the play to fill this out, preferably with your students (if time permits). One of the reasons we are still in business after 28 years is that WE LISTEN TO YOUR FEEDBACK! We use the evaluations to help us make our plays the very best they can be. Your ratings and comments are also essential for reporting the results of our work to granting organizations. (Your school pays approximately one third of what it costs us to bring a performance to your school. The rest of the money comes from grants.)

I don't have time to go to an assembly – I'm swamped and need to correct papers during the show. What should I do?

We understand that sometimes you may need to do paperwork during the performance. If this is the case, we respectfully request that, after seating your students, you sit at the rear of the audience. We would like to express our appreciation, in advance, for your cooperation during the performance. We have noticed that when teachers come to the show with their class, stay for the entire time, and give their full attention to the performance, the students model this audience behavior. The students then benefit more from the play and its themes, and everybody, including the performers, has a more rewarding experience.

Can my students write letters to the performers?

YES! We love to receive letters and artwork from students. We include some of these in our grant evaluations. We also save the best ones for our scrapbook and we pick some of our favorite pictures to frame and put up in our office. Our address is:

*Imagination Makers Theater Company
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Boulder, CO 80302*

Are there any considerations for special education students?

If you would like to discuss how Imagination Makers can make the performance more accessible to your students, please call us at 720-565-1055 or e-mail info@imaginationmakers.org. We will be happy to provide a copy of the script ahead of time for sign language interpreters. We will try to meet any special disability needs as best we can. We can also arrange for special education students to come to the performance early and meet the performers.

What if I still have more questions?

We are dedicated to serving students and teachers. Feel free to call 720-565-1055 or e-mail us at info@imaginationmakers.org with any questions or comments you have.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO PERFORMING AT YOUR SCHOOL!

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

FABLES—OLD AND NEW

Take an old fable, recycle it, and it becomes something new!

This imaginative musical play first dramatizes children's retellings of Aesop's traditional fables, then shows student-written modern versions of these tales. In addition to reusing old fables, the entire set for the play, all the props and the musical instruments have been created entirely from recycled materials. Students can see that with little more than "junk" and a good imagination, something incredible can be created.

The fable writers were from diverse backgrounds including African-American and Latino (one girl wrote her fable in Spanish), as well as a boy who was blind and a girl who was homeless. This entertaining and meaningful play promotes recycling in a fun way, and teaches simple but valuable lessons for life.

LIST OF FABLES and THEIR MORALS

1. Old Fable—The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
New Fable--The Babysitter
Moral: Sometimes looks can fool you.
2. Old Fable--The Olive Tree and the Fig Tree
New Fable--The Big Coat
Moral: The stuff that people make fun of you for can turn out to be a good thing.
3. Old Fable--The Fox and the Lion
New Fable--The New Girl Moves In
Moral: Get to know people, before you judge them in the wrong way.
4. Old Fable--Hercules and the Wagoneer
New Fable--The Pop Bottle
Moral: Help yourself first, before asking others for help.
5. Old Fable—The crow and the Pitcher
New Fable—My Story About the Bag of Potato Chips
Moral: When faced with a problem, use your imagination to solve it.
6. Old Fable--The Tortoise and the Hare
New Fable--My Words of Writing
Moral: It's not always the best one that wins, but the one that sticks with it.
7. Old Fable--The Boy Who Cried Wolf
New Fable--Jason the Liar
Moral: If you lie, people won't believe you, even when you tell the truth.
8. Old Fable--The Lion and Boar
New Fable—The Misunderstanding at 12:05
Moral: Sometimes the consequences of fighting aren't worth it.
9. Old Fable--The Hen and the Golden Eggs
New Fable--Popsicles
Moral: Greed can lead to losing it all.

SOME NOTES FOR STUDENTS

Theater is an incredible experience, and we are pleased that you get to see our play, *Fables—Old and New!* Here are some things about seeing a play that are different from watching TV and movies:

Theater is live!

At a play, the audience is an important part of the performance. This is because the performers can hear everything that goes on in the audience. When you laugh at the funny parts, are quiet at the serious parts, and give your total attention to what's going on in the play, you actually *help* the actors. If you do a great job as an audience, then the actors do a great job performing and you will see a fantastic show!

Listening is very important

Once the show starts, be respectful of the people in audience. If you talk to others around you, they will miss part of the play and so will you. You can't rewind a play! Save your thoughts and comments for the conversations you will have with friends after the play is over.

