

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A CREATIVE & THEATRICAL STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



By Annie Cusick Wood

As part of DCT's mission to integrate the arts into classroom academics, the ***Behind the Curtain Resource Guide*** is intended to provide helpful information for the teacher and student to use before and after attending a performance. The activities presented in this guide are suggested to stimulate lively responses and multi-sensory explorations of concepts in order to use the theatrical event as a vehicle for cross-cultural and language arts learning.

Please use our suggestions as springboards to lead your students into meaningful, dynamic learning; extending the dramatic experience of the play.

FOR SQUIRMY TODDLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

APRIL 18 – MAY 4 STUDENT MATINEE

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Your Family Arts Center

DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER

Astonishing kids & families with the fun of Broadway-like plays & much more!

Dallas Children’s Theater

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A Creative & Theatrical Resource Guide for Teachers

DCT Executive Artistic DirectorRobyn Flatt

Resource Guide EditorMarty Sherman

Resource Guide Layout/Design.....Jamie Brizzolara

PlayBLUE

ByAnnie Cusick Wood

DALLAS CHILDREN’S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 250,000 young people from 196 zip codes, 146 cities and 78 counties and 32 states each year through its main stage productions, touring, educational programming and outreach activities. Since its opening in 1984, this award-winning theater has existed to create challenging, inspiring and entertaining theater, which communicates vital messages to our youth and promotes an early appreciation for literature and the performing arts. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing on theater for youth and families, DCT produces literary classics, original scripts, folk tales, myths, fantasies and contemporary dramas that foster multicultural understanding, confront topical issues and celebrate the human spirit.

DCT is committed to the integration of creative arts into the teaching strategies of academic core curriculum and educating through the arts. Techniques utilized by DCT artists/teachers are based upon the approach developed in *The Integration of Abilities and Making Sense with Five Senses*, by Paul Baker, Ph.D.

DCT founder and Executive Artistic Director, Robyn Flatt defines the artistic mission and oversees the operations of the organization, consisting of twenty-five full time staff members and more than 200 actors, designers, theater artists and educators.

TEKS that your field trip to Dallas Children’s Theater satisfies are listed at the back of this guide.

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CURTAINS UP ON PUTTING A PERFORMANCE TOGETHER

Every DCT performance you see is the result of many people working together to create a play. You see the cast perform on stage, but there are people behind the scenes that you do not see who help before, during, and after every production.

The DIRECTOR

Determines the overall look of the performance.

Guides the actors in stage movement and character interpretation.

Works with designers to plan the lights and sounds, scenery, costumes and make-up, and stage actions.

The DESIGNERS

Plan the lights, sounds, scenery, costumes, make-up, and actions to help bring the director's vision to life.

There are also designers who work to create the posters, advertisements, programs, and other media for the performance.

The STAGE MANAGER

Before the performance, they create a cue sheet to guide the crew in getting set pieces on and off the stage during the performances.

During the performance, the stage manager uses this cue sheet to direct people and things as they move on and off the stage.

The CREW

Build and operate the scenery, costumes, props, and light and sound during the performance.

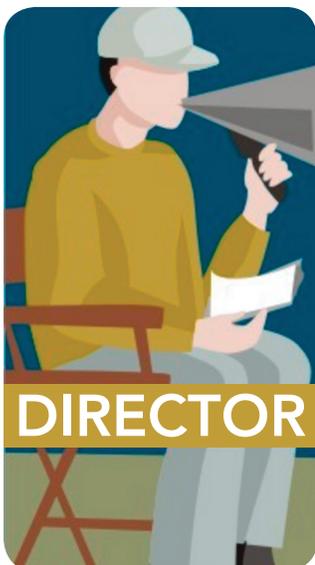
The CAST

Includes all of the performers who present the story on stage.

The AUDIENCE

That's right! There can be no performance without you—the audience. The role of the audience is unique because you experience the entertainment with the performers and backstage crew.

You are a collaborator in the performance and it is important to learn your role so you can join all the people who work to create this Dallas Children's Theater production.



