

2011-2012 Season Play Guide



**Performances
on LCT's
Main Stage
October 17- 21
& 24
10:00 and 11:45**

**Regional Performances
November 1st - 15th, 2011**

OUR MISSION TO SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

The mission of Lexington Children's Theatre Education Department is to provide students of all ages with the means to actively explore the beauty, diversity, complexity and challenges of the world around them through the dramatic process. We strive for young people to develop their own creative voice, their imagination and their understanding of drama and its role in society.

FREE TEACHER PREVIEWS

Want to be more fully prepared to share the theatrical experience with your students? LCT offers teachers the opportunity to preview many of our Main Stage productions.

Each Preview lasts about two hours and includes a free performance of the play. Don't miss this chance to bring some drama into your classroom!

Call Jeremy (859-254-4546 x226)
to reserve your spot today!

Dear Educator,

Lexington Children's Theatre is proud to be producing our 73rd season of plays for young people and their families. As an organization that values the arts and education, we have created this resource for teachers called the Play Guide.

Our Play Guides are designed to be a valuable tool for teachers in two ways: helping you prepare your students for the enriching performance given by LCT, as well as serving as an educational tool for extending the production experience back into your classroom.

We designed each activity to assist in achieving the Kentucky Core Content (KCC) and to integrate the arts with your core curricular subjects.

Teachers are important voices as LCT. We rely heavily on your input. If you have comments or suggestions about our Play Guides, show selections or any of our programming your thoughts are greatly appreciated. Please look for the Teacher Response form that you will receive following a performance.

We are thrilled that you rely on LCT to provide your students a quality theatrical experience and we hope this resource aids you in extending our production into your classroom.

LCT's Education Department

Play Synopsis

Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny Alden are orphaned after their parents perish in a terrible boating accident. When the adult authorities discuss separating the children and sending them to different foster homes, the Aldens make a secret escape in a desperate attempt to keep their family together.

The world isn't an easy place for children to survive on their own in the best of times, and now it's the worst of times - 1930, the beginning of the Great Depression. Many Americans are down on their luck, living in makeshift Hoovervilles, and the young, beleaguered Alden clan is joining their ranks. To add to the family's troubles, a mysterious stranger offers a small fortune to anyone who turns the children in to the authorities.

Each child uses his or her own special gift to contribute to the family's new life. Henry tells stories that keep his siblings' hearts and hopes alive. By contrast, Jessie is the pragmatist who loves to organize and budget. Violet makes a home in adverse circumstances. The youngest, Benny, sees the world through a unique pair of eyes, finding possibility where others would not.

The kids are on the run until they find an abandoned old boxcar - the perfect hiding place for a fugitive family. Here they make their home. Under the alias of Tom Jones, Henry finds a job of doing lawn work for Dr. Sam Truman. While Henry's at work, the other children "decorate" their home after outings to the dump.

Eventually, Dr. Truman has questions about the secretive young man who works for him. When Sam goes to Sarah Calder at the child welfare office, they realize that Henry is part of the missing Alden family. Slowly, Sam and Sarah gain the children's trust. Sarah arranges a meeting between the Alden family and the mysterious stranger offering the reward - their long estranged grandfather. When Violet becomes ill with scarlet fever, Henry and Jessie decide that they need the help of the only family they have left.

As they endeavor to build a life with this newfound patriarch, the Aldens look fondly toward re-visiting the boxcar they transformed into a home.



Your Role in Our Play



You may wish to have a discussion with your class about your upcoming LCT experience and their role as audience members. Remind your students that theatre can only exist with an audience. Your students' energy and response directly affects the actors onstage. The quality of the performance depends as much on the audience as it does on each of the theatre professionals behind the scenes and onstage.

Young audiences should know that watching live theatre is not like watching more familiar forms of entertainment: they cannot pause or rewind us like a videotape, there are no commercials for bathroom breaks, nor can they turn up the volume to hear us if someone else is talking. Your students are encouraged to listen and watch the play intently, so that they may laugh and cheer for their favorite characters when it is appropriate.

At the end of the play, applause is an opportunity for your students to thank the actors, while the actors are thanking you for the role they played as an audience.

Prepare for the Play

Going to California

The Great Depression was hard on families in the United States, and many had to move to find what little work there was. California was rumored to be the land of “milk and honey” and many families set out west in search of a better life there.

In this role-playing activity, seat your students in a circle. Discuss what life was like during the Great Depression. Have the students portray individuals heading to California. Place an imaginary trunk in the middle of the circle, and ask each participant to place a food item for the trip into the trunk. It may be easier if the students choose items that begin with the same letter as their first name. (Ex: Christine brings corn on the cob.) After every child has a turn, have the group repeat all the items in the trunk thus far.

