

The Wonderful World of Seuss Study Guide

Welcome to The Rose, where we strive to enrich the lives of children through live theater and arts education. We are pleased you have chosen to make The Rose a part of your students' learning experience, and we will do our best to make it both meaningful and educational. This study guide has been created to help identify the themes and lessons from *The Wonderful World of Seuss*, so they can be moved into the classroom for further development through discussion, activities, and assignments.

Pre-Show Activities

Cover the Space

Out-of-chair activity • 5-10 minutes

Objective: Students will use their bodies to help each other complete a task.

Discussion: In theater, it's important to work as a group. What are some different ways that people can work together?

Activity: Set up a big rectangle in the room using chairs as corner markers. Ask the class to walk around in the space without talking or touching each other. They should be aware of their bodies, the bodies around them, and the area. The goal is to make sure all the space within the rectangle is covered at all times: the corners, sides, etc. The students should be evenly distributed, filling it. Shout "freeze" and point out how they're doing, then send them right back to covering the space.

Side Coaching: Experiment with levels and sizes. How low can they go? How wide can they spread their arms without touching anyone else in the room?

10,000 Ways to Cross the Room

Out-of-chair activity • 10-15 minutes

Objective: Students will use team building skills to create trust

Discussion: It's important to be able to listen and respect the people you're working with on a team. Why is this important in acting?

Modeling: Split the class into groups of four or five and join one of the groups. Explain that the group needs to walk across the room together in a creative way that requires each person to be touching at least one other group member. For the demonstration, have everyone in the group touch elbows and walk across the room.

Activity: Have each group walk across the room in a new, creative way in which they are all connected. Some examples include touching heads, knees, etc. When each group gets to the end of the room, they must turn around and walk back in a new creative way, still connected. For variation, try walking backwards together.

Look Inside!

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A Behind-the-Scenes Spotlight on Acting

An interview with actor Kevin Ehrhart (Dr. Seuss)

The Wonderful World of Dr. Seuss

Artistic Team

Playwright Kevin Ehrhart
Composer Kevin Ehrhart
Director Jim Hoggatt
Costume Designer Sherri Geerdes
Prop Master Ronnie Wells

Cast

Dr. Seuss..... Kevin Ehrhart

Q: How long have you been acting?

A: I started acting in 1981 in college, where I studied Dramatic Arts.

Q: How did your education prepare you as an actor?

A: At the University of Nebraska, I was able to study directing, acting, and stagecraft. It was very helpful to study all of the areas of theater and to discover how the process of “imagination to realization” was able to make everything the audience experienced more lively and engaging.

Q: Do you consider ensemble to be an important part of being an actor? If yes, why?

A: I believe that every aspect of theater benefits from an effective ensemble. The production team puts the sets, costumes, props, lights, and sound together under the vision of the director, and the actors are a crucial thread that sews all of those elements together. When the actors work well together, that thread does a better job of telling the story.

Q: What challenges does an actor face when performing a one-man show?

A: One of the challenges is that you only have yourself on which to depend. If something goes wrong, you have to get back on track all by yourself.

Q: What are the benefits of performing in a one-man show?

A: One of the benefits is that you can move from moment to moment in a way that makes sense to you, as the actor. This allows you to become immersed in the world of the show and really experience the story in an honest way.

Q: In what way is the performance enhanced by music?

A: When I sat down to write this script, the first thing that came to me were there songs. The music became the backbone that inspired the entire story.

Q: What is your favorite part of playing this role?

A: My favorite part is at the end of the final song, when I hope to see smiles on the faces of the young audience members who just experienced it!

Explore Acting with a Post-Show Activity

Building Group Characters

Out-of-chair activity • 15-20 minutes

Objective: Students will use teamwork to create a character from one of Dr. Seuss’s stories.

Discussion/Brainstorm: Name some of the different characters featured in Dr. Seuss’s books. What would each character look like if three bodies were used to create it? How would each character sound?

Activity: Divide the students into groups of three. Each group’s goal is to use their bodies together to create one magical creature. Secretly tell each group which character

they will be creating (pick from the list that was brainstormed earlier) and give the students a few minutes to decide how they will create the character using all the members of the group. How will the character move and sound? When time is up, each group is to share their character with the entire class.

Extension: Ask each group to decide how its character would drink. How would the character make and eat dinner? How would the character dance? Instead of explaining their ideas, the groups should reply to the questions by acting out their answers. Showing; not telling.

Post-Show Activities

Movement Director

Out-of-chair activity • 10-15 minutes

Objective: Students will learn to work together as an ensemble under the leadership of an individual.

Discussion: It's important when working together to be able to follow the lead of the person in charge, just like Kevin must follow the instruction of the director.

Modeling: Demonstrate a variety of repetitive movements such as tapping your fingers, clapping your hands, or stomping your feet. Ask the students to copy what you are doing, so they are performing the movement with you.