CURTAINS UP ON THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Watching a play is different from watching television or a sporting event. When you watch T.V., you may leave the room or talk at any time. At a sporting event you might cheer and shout and discuss what you're seeing. Your role as a member of the audience in a play means you must watch and listen carefully because:

- You need to concentrate on what the actors are saying.
- The actors are affected by your behavior because they share the room with you. Talking and moving around can make it difficult for them to concentrate on their roles.
- Extra noises and movement can distract other audience members.



Are you ready for your role in this performance?

Check the box next to the statements that describe proper etiquette for an audience member.

- Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun.
- Share your thoughts out loud with those sitting near you.
- Wave and shout out to the actors on stage.
- Sit on your knees or stand near your seat.
- Bring snacks and chewing gum to enjoy during the show.
- Reward the cast and crew with applause when you like a song or dance, and at the end of the show.
- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything or disturb other audience members when you are being seated.
- Keep all hands, feet, and other items out of the aisles during the performance.

CURTAINS UP ON THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE (contd.)



1. Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from the stage. Consider your work from the viewpoint of the actors on stage. How might things look from where they stand?
2. Write a letter to an actor telling what you liked about his or her character.
3. Write how you think it might feel to be one of the actors. Are the actors aware of the audience? How might they feel about the reactions of the audience today? How would you feel before the play began? What about after the show ends?
4. Which job would you like to try? Acting, Directing, Lighting and Sounds, Stage Manager, Set designer, Costume designer, or another role? What skills might you need to complete your job?

CURTAINS UP ON THEATER VOCABULARY

ACTOR	any theatrical performer whose job it is to portray a character
CAST	group of actors in a play
CENTER STAGE	the middle of the stage
CHARACTER	any person portrayed by an actor onstage. Characters may often be people, animals, and sometimes things.
CHOREOGRAPHER	the designer and teacher of the dances in a production
COSTUME DESIGNER	the person who creates what the actors wear in the performance
DIRECTOR	the person in charge of the actors' movements on stage
DOWNSTAGE	the area at the front of the stage; closest to the audience
HOUSE	where the audience sits in the theater
LIGHTING DESIGNER	the person who creates the lighting for a play to simulate the time of day and the location
ONSTAGE	the part of the stage the audience can see
OFFSTAGE	the part of the stage the audience cannot see
PLAYWRIGHT	the person who writes the script to be performed. Playwrights may write an original story or adapt a story by another author for performance
PLOT	the story line
PROSCENIUM	the opening framing the stage
PROJECT	to speak loudly
PROP	an object used by an actor in a scene
SET	the background or scenery for a play
SETTING	the time and place of the story
SOUND DESIGNER	the person who provides special effects like thunder, a ringing phone, or crickets chirping
STAGE CREW	the people who change the scenery during a performance
STAGE MANAGER	the person who helps the director during the rehearsal and coordinates all crew during the performance
UPSTAGE	the area at the back of the stage; farthest from the audience

CURTAINS UP AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Attending a play is an experience unlike any other entertainment experience. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story as it happens. **Dallas Children's Theater** brings stories to life through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. **Playwrights** adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and onto the stage. **Designers and technicians** create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. **Carpenters** build the scenery and make the setting of the story become a real place, while **costumers** and **make-up designers** can turn actors into the characters you meet in the stories. **Directors** help actors bring the story to life and make it happen before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs of stories.



Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance. Ask students the following questions and allow them to write or draw pictures of their experience at DCT.

- What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the theater?
- What did you notice first on the stage?
- What about the set? Draw or tell about things you remember. Did the set change during the play? How was it moved or changed?
- Was there any space besides the stage where action took place?
- How did the lights set the mood of the play? How did they change throughout? What do you think house lights are? How do they differ from stage lights? Did you notice different areas of lighting?
- What did you think about the costumes? Do you think they fit the story? What things do you think the costume designers had to consider before creating the costumes?