To extend this activity, additional rounds may be played. Students may place items such as supplies or special talents and skills in the trunk. (Ex: Belinda brings blankets; Terrence brings tool-making skills.) To really test your class’s memory, see if they can recall the three things each child will be taking on the trip to California.



KCC's SS-E-3.1.1, PL-E-3.1.1, AH-06-4.3.3

Class Project: Life in the 1920s and 30s



Research the 1920s and 1930s as a class.

What was everyday life like for children during that era in your town?

What kinds of clothes did kids wear?

What music did they listen to?

What toys did they have?

What kind of technology existed?



Interview grandparents or great-grandparents about life during the Great Depression.

Create a montage with pictures, drawings, and reports about what life would have been like for Benny, Violet, Jessie and Henry.



KCC's RD-E-2.0.9, WR-EP-1.2.3

Prepare for the Play

Discussing the Great Depression



The Great Depression had a lasting effect on most Americans, especially children who lived through it. What were some concerns of young people then that young people today do not have to worry about? Also, what elements of our society have changed? Would you characterize life today as better or worse? Why?

The value of money was much different in the 1930s than it is today. Have your students find out what they could buy for a quarter, a dollar, or ten dollars in the 1930s. What could you buy for the same amount today?

The Alden children are forced to make hard choices about how they spend the little money they have. What would the students spend money on if it were severely limited? Would they buy a piece of fruit or a book if their brother or sister needed a new pair of

shoes? Henry helps out his family by mowing Dr. Truman's lawn. What could young people do today to earn extra money?

KCC's MA-E-3.2.5 & 3.1.3, SS-E-3.1.3, PL-E-3.1.1



Tell the Story

Show your class the pictures in this packet. Have the students create a story of the circumstances that surround one of the images.



Who are these people?

What is their life like?

Where are they?

What happened right before and after the picture was taken?

What title would you give the picture?

If you were going to offer advice to the people in the photo, what would it be?



KCC's WR-04-1.1.2-1.2.2, SS-E-5.1.2

Trains and Their Cars

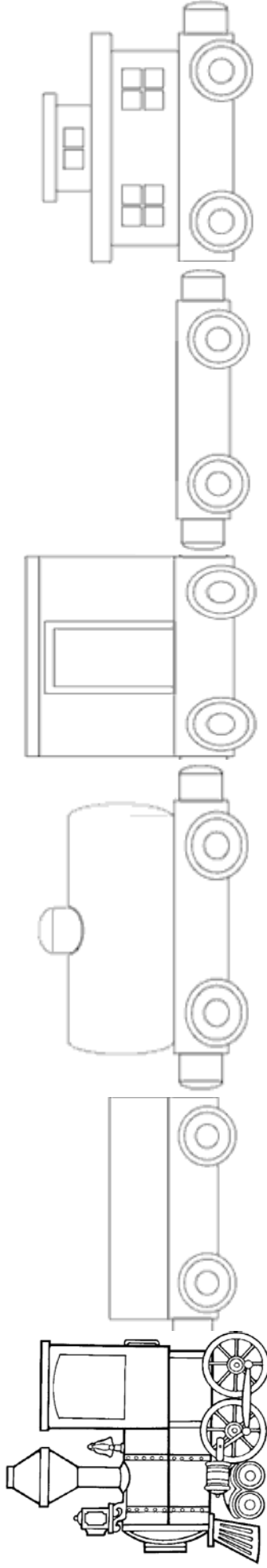
Trains played a big part in shaping United States history and by 1869 people and goods could travel across the nation by rail-ways. In the early 20th century, most people lived within twenty five feet of a railroad. After the Great Depression occurred in 1929, many people left home and traveled by train to start a new life in a different state.

KCC's RD-E-2.0.6, SS-E-4.3.2

To learn more about trains, draw a line from the train car in the picture below to its description.

Copy Page

Name: _____



This pulls the train. In the time of *The Boxcar Children Locomotives* were powered by steam.

Designed to carry crates and cartons, the **Boxcar** is loaded and unloaded through sliding doors on the side and is a favorite place for hoboes to stay.

The **Tanker Car** is a round container that carries liquids and gases. Often it has oil or milk on board.

This car has an open top and low sides. It is used to carry steel beams, concrete pipes and scrap metal. It is called the **Gondola Car**.

The **Flat Car** has no top and no sides. It carries bulldozers and large machinery.

The **Caboose** is the last car in the train. It serves as the crews' working quarters.