Imagine

The name of our company is Imagination Makers because, you will need to use your imagination when you are watching the play. For instance, there are three actors playing forty-eight different characters! Also, all the props are made from recycled materials so, you will need to pretend that tin cans are leaves and newspaper bags are a lion's mane. The musical instruments are recycled as well, so there will be some frying pans and garbage pails that will become drums.

Applause

The performers work very hard to give you a great show. The way to show them that you like what they are doing is to clap. Applause can be short and polite if you think the play is just "Okay," or it can be loud and long if you have really enjoyed the play.

Feedback

After the play, the performers will greet you as you leave. This is a good time to shake their hands, ask a question, or tell them what you liked about the play. If you have more to say to the performers, they would be happy to receive a letter from you. Your teacher has our address. (*Teachers: This can be found on page 3.*)

HAVE FUN!

NOTE TO INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS *Fables-Old and New* includes 18 student written fables, 14 of which have been written by students grades 4th-6th. Some fables were written by kids that had great writing skills, and some were written by kids whose writing skills were not that good. In one case, this was because a girl was homeless, so she kept changing schools and didn't have a chance to develop her writing up to grade level. But we picked their fables because these writers had great stories to tell and a unique sense of humor. As older students we hope you are able to look beyond what may appear to be "babyish" and find the amusing concepts and inspiring ideas behind the words.

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

PLEASE NOTE: The following suggestions are only a guide. You will need to judge what is appropriate for your grade level and your individual class.

BEFORE THE PLAY

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Approach the play enthusiastically and intelligently with an understanding of what to expect.
- Begin thinking about fables.
- Review audience skills.

DISCUSSION

Choose from among the following topics to discuss with your students:

1. Read the “Information for Students” (*Teachers: This can be found on page 4*).
2. Plays in general
 - Have you been to a play by Imagination Makers before? If so, what do you remember about it?
 - Have you been to other plays? What do you remember about them?
 - Has anyone in the class ever been in a play?
 - What is the difference between seeing a play and watching TV?
3. Concepts of the play
 - Have you ever had a problem and used your creativity and ingenuity to solve it? (*Fable: The Crow and the Pitcher*)
 - Tell about a time when someone lied so much that when that person told the truth no one believed them. (*Fable: The Boy Who Cried Wolf*)
 - Have you ever disliked someone at first because they were different than you in some way, but after getting to know then you became friends with them? (*Fable: The Fox and the Lion*)

ACTIVITIES

Art

This activity is a great way to generate enthusiasm for the performance within your class and also throughout the school.

1. Make posters advertising the play: “Imagination Makers presents *Fables—Old and New* at (name of school) in the (gym or cafeteria) on (date of performance).” Include pictures of one of the following:
 - A boy crying wolf
 - A tortoise and a hare in a race
 - A crow dropping pebbles into a pitcher
 - A hen with golden eggs
 - A wolf disguising himself in a sheep’s fur

Reading

Especially for younger students, reading some fables ahead of time can really enhance their experience of the play. (See page 3 for a list of all the fables in the play.)

1. Read some fables. You can read the Aesop's fables that we will be doing in the play, or any fables you have in your school library.

AFTER THE PLAY

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the play.
- Deepen the understanding of the theme areas and apply this understanding in their own lives.
- Analyze problems and evaluate possible solutions.
- Relate appropriate curriculum areas to the play.

DISCUSSION

Choose from among the following topics to discuss with your students:

1. Plays in general
 - Which fable was your favorite? (*Teachers: See page 3 for list of fables.*) Did you like the old version or the modern version better? Were there any you didn't like?
 - Which characters were your favorite? Least favorite? Why?
 - How did the costumes and set help you to enjoy the play? Give examples.
 - Did you like the music? Why?
 - What song did you like the best? What did you like about the song?
2. Concepts of the play
 - What do you think are some of the ideas/ concepts that the play was trying to communicate?
 - Have you ever had experiences similar to the ones shown in the modern fables? Here are some possibilities:
 1. Have you or anyone you know, been made fun of for a quality that turned out to be an asset later on? (*Fable: Olive Tree and the Fig Tree*)
 2. Has there ever been a time when you asked for help before you had tried to help yourself first? (*Fable: Hercules and the Wagoneer*)
 3. Have you ever gotten to know someone and realized that they were not what they appeared to be at first? (*Fable: Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*)
 4. Has greed ever made you lose something that you had been given? (*Fable: The Hen and the Golden Eggs*)