Activity: Ask one student to leave the room as the rest of the class forms a large circle. Select a second student to be the movement director. The student outside the room should now return and sit in the center of the circle as the director starts a repetitive motion. The rest of the students in the circle should immediately copy the movement in an effort to hide the identity of the director. As the director changes from one repetitive motion to the next, the students in the circle should change with him/her. The person in the middle is allowed three chances to guess the director, and they should be given as long as they need between guesses. The director can change movements as many times as they like.

Side Coaching: How can it be made harder to guess the director? How can you move your arms slower? How can you move without the guesser seeing you? Can you watch the director without looking directly at him/her?

Time Machine

Out-of-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

Objective: Students will explore working together as a unit.

Discussion: Working together as a team means being able to move and connect like a unit. Machines are great examples of teamwork. A machine has several different parts that all have their own special job, yet each part works together to complete one task.

Modeling: Ask a volunteer to come to the front of the room and choose an action that a machine might do. While performing the action over and over again, they should add a sound. Next, add yourself to the machine by choosing a new movement and sound that works off what the student has created. Make sure your new addition adds to the creativity. Repeat your two-person machine movement several times to make sure the expectations are clear.

Activity: Ask the rest of the class to join the machine one student at a time. Each student should "connect" to the machine and add a creative movement and sound that has not already been done. Eventually, the entire class will be moving as one big machine. Ask the class to freeze and change their sound to make it a metal machine, a water machine, a weather machine, etc. Try to speed up the machine and slow it down on command.

Story Circle

In-chair activity • 10-15 minutes

Objective: Students will learn the importance of working together when creating a story.

Discussion: Stories are created one word at a time, and it often takes many people coming together to write a good story. Dr. Seuss spent a lot of time writing his stories, and he created many fun sentences and crazy characters.

Activity: Ask one student to tell the first sentence of a story and then clap their hands in the direction of someone else in the room. This person should then add a second sentence to the story. This continues until everyone in the room has participated once or twice. Tell the story as quickly as possible. You can do it to a beat. The idea is to create a story as an ensemble with each person adding one sentence at a time.

Side Coaching: When you get close to the last person, remind the class that they need to work towards ending the story. How can you use the characters and ideas that your classmates have created? What is the problem in the story? How can it be solved?

Picture Story

Out-of-chair activity • 20-30 minutes

Objective: Students will use teamwork and storytelling to create pictures from *The Cat in the Hat*.

Discussion: Read *The Cat in the Hat*. Stories are often inspired by pictures or works of art. Pictures can also help us to tell a story. What information do pictures give us? How do the pictures help to tell the story?

Brain Storming: Every story has a beginning, middle, and an end. What happens in the beginning of *The Cat in the Hat*? What happens in the middle of the story and at the end?

Activity: Split the class into three groups. One group will use its bodies to create a frozen statue of the beginning of *The Cat in the Hat*. Assign the middle and the end to the other two groups. Each group should work together to create a statue that fits its part of the story. For example: the first group might make a statue of when the cat in the hat arrives. The students could use two actors as the kids, one as the cat, one as the fish, two working together to create the bowl, and four working together to create the house.

Side Coaching: How should each character stand? How should they use their eyes, knees, and shoulders? Not everyone has to be a character. How can students use their bodies to create an environment?

Bibliography

If you enjoyed *The Wonderful World of Dr. Seuss* and wish to learn more, you may want to reference the following Dr. Seuss websites or check out these Dr. Seuss books.

Please feel free to contact us!

Letters may be written to:

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Emails may be sent to:

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Sponsored by:



Web Sites

<http://www.seussville.com>

Explore the wonderful world of Dr. Seuss on the official Seuss website. The site offers games and reading materials.

<http://www.drseussart.com>

This is a great website for students and teachers. It offers information about Dr. Seuss, his artwork, and his books.

<http://www.catinthehat.org>

Visit this website to learn about the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden at the Spring Museum in Springfield, MA. It contains information about the gardens, Dr. Seuss, and his birthplace.

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/content/spectopics/seuss.cfm>

This is a great website for teachers. It offers lesson plans, curriculum, music, and visual aids.

Books

The Cat in the Hat

Sally and her brother are paid a visit by a wacky cat wearing a very long hat. The cat causes an uproar of excitement with his two friends Thing 1 and Thing 2.

The Grinch

The Grinch is banished from Who-ville and seeks his revenge by trying to take away Christmas, the one thing the Whos hold dear.

Green Eggs and Ham

Sam explores the world of trying new things, which includes...green eggs and ham!

Bring The Rose to Your Classroom

The Rose Theater offers a variety of classroom workshops, residencies, and touring productions! For your next engagement with The Rose, please consider one of the following:

- *Nebraskaland! The New Nebraska History Theme Park* - An educational play about famous Nebraskans
- *The Big (Not-So-Bad) Wolf* - A jolly one-man show that features fairy tales and stories about wolves that serve to explore the themes of honesty, trust, and good behavior.
- *The Bully Show* - An interactive play that challenges students to reconsider their assumptions about bullies

Three to five-day curriculum based workshops are available! Topics include *Bringing Literature to Life*, *Acting & Characters*, *The American Revolution*, *Dr. Seuss*, *The Civil War*, and more!

For more information, please contact James Larson at 502-4618.