Childhood in the Great Depression

The 1920s were a time of great prosperity for most people in the United States. The majority of Americans had money to spend on luxury items for the first time in their lives, and buying on credit was fast becoming the norm. Also, people began investing their surplus money in the stock market. This meant that, for a great number of Americans, their money was tied to the prosperity of the stock market, but the present was rosy and the future looked clear, so why worry? The answer to that question came with a crash on October 24, 1929, Black Thursday, when the stock market collapsed, taking with it the lives and hopes of America. People lost their money and banks foreclosed on their land. The loss of their jobs forced them to move and search for work wherever they could find it. The Great Depression devastated families, leaving a lasting impression on the children who experienced it first hand.



Not all people were shattered by the unfortunate turn of events. Curtis Nesheim, a 17 year-old living in Silverton, Oregon at that time, said that he never once wanted for food, and always had a job because of his willingness to work every day all day, doing jobs that many others would not do. However, he never quit school to “ride the rails,” as did so many of his contemporaries.

Boys not wanting to be a burden to their families would leave home and hop on freight cars as they slowly rolled out of town. Over 250,000 young men left home during these years, taking to the roads in search of a better life and a new American dream. The dangers of this lifestyle were daunting. Many of these “hobos” had no other alternative but to travel the country living hand to mouth, getting food from handouts or bread lines. Most of these boys lived in “hobo jungles” between rail trips. These makeshift camps consisted of shacks, tents, boxes, and the dozens of lonely homeless boys trying to survive with some semblance of dignity.



Life for young women was different, if not better. Girls did not generally leave home because the dangers of the outside world were too great, and shelters and bread lines refused to serve them. Fortunately, there was often plenty of “women’s work” that men would not consider accepting even in the most dire of times, such as laundry, sewing, or even teaching. However, many industries would not hire girls at all because they felt that they were taking jobs away from men.

With nowhere else to go and no work available, children needed to get out of the house while still staying safe. Schools, unlike most homes, were heated and thereby became an oasis in an otherwise unbearable world. Also, the beginnings of federally subsidized meals at school meant that children, many of whom had strict rationing at home, would not have to go hungry.



Families grasped for any scraps of work they could find, and many pulled their children out of school to search for work as well. Children did not get to enjoy the transition between childhood and adulthood. Those who could work were considered adults regardless of age. Employers knew how desperate everyone was and exploited the child laborers under their control with dangerous working conditions and grueling hours. These hardships brought about the inception of Child Labor Laws, which limited the age at which a child could start working and the number of hours they could work. Having to start working and contributing to the family’s survival at extremely early ages made a lasting impression on the children of the Depression. Their work ethic and spirit have shaped the world in which we live today.

Extend the Experience

From Page to Stage: Writing Activity

Adapting a book into a play is very challenging, and children can be quick to notice changes in their favorite stories. Has your class read the book *The Boxcar Children*? What similarities and differences do they notice between the book and the play? (Here's an example: In the book, Benny's dog is real. In the play, the dog is a stuffed animal. Why do you think that was changed? Probably because it's tricky to have a real dog on stage!)

Have your students write a brief article as if they are newspaper journalists, noting the similarities and differences between the book and the play, including their reasoning for why the differences exist. (This activity can also be performed as a group discussion.)



KCC's WR-E-4.7.0; RD-E-1.0.7

Dear Boxcar Children...

In this activity, instruct students to write a letter as if they are pen pals with one of the characters. What advice would they give the Boxcar Children about living on their own, or about choosing whether they should live with their grandfather?



KCC's WR-04-1.1.3, SS-E-4.4.2

Group Resourcefulness

The Boxcar Children learn to create uses for objects they find in the dump. Items discarded as unnecessary by other people become useful, everyday items for the children. To encourage resourcefulness in your students, divide them into small groups of 4 to 6 and have them design and build one object that you think would improve the Boxcar Children's life in some way.

Limit each group to only two materials to create their object, such as newspaper and masking tape, scraps of material and safety pins, or empty milk jugs and string. Have the students show their new inventions and demonstrate how they work.



KCC's PL-E-3.1.5, SS-E-3.1.1 A. Expectation 2.1

Continue the Boxcar Children's Adventure

Imagine what happens next to the Alden Children.
Write an answer to each question below.

Copy Page

Name: _____

What is life like at Grandfather's house? Describe what each character likes best about living with Grandfather.



What do they miss about the boxcar?



