

DUFFLEBAG THEATRE

TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE

ABOUT THE COMPANY

The nearly world-famous DuffleBag Theatre was formed in the summer of 1992 for the London International Children's Festival in what was supposed to be a five-day commitment for the duration of that festival. The response, however, was so tremendous that the company continued performing during the school year, and onto the next year, and so on. What started with modest beginnings has blossomed into a touring phenomenon.

Today DuffleBag Theatre performs over 450 shows a year touring to theatres, festivals, events, and schools, across Canada, the United States, and Asia.

As the name would suggest, like a duffle bag, they're portable. When they first



started, all their props and costumes for the show came out of a duffle bag. Now with so many shows to choose from, they need a trunk to hold it all, but changing the name to "Trunk Theatre" wouldn't have the same ring to it.

In addition to performing for young audiences and families, every year DuffleBag Theatre does a number of corporate events, including staff Christmas parties, company functions, fundraisers, as well as bilingual shows done in both French and English.

THEMES:

- Comedy
- Conflict Resolution
- Classics
- Communication
- Creativity
- Drama
- Imagination
- Improvisation
- Language Arts
- Narrative
- Spontaneity
- Storytelling
- Teamwork

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

DuffleBag Theatre adapts fairy tales and classic stories using members of the audience in the main parts



thereby creating a spontaneous and energizing theatre experience for audiences of all ages. No one is chosen ahead of time, so when a show begins, the narrator invites an unsuspecting audience member on stage to play one of the main parts. They are given a costume, props, and guidance from the narrator as they perform on

stage with the DuffleBag actors.

Improvisation is the key to DuffleBag Theatre because whatever the audience cast members do is incorporated into the show. Since the whole audience participates during the show as well, the results are captivating and hilarious. With DuffleBag Theatre, adults enjoy the performances just as much



PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

FAIRYTALES/FOLKTALES

What are some common objects that often appear in Fairytales/folktales? (magic beans, wands, bowls of food, rings etc.)

Who are some familiar characters? (king/queen, prince/princess, peasant boy/girl, fisherman and wife, magic person: fairy, wizard, etc.)

What are some common settings of some familiar tales? (Forest, poor cottage, palace, shore of lake, cave, mountain, etc.)

What are some common challenges? (lost, looking for home, making wishes, journey to fulfill a promise, quest, etc.)

What are some common endings? (a marriage, a wish coming true, finding home, etc.)

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

PICTURE RELAY: Small groups

(Primary)

Each group sits around one piece of large art paper. The children are numbered from 1 to x. All of the #1's go to the teacher who gives them a word that relates to Fairy/Folktale characters (perhaps taken from the charts made during the discussion above.) Each child runs back to the group and draws the picture. The rest of the group must guess what the #1 is drawing. The drawer must not speak, use hand signals or write numbers or letters. When the group guesses the correct answer, #2 goes to the teacher and is given a new word to draw. Continue until all the children have had a turn or until the list of words is finished.

(Intermediate) Have them convey other elements of a story, such as plot, setting, the challenge or the ending in the drawing. Use ideas from the charts made

during the discussion above. (e.g. in the forest; slaying a dragon. They lived happily ever after.)

IMPROVISED STORY: Small groups The groups use the pictures that they have just drawn to create a story. The person who is #1 starts to tell a story using one of the elements on the sheet of paper. (e.g. "Once there was a fisherman and his wife...")

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

What are some of the changes that were made to the story through improvisation?

How did this adaptation differ from other versions? (e.g. book, movie, musical)

Were there any extra characters added that were not in the original story?

Did they change the personalities of any of the characters?

What was good about members of the audience playing some of the parts?

How did props or costumes help to create the characters and tell the story?

What other ways did they get the audience involved?

How did having a "storyteller" help to move the story along?

Where did the story take place?

How did they show the different locations?

Did the storyteller "paint a picture" in your mind of how it looked?