CURTAINS UP ON THE AUTHOR



ANNIE CUSICK WOOD is a Hawaii-based director and writer of theatre for children. Born in Scotland, Annie graduated as a drama teacher from Aberdeen College of Education. She has worked as an educator and a director since 1987, and has written and directed plays for children for many companies across the UK, including TAG, The Citizens Theatre, M6, Newcastle Playhouse, Leicester Haymarket, Visible Fictions, the macRobert and Catherine Wheels. Annie was the drama artist at the macRobert, Stirling, and the artistic director of Polka Theatre in London. She was one of the first recipients of a Creative Scotland Award in 2000 from the Scottish Arts Council. Her shows *The Red Balloon*, *Martha*, and *The Happy Prince* all played on Broadway at the New Victory Theatre and toured internationally. Her awards include the Victor Award for *The Red Balloon* and 'Best Play for Children' at the Shanghai Children's Theater festival for *Martha*. In Hawaii, she has directed *The Red Balloon* and *Charlie Brown* for Hearts, and *Stellaluna* for Kids Entertainment (Toronto). Annie wrote and directed *Blue; Sort It Out; Peter Rabbit and the Garden*; and *Auntie Martha and the Nene* for Honolulu Theatre for Youth (HTY).

CURTAINS UP ON MATH

Match and Sort

Use the following activity to practice one-to-one correlation and color matching.

You will need:

- Beads, counters, or buttons
- Muffin tins or egg cartons

Provide students with a large bowl or basket of multicolored beads or counters.

Instruct them to sort the beads into smaller cups of a muffin tin so that each cup holds only one color bead.

Extend the activity by using differently shaped or sized beads and have students match by size or shape and color.

CURTAINS UP ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Colors Race

You will need:

- Laundry basket or cardboard box
 - Clothing items in single bright colors; hats, mittens, scarves, socks, oversized t-shirts, boots
-

Here's How:

- + Divide students into even teams and provide each with a basket of one colored items.
- + Explain that this is a relay race in which each student will 'dress' as quickly as possible in the items in the basket.
- + Once they've put all the items on, students will run back to the line and transfer the items to the next student who will put them on, race to the basket, remove the clothing, and put it back into the basket. The student will race back and tag the next student in line who will repeat the process.
- + The first team whose members complete the task wins!

CURTAINS UP ON LANGUAGE ARTS

Inky and Pale are introduced to new colors after living in a world that is all blue. Use the following questions for discussion of the themes and ideas presented in DCT's production of BLUE.

- Do you think we should all be the same as one another?
- What makes each of us special?
- What might the world be like if everything was the same color?
- How does color make the world more exciting?
- How does trying something new and different make you feel?
- Can you think of something you tried that you really liked?
- Can we be similar to each other even if we are different colors than each other?

CURTAINS UP ON ART AND IMAGINATION

Color My World

You will need:

- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
 - Copies of the coloring sheet
-

Here's How:

- + Begin with a discussion of things we find in our world that we think of as having a particular color. Encourage students to use their imaginations and consider what things might look like if they were differently colored.
- + Provide students with a copy of the coloring sheet and encourage them to decorate each of the items in a way that is unique. Allow them time to discuss their choices and what things might be like if we found these things in the world as they had decorated them. Display their finished work in the classroom.

Mixing Colors

You will need:

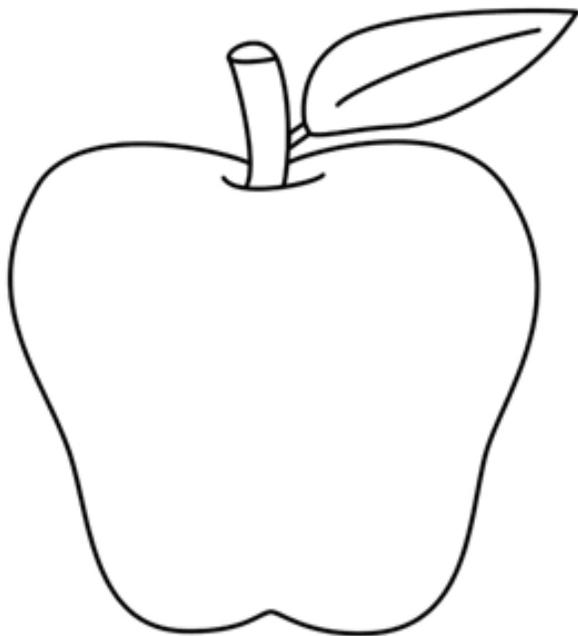
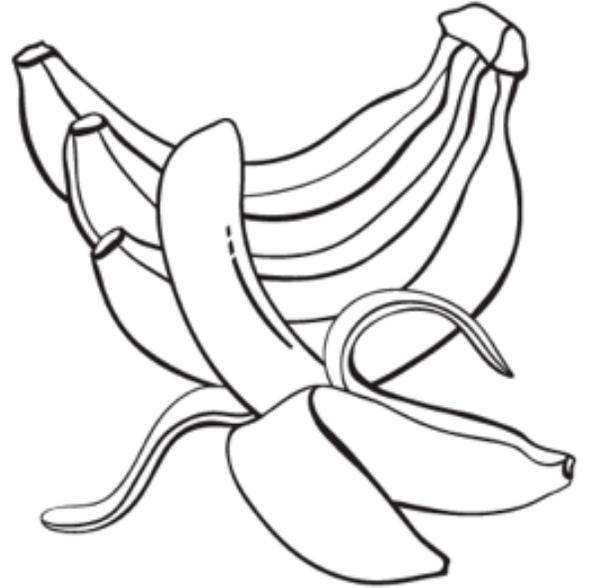
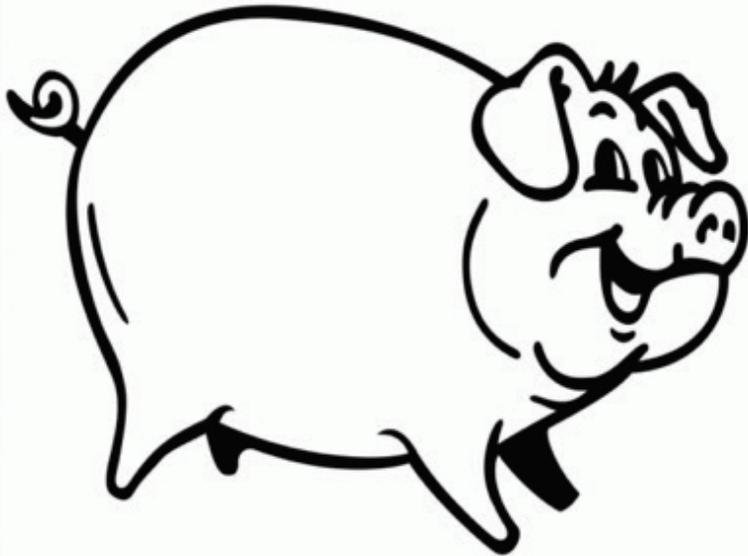
- Blue, Red, and Yellow washable paint
 - Paintbrushes (Younger children can use finger paints)
 - Large paper sheets (Butcher paper or freezer paper works well)
 - Small cups or an egg carton to use as a paint palette
 - Oversized shirts or paint smocks to protect clothing
-

Introduce this activity by explaining that there are three colors, called primary colors, that can be mixed to make all the other colors we see. Blue is one of those colors, as are red and yellow.

Provide each student with a sheet of paper and cups of red, blue, and yellow paint. Encourage them to begin by mixing two of the colors to 'create' a new one. Allow them to experiment with other mixtures to see which colors combine to make another color.

Extend the activity by encouraging students to paint a picture using their newly mixed colors and display them in the classroom or hallway.

If I could color the world!
Coloring Sheet



CURTAINS UP ON MORE...

Books to Read Together:

Three Cheers for Tacky by Helen Lester

Butterfly, Butterfly by Petr Horacek

The Cow that went OINK by Bernard Most

Ish by Peter Reynolds

The Dot by Peter Reynolds

I Like Myself by Karen Beaumont

Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni

A Color of His Own by Leo Lionni

T.E.K.S. SATISFIED BY BLUE

117.4 - Theatre, Kindergarten.

K.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Begin to identify appropriate audience behavior.

B - Respond to dramatic activities.

C - Demonstrate awareness of the use of music, creative movement, and visual components in dramatic play.

D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

117.7 - Theatre, Grade 1.

1.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify appropriate audience behavior.

B - Respond to and begin to evaluate dramatic activities.

C - Identify the use of music, creative movement, and visual components in dramatic play.

D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

117.10 - Theatre, Grade 2.

2.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior.

B - React to and begin to evaluate dramatic activities.

C - Employ music, creative movement, and visual components in dramatic play.

D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.