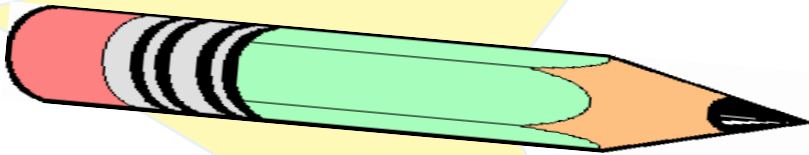
What do you think happens to Benny, Violet, Jessie, and Henry when they grow up? Describe what type of job you think each one would enjoy.



Open Response Question

Production elements can influence the mood and feeling of a production. Choose one of the following elements from the play and describe how it had a positive or negative effect on the storytelling in *The Boxcar Children*.

1. Sound FX/Music
2. Lights
3. Costumes



4
The response uses and exhibits understanding of a specific production element and how it affects the story. The response demonstrates consistent use and knowledge of the specific element and relates it to the show with a clear positive/negative attribute. The response demonstrates effective communication skills and provides insightful use of supporting examples and relevant details from the show.

3
The response exhibits a mediocre understanding of a specific production element and how it affects the story. The response demonstrates some knowledge of the specific element and relates it to the show with a clear positive/negative attribute. The response demonstrates effective communication skills, with use of supporting examples and relevant details from the show.

2
The response exhibits a limited understanding of a specific production element and how it affects the story. The response demonstrates little knowledge and insight into how the specific element relates to the show and uses a vague positive/negative attribute to support it. The response may include errors or misconceptions. The response communicates on a basic level, with limited use of supporting examples and relevant details from the show.

1
The response is not able to identify correctly any of the production elements and how it affects the story. The response demonstrates little to no knowledge and insight into how the specific element relates to the show and provides unclear or no positive/negative attributes to support it. The response includes errors or misconceptions. The response demonstrates ineffective communication skills with little or no use of supporting examples and relevant details from the show.

THEATRE TERMS

Here is a list of some of the terms used in the theatre to help your students learn more about theatre and its terms.

Design team - those who design and coordinate a production's set, props, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup.

Designer - the person who designs a one of the six production elements for a show.

Actor - person who performs a role or character.

Character - a person in a play or story; the part played by an actor

Playwright - the person or author of a play.

Costume - any clothing an actor wears onstage for a performance.

Scenery- onstage structures to help establish the time and place of a play.

Lighting designer - the person who develops a lighting concept and design for a production. The lighting designer oversees installation and operation of lighting for the production.

Sound designer - the person who determines the kinds of sound needed for a production. The sound designer supervises the sound crew in recording sounds and providing live sounds, setting up sound equipment, and sound playback during a show.

Suggested Reading

Aunt Minnie McGranahan by Mary Shillings Prigger

Aunt Minnie is very particular about everything in her life. Will all her systems work once her nine orphaned nieces and nephews come to live with her?

Meet the Boxcar Children created by Gertrude Chandler Warner

Benny, Violet, Jessie and Henry are wandering through the woods when they come upon an empty boxcar.

The Boxcar Children's Cookbook by Diane Blaine

The recipes in this book refer to specific moments in the beloved *Boxcar Children* series!

Where the Lilies Bloom by Vera and Bill Cleaver

Mary Call has promised her late father that she'll keep the family together. When a harsh winter befalls them, will they be able to keep that promise?

Gertrude Chandler Warner and the Boxcar Children by Mary Ellen Ellsworth

This biography showcases Ms. Warner's life as a writer and teacher.

How it Feels When a Parent Dies by Jill Kremenz

Young people who have lost parents share their stories in this book.

Aggie's Home by Joan Lowery Nixon

Aggie, a spirited orphan, wants nothing more than a home. But when sent out west, she discourages potential families with her attitude. Will she find the right family?

Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story by Andrea Warren

This non-fiction book provides pictures, facts, and personal stories of orphan train riders between 1854-1930.



LCT Teaches in your School!

Let LCT's professional artists bring their extensive experience into your classroom. An LCT residency program is designed to offer young people the opportunity to learn in a dynamic, fun and challenging way. LCT tailors a residency to the needs of your students, curriculum and budget. We offer residencies that range from a one time visit to a month long intensive program.

- Performance Workshops - Two week intensive unit culminating in a performance. LCT provides all scripts, costumes, props and scenery.
- Kentucky Core Content - Elements of Drama - This residency is a one time visit to assist students in preparation for the KCC testing.
- Spotlight on Reading - Students will explore popular literature through drama, creative writing, art and movement.
- Science and Art - Students can explore a variety of scientific concepts using drama. Experience the wonders of nature, animals, bugs, weather, plants, recycling, or the rain forest through the use of role-play, movement and pantomime.

Call 254-4546 x233 or x226 TODAY!