What descriptions were given?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

TABLEAU CHALLENGE

Step One: whole group (Primary/Junior/Intermediate)

The teacher gives an instruction such as: "Show me the supermarket in 20 seconds". All the children must immediately create a tableau or frozen picture of people in a supermarket: some at cash desk, some in the aisles, some customers, some employees. Each person must find a way to fit into the picture. (other suggestions, the beach, the fair, the enchanted forest, the castle)

Step Two: 2 groups

Each group is given a different setting to portray. Each group rehearses the scene and then performs it for the other group. The audience guesses the setting and points out some of the individual activities they recognize. (They're at a beach. He is swimming, she is playing Frisbee, etc.)

Step Three: small groups (Junior/Intermediate)

Groups challenge each other to perform a scene and bid on how fast they can do it. (We can do that scene in 10 seconds.) The team who wins the bid, then quickly get into place while the others count down the seconds.

PROPS AND COSTUMES

The Dufflebag performers often use props and costumes to help them create the characters and to tell the story (e.g. a crown, a bowl, a shoe). The prop/costume helps the imagination of the actor and the audience as they create the character and the action on stage. Sometimes the same prop/costume can be used to represent more than one object. (e.g. a saucepan can be for cooking, but then placed on a head for a helmet.) This is part of the magic of theatre. Things are not always what they seem.

DISCUSSION— What are some of the objects that were used in the play to help create a character or an action? What objects were used to represent more than one item in the story? How did you know what the prop was supposed to be? What do you think is the hardest part about using props in this way?

PASS THE OBJECT: whole group (Primary/Intermediate)

The class sits in a circle. The Teacher begins by using an object, such as a marker, as something completely different. (e.g. uses it as if it is a toothbrush.) The class guesses what the teacher is miming. The teacher then passes the marker to the student on the left, who uses the marker as if it is something else. Each time the class guesses what it is. The second time around the circle, change the original object (a scarf, a pot, a pointer) and use it to represent the items in a folk/fairy tale. **Hint:** *Tell children that it is okay to do the same object as some else, since they might do it differently. Also tell them it is okay to pass if they are stuck for an idea. This way the game doesn't get bogged down by the shy or reluctant child.*

PASS THE OBJECT CHALLENGE: small groups (Intermediate)

Each group is given a different object/costume and asked to use it in as many different ways as possible in one minute. This can be done by children taking turns in order, or by anyone on the team running to centre to demonstrate an object. One team at a time takes the challenge while the other teams watch and listen.

OBJECTS TELL A STORY: in pairs, small groups (Primary/Intermediate)

A set of non-related objects/costume pieces is placed in the middle of the children's circle. One student starts a story, using one of the objects as a jumping off point. Each student adds to the story, by continuing the storyline and including another of the objects from the pile (e.g. a slipper, a hat, a pail and shovel, magic beans, scissors, teddy bear, etc). The teacher may want to give the students a topic or theme for the story.

AN OBJECT LESSON: in pairs (Primary/Junior/Intermediate)

Objects used in a particular setting are placed on a table. (e.g. kitchen objects, beauty parlour, items) One person narrates the activity, such as baking a cake, or giving a shampoo. The other person must listen to the narrator and perform the action and use any items mentioned by the narrator. As in 'Pass The Object', items may be used for other than their real purpose (e.g. a pot can be a hat etc.)

HOSTING THE PERFORMANCE

The company will arrive at your school approximately 45-minutes prior to start time for load-in & set up. (Load out approximately 15 minutes.) They will set up on the floor at one end of the gymnasium. The audience should have an aisle down the centre. Access to changing rooms and an electrical outlet will be needed. The performance will last approximately 45–50 minutes.

AVAILABLE PERFORMANCES 2007—2008

Schools may choose which story they wish DuffleBag Theatre to perform. Please advise which of the following you would like when booking the performance:



Beauty and the Beast

Macbeth

Peter Pan

Robin Hood

Sleeping Beauty

CREDITS

For DuffleBag Theatre:

Marcus Lundgren, Artistic Director
Rod Keith, General Manager

Visit DuffleBag Theatre's website:
www.dufflebag.com

Dufflebag Theatre loves to receive letters and pictures from students. Please send to:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DuffleBag Theatre is represented in Canada by:

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PROLOGUE

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