*(Teachers: Also see the **Concepts** category under **Discussion** in the **Before the Play** section.)*

ACTIVITIES

Writing

We hope that your students will be inspired to do some writing of their own after seeing the play. Here are some ideas to get them started. Have students:

1. Write fables. You can:
 - Retell Aesop's fables in your own words.
 - Make up modern versions of Aesop's fables.
 - Make up your own fables with morals that reflect things you have learned.
2. Write a letter to:
 - A character in the play. Tell him or her why you liked or disliked them.
 - The actors. Tell them what you liked about the play.
 - The parent group, principal, or whomever sponsored the show in your school. Tell them what you liked about the play and thank them for sponsoring it.
 - Your parents. Tell them about the play.

(Teacher hint: Here are some "starters" for letters: "The part of the play that really stuck in my mind was...", "I had a connection to the play because...")

3. Brainstorm a list of words and/or phrases that the play evoked: Impressions, thoughts, feelings, images, etc. Use these words and phrases to create a poem.
4. Write a newspaper review of the play. They may include such elements as:
 - How you felt about the story in general.
 - Whether you think the costumes and set were good and fit the play.
 - What you thought of the acting; whether you thought it was believable and realistic.
 - You may give the performance a star rating (1 is lowest, 4 is highest) and say whether you would recommend it to other people.
 - What you would change about the play if you were the director.
5. See Drama #3.

Drama

Now that your students have had a chance to see live theater, they might enjoy doing some acting of their own.

1. Get into groups and act out your favorite part of the play.
(Teacher hint: This is a very easy drama activity and it helps students to process the play. It takes no theater expertise on your part, and their interpretations of the play can be a lot of fun!)
2. Do the above activity but, instead of acting out your favorite parts, do a comic strip. This is done by telling the story in frozen pictures or photographs - like in the game "Statues". Decide on 3-5 tableaux that would tell one of the stories from the play and use your bodies to pose the photos. Then, each group shows their "photo album" to the rest of the class.

3. With the whole class, write your own play based on the fables the class has written. Gather found and recycled objects (junk!) for props and costumes. Perform it for other classes.

Art

Have students:

1. Draw a picture of their favorite part of the play or favorite character.
2. Make a mural depicting all of the fables in the play.
3. Make pictures of the different fables, then make a collage of the pictures.

Music

Have students:

1. Find things in the classroom that might make good instruments, such as desks, chairs, table legs, side of bookcase, chalkboard, etc. Experiment to see which things make interesting sounds when played.
2. Collect junk that might make good instruments. See if they can find some interesting rhythms to play with the "junk" instruments.

Recycling/Environmental Education

The show can inspire kids to be creative about recycling. Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. Make a list of things that you currently re-use or recycle.
2. Can you think of anything else that you could add to that list?
3. In the play, we used all kinds of "junk" to make our set, to use as props and to use as musical instruments. Think up some creative ways to use "junk" that you may have lying around or that you may find.

ABOUT IMAGINATION MAKERS THEATER COMPANY

Imagination Makers is a professional company presenting innovative theater that is both entertaining and emotionally powerful. Internationally acclaimed, the company has given over 3,400 performances and reached approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million kids with performances of 25 original musical plays since 1980.

Some examples include a play about a family of Irish immigrants who move to America at the turn of the century, a play based on true stories of children who lived in early Colorado, and two student rewritten versions of Shakespeare's, *The Merchant of Venice*--one for elementary schools and one for middle and high schools.

For 28 years, Imagination Makers has toured successfully in Colorado. Out of state, we have done shows in New York, Connecticut, and England. Highlights include invitations to perform in London at the Newham International Festival of Theater in Education, and Take Off '89, an international theater festival. In 1998, we were selected to perform at the national conference of the American Alliance for Theater and Education. A play created by Imagination Makers, in collaboration with students from Brighton High School, was performed by those students at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The company has completed 31 Drama Residency programs at schools across Colorado. In the last few years, we have designed and conducted residencies that are intensive writing and theater experiences for students.

Imagination Makers is supported by grants from the following organizations: The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) through the Cultural Councils of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Douglas, and Jefferson counties, The Denver Foundation, Colorado Council on the Arts, The Janus Foundation, Boulder Arts Commission (an agency of the Boulder City Council), The Community Foundation serving Boulder County, Amgen Foundation, Target, Broomfield Community Foundation, as well as donations from numerous individuals.



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