

Teacher from the Black Lagoon & Other Story Books

Dear Teacher:

We have created the following study guide to help make your students' theater experience with TheatreworksUSA's production of *Teacher from the Black Lagoon & other Story Books* as meaningful as possible. For many, it will be their first time viewing a live theatrical production. We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more significant and long-lasting.

You may want to review how to be a good audience member with your class. You can explain, for example, that the audience doesn't talk during the performance and they shouldn't get out of their seat. Mention that there is usually an announcement about not taking pictures and turning off cell phones which are distracting to the performers and the rest of the audience.

This performance highlights seven favorite children's stories. The format is that of a musical revue made up of vignettes created by a variety of talented writers and performed by a cast of five actors. (Note: the actors assume various roles throughout the show through quick costume and character changes—a concept which you may need to review for younger children).

Following is an alphabetical list of the books used in the performance. You may choose to read some (or all) of the books to your class before or after seeing the performance (perhaps asking students which books from the show they would like to read). Similarly, depending on the grade level of your students and the time you have available, you can utilize the activities either before seeing the show (as pre-performance preparation) or as follow-up activities.

THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER

Based on the fable by Aesop

Summary: Two hardworking ants meet a saxophone-playing grasshopper who would rather have fun than save up food for the winter. The ants are prepared when winter comes and the grasshopper is hungry. The ants make a deal to share their food in return for music lessons. They all end up in a band together with a moose as lead singer.

Theme: It's important to do your work and plan for the future but save time for some fun.

- ✎ Discuss the difference between fact and fiction in stories. Make a chart of what is factual in the story (ants store food, grasshoppers make noise) and what is fictional (insects play instruments). Add other facts students know about insects.
 - ✎ Make a cause/effect chart of the story. What actions or causes early in the story lead to what effects in the winter?
 - ✎ Discuss fables and read several fables by Aesop. When students are familiar with the style, let them create their own fables complete with morals. Create a class book of fables illustrated by the students.
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DOGZILLA

Based on the book by Dav Pilkey

Summary: The mice of Mousopolis wake up the dreaded Dogzilla during their barbeque cook-off. He proceeds to destroy the city until the mice come up with the perfect plan – Bath time! Mousopolis is saved when Dogzilla runs away, at least until the next annual cook-off.

Theme: Even the biggest monster has a weak spot.




- ✎ Make a list of “BIG” vocabulary and illustrate it. Find synonyms for big such as: enormous, monstrous, colossal, tremendous, etc. Have students choose a word and illustrate it with a picture of a monster of their choice.
 - ✎ Dav Pilkey wrote *Dogzilla* and *Kat Kong* about ordinary pets that appear to be monsters to mice. Have students brainstorm other book titles using well known films and pets i.e.: “Frankengerbil.” What looks harmless to us that would look terrifying to a mouse?
 - ✎ Play the game: “Doggie, Doggie, Where’s Your Bone?” One student is “Dogzilla” and gets sent outside the classroom. The rest of the class are the “mice.” The mice hide a “bone” or eraser in a student’s desk and then let Dogzilla back into the room. Then the whole class sings, “Doggie, doggie, where’s your bone? Somebody’s got it in their home.” Dogzilla gets 3 guesses where the bone might be. If he/she guesses right, then the person with the bone comes up and the original Dogzilla goes back to his seat. Then the game starts again. If he/she does NOT guess correctly, then the “bone” is shown, and the game begins all over with the same person leaving the room guessing again.
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Grumpy Bird

Based on the book by Jeremy Tankard

Summary: Bird wakes up too grumpy to eat, play or even fly. As he walks past sheep, rabbit and other animals they offer to join him. Before too long bird is able to overcome his bad mood and enjoy his friends.

Theme: Being with friends can help you feel better.




-  Writing about emotions: Pair book with *The Very Grumpy Ladybug* or other titles. Give students a writing prompt: "What makes me grumpy/grouchy?" Take a picture of each child making a grumpy face and paste it onto a ladybug or bird cutout (or other animal from different story) with their answer attached.
-  Start a list titled "Good Friends", and have the students come up with qualities they want in a good friend or behaviors that they expect in a friend. Students can trace their hands on colored paper and cut them out. On each hand they can list their most important qualities for a friend. Hang all the hands overlapping each other to form a "Rainbow of Friendship."
-  Animal Research - Have students research one animal from the story: bird, sheep, rabbit, raccoon or beaver. Students can work in groups or individually to answer the questions: What does the animal look like? What does it eat? Where does it live? What is a special feature or fun fact about your animal? Use non-fiction books and/or online encyclopedias to answer the questions and deliver them as a report, a poster or an oral presentation.

I WANT MY HAT BACK

Based on the book by Jon Klassen

Summary: Bear has lost his hat and he wants it back. He asks all the animals he meets if they have seen it. Each animal says no and the bear is very frustrated until he remembers that he has seen it after all.

Theme: Sometimes what you are looking for is in plain sight.

-  Make your own hat. Go to the website: http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763655988.kit.1.pdf and print out an activity sheet pattern to make bear's red hat.
-  Find the hat game. Hide a red hat or other pointy red object in the classroom and have students try to find it. Use *20 questions* style with yes/no answers or "you're getting warmer" clues.
-  List words that rhyme with "hat." Write the sentence, "I want my __ at back." Have students try to find as many words as possible to complete the sentence.

- ✎ Have the class name as many types of bears that they can. Investigate the bears and make a chart of their different features such as where they live, physical details and markings, food and predators. Once students are familiar with all the different types of bears, create a game where the bear facts are on cards and the children have to match them to the picture of the bear they belong to.

LILLY'S PURPLE PLASTIC PURSE

Based on the book by Kevin Henkes

Summary: Lilly brings a fabulous purse into school for sharing time but her teacher confiscates it because she doesn't follow the rules. Lily tries to get revenge but feels remorse for her angry actions. She makes amends and learns a valuable lesson.

Theme: It's important to follow the rules at school and have good manners.

- ✎ Color Lilly with her purple purse. Print out the reproducible picture at: <http://www.kevinhenkes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Lillys-Purse-coloring-page.pdf>
- ✎ Discuss sequence: beginning, middle, and end. Read Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse and have students make a list of all the different things that happen. Put the events of the story in chronological order. Have students create a sequence for an activity (i.e. making a sandwich). Put each step on a separate slip of paper and trade with classmates to see if they can put the activity into the proper order.
- ✎ Have a "share time" with the students. Allow them to bring in something special from home or share a special talent with the class.

LOVE, SPLAT

Based on the book by Rob Scotton

Summary: Splat the cat wants to give Kitten a special valentine but he thinks maybe she doesn't like him at all. His rival, Spike, is also trying to win her heart. Splat and Spike have a showdown to prove who likes Kitten best and Splat gets his wish after all.

Theme: Tell people how you really feel and you might be surprised at the reaction.

- ✎ Make Valentine's Day cards. Have students cut out various sizes of hearts and glue them on paper to make animals and shapes. See pattern ideas at the end of teachers guide.

- ✎ Discuss why Kitten chose Splat over Spike. Have students write a journal entry of a time when they made a new friend.
- ✎ List the positive and negative attributes of Splat and Spike. Have the class divide into “pro Splat” and “pro Spike” groups and stage a debate in which both sides have to try to win the hand of Kitten.

THE TEACHER FROM THE BLACK LAGOON

Based on the book by Mike Thaler

Summary: A boy about to start his first day of school has heard horrible stories about his teacher, Mrs. Green. He imagines she is a monster who tortures her students in different ways. After all his worry, he finds out she’s actually not bad at all.

Theme: New experiences can be scary but you can overcome your fears.

- ✎ Give students the writing prompt: “On the first day of school...” Have them complete a journal entry describing any fears they had when they first started school.
- ✎ Explore the idea of fears (like a new school.) Have students pick their worst fear and illustrate it in a “Would You Rather...” poster, i.e.: Would you rather touch a spider or sleep on ice cubes?
- ✎ Read other Mike Thaler ...*from the Black Lagoon* series books, i.e.: The Principal from the Black Lagoon, The Librarian From the Black Lagoon. Have students compare/contrast the stories with the one from the play. Brainstorm ideas for other titles and have students create stories and illustrate covers. Display them on a Black Lagoon bulletin board.

Heart Animal Ideas:

