PLAY GUIDE

LEXINGTON CHILDREN'S THEATRE
SINCE 1938

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The Hundred Dresses

Adapted by Ralph Covert and Riley Mills

Based upon the book by Eleanor Estes

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Dear Educator -

Lexington Children's Theatre is proud to be producing our 81st season of plays for young people and their families. As an organization that values the arts and education, we have created this Play Guide for teachers to utilize in conjunction with seeing a play at LCT.

Our Play Guides are designed to be a valuable tool in two ways: helping you prepare your students for the enriching performance given by LCT's performers, 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 Academic Standards (KAS), including the National Core Arts Standards for Theatre. Teachers have important voices at LCT, and 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 email Rhonda Bell, our Associate Artistic Director in Charge of Education, at education@lctonstage.org.

Please use the Teacher Response form following a performance. We are thrilled that you rely on LCT to provide your students a quality theatrical experience, and we hope this resource helps you in your classroom.

-LCT's Education Department

The mission of our education programming

The mission of Lexington Children's Theatre's 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.

Your role in the 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 on stage.

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 DVD, 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 you played as an audience.

What to know - before the show!

Play Synopsis

In a small town in Connecticut in 1938, Wanda Petronski finds it difficult to fit in with the other children at her school. Having emigrated from Poland with her brother, Jacob, and her father, Mr. Petronski, Wanda is excluded and teased for her funny accent, her plain clothes and muddy shoes. Her classmates Maddie, Peggy, Cecil, Jack, and Willie are all preoccupied with playing pranks on Wanda's neighbor, Mr. Svenson, and are eager to compete in the school-wide drawing competition.

In the thick of the Great Depression, Maddie Reeves struggles to under¬stand why her father can't hold down a job, and why she must use hand-me-down dresses to get by while her friends seem to always have new things. Peggy, Cecile, and Maddie brag about their dresses, and Wanda interrupts, announcing that she has a hundred dresses. Peggy and Cecile laugh at how a poor Polish girl could afford a hundred dresses when she wears the same blue one every day, while Maddie watches silently nearby. Peggy decides that they should wait for Wanda right before school and ask her about her dresses every day, claiming it will be their new game.

Time passes, and Maddie regretfully remembers the dozens of times they teased Wanda about her dresses. She daydreams about telling Peggy to stop playing the hundred dresses game with Wanda, but when she does, Peggy suggests all the kids play a new game asking Maddie about her dresses, pointing out that "Maddie's poor." Maddie breaks out of her dream, deciding that the Hundred Dresses game can't be all that bad if Peggy is the best liked girl in the school.

At school, Wanda has been absent for days when the class learns that she is the winner of the drawing competition and that she drew a hundred dresses. A letter arrives from Wanda's father saying the Petronskis have moved away because of how awfully they have been treated. Peggy and Maddie decide to visit Wanda's house in Boggins Heights and discover an empty one room house. Realizing Wanda has truly left for good. The girls vow to write Wanda a letter to tell her about her medal. While Peggy is certain they never did anything wrong, Maddie cannot shake the awful feeling that she was responsible for what happened to Wanda.

After confiding in her mother, and opening up to an unlikely friend in Mr. Svenson, Maddie realizes what a grave mistake she made, not in choosing to tease Wanda, but in choosing not to stop it. Maddie vows that if she can't make it right with Wanda, she will be sure do better next time and stand up for what she believes in.

What to know - before the show!

Discover Your Heritage

Wanda Petronski is a Polish immigrant. She knows that her family is of Polish descent and knows about her family's culture. As a class, come up with a list of questions that students can ask their families to learn more about their own family histories. Send students home with the list. Students will interview family members and create a poster showcasing their heritage to share with the class. Students can also ask family members about their favorite family legends – it's always fun to hear adventurous stories about your ancestors! Students with many different countries of origin may choose one or focus on two for their presentation.

SS.4.2.20; SS.5.2.16; W.5.7; VA:Cr1.2.3

Drawing Contest

In *The Hundred Dresses,* there is a school-wide drawing con¬test. In the play, girls design dresses and boys design motorboats. In your classroom, allow each student to draw a dress or a motor¬boat that represents themselves – their personalities, their likes, their fears – and share them with the class. Don't get stuck on the contest, though – boys can draw dresses and girls can draw motorboats if they'd like to. Once the drawings are finished, have students explain their choices to the class, and hang them up in a class gallery.

VA:Cr1.1.3; VA:Pr5.1.3; VA:Pr7.1.

Frozen inTime

The Hundred Dresses addresses bullying. Before seeing the show, split the class into groups and have each group create a frozen picture depicting an instance of bullying that they have seen in their school or community. Present these frozen pictures to the class. While one group is frozen in their picture, the facilitator may come around with a thought bubble cut out of paper or poster board and hold it over a frozen character's head. When the thought bubble is held over the character's head, the audience may volunteer what that character may be thinking. After seeing the show, come back to this activity. There may be new instances that stu¬dents did not previously see as bullying that were brought back to mind by the play.

TH:Cn11.1.4; TH:Cn10.1.4; TH:Cn10.1.3

What to know - before the show!

Maddie's World

Here are some of the culture references mentioned in The Hundred Dresses. Please review these with your class to help them understand the period of the play.

SS.4.2.20; TH:Cn11.1.3

Buck Rogers: The adventures of Buck Rogers in comic strips, movies, radio and television became an important part of American popular culture. This pop phenomenon paralleled the development of space technology in the 20th century and introduced Americans to outer space as a familiar environment for adventure.

Dick Tracy: A comic strip created by Chester Gould that featuring Dick Tracy, a hard-hitting, fast-shooting and intelligent police detective.

Flash Gordon: The hero of a science fiction adventure comic strip originally drawn by Alex Raymond. First published in 1934, the strip was inspired by and created to compete with the already established Buck Rogers adventure strip.

Charlie McCarthy: The dummy of Edgar Bergen. He was always presented as a highly intelligent child, who was sophisticated and crazy about girls.

Edgar Bergen: An American actor and radio performer, best known as a ventriloquist. He had a dummy named Charlie McCarthy, who became Bergen's lifelong sidekick. In 1949, Bergen went to CBS, with a new weekly program, The Charlie McCarthy Show.

Franklin D. Roosevelt: FDR was the 32nd President of the United States (1933–1945) and a central figure in world events during the mid-20th century, leading the U.S. during a time of worldwide economic crisis and world war.

Gettysburg Address: A speech by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. It is one of the most well-known speeches in United States history. It was delivered during the American Civil War, on November 19, 1863. It came to be regarded as one of the greatest speeches in American history.
Greta Garbo: A Swedish film actress who was an international star and icon during Hollywood's silent and classic periods.

Little Orphan Annie: Little Orphan Annie was a daily American comic strip created by Harold Gray (1894–1968). The strip made its debut on August 5, 1924 in the New York Daily News. The plot follows the wide-ranging adven¬tures of Annie, her dog Sandy, and her benefactor Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks.

PLEASE NOTE: The term Polack is used in the play, which is a derogatory reference to a person of Polish decent. While our theatre does not condone the use of this language, it is accurate given the topic, the setting, and the time period of the story and, therefore, is retained for the purpose of being true to the story. It is hoped that this language, as well as the attitudes of some of the characters in the story, will inspire conversations about why people behaved and spoke in the ways they did and how things have changed since the era of the story.

What to know - before the show!

Contextual Article

The Great Depression

The Great Depression was a worldwide economic crisis that, in the United States, involved an extreme decline in stock prices during the decade before WWII, widespread unemployment, and near stoppages in industrial production and construction. The start of the Great Depression is usually marked by the stock market crash of "Black Tuesday" on October 29, 1929, when the market lost between 8 and 9 billion dollars in value.

The stock market continued to decline despite short recoveries. Unemployment rose and wages fell for those who continued to work. As consumers lost buying power, industrial production fell, businesses failed, and more workers lost their jobs. Farmers were also caught in a depression that extended through the 1920s. Farming and rural areas suffered as crop prices fell by approximately 60%. This was caused by the collapse of food prices with the loss of export markets after World War I and years of drought that were marked by huge dust storms that blackened skies and removed the land of topsoil. Many people lost their homes, and many farmers lost their land and equipment.

By 1932 the unemployment rate had risen past 20 percent. Thousands of businesses had failed and millions of people were homeless. Many moved from town to town looking for jobs that did not exist, and many more lived at the edges of cities in shantytowns (slum settlements comprised of impoverished people who live in homes made from scrap materials).

Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office on March 4, 1933, stating that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Roosevelt was facing an unemployment crisis that reached 24.9 percent, with 13 to 15 million workers without jobs. He offered and Congress passed a series of emergency measures that came to characterize his promise of a "new deal for the American people." The first hundred days with new administration included legislation to reform banking and the stock market, insure private bank deposits, protect home mortgages, seek to stabilize industrial and agricultural production, create a program to build large public works and another to build hydroelectric dams to bring power to the rural South, bring federal relief to millions, and send thousands of young men into the national parks and forests to plant trees and control erosion.

The Civil Works Administration employed many men and women at jobs from building and repairing roads and bridges, parks, playgrounds and public buildings to creating art. Unemployment, however, persisted at high levels. That led the administration to create a permanent jobs program, the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The W.P.A. began in 1935 and would last until 1943, employing 8.5 million people and spending $11 billion as it trans¬formed the national infrastructure, made clothing for the poor, and created landmark programs in art, music, theater and writing. To accommodate unions that were growing stronger at the time, the W.P.A. at first paid building trades workers "prevailing wages" but shortened their hours so as not to compete with private employers.

Roosevelt's efforts to assert government control over the economy were frustrated by Supreme Court rulings that overturned key pieces of legislation. Congress rejected the proposal to include additional justices in the Supreme Court and also denied further New Deal measures, but not before the Social Security Act creating old-age pensions went into effect.

Gains from the New Deal were ruined in 1937 due to a recession that lasted through most of 1938. This hindered industrial production and employment, prolonged the Depression and caused Roosevelt to increase the work relief rolls of the W.P.A. to their highest level ever. Roos¬evelt, who had been re-elected in 1936, aimed to rebuild a military infrastructure that had deteriorated after World War I. As the war in Europe intensified with France surrendering to Germany and England fighting on, ramped up defense manufacturing began to produce private sector jobs and reduce the persistent unemployment that was the main face of the Depression. Jobless workers were absorbed as trainees for defense jobs and then by the draft that went into effect in 1940, when Roosevelt was elected to a third term. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 that started World War II sent

America's factories into full production and absorbed all available workers.

Despite the New Deal's many measures and their alleviation of the worst effects of the Great Depression, it was the factories that supplied the American war effort that finally brought the Depression to a close. And it was not until 1954 that the stock market regained its pre-Depression levels.

A Short History of the Great Depression. Excerpt paraphrased from The New York Times website. Taylor, N. (2008).

How to grow - after the show!

Bullying Poems

The Hundred Dresses is a story of bullying. In our country, about 25% of young people say they have been a victim of bullying. What we say and the words we use deeply affect other people. Have your class create a poem about the experiences and issues that surround bullying. How might a victim feel about being bullying? What should a bystander do if they see someone being picked on? What are your thoughts and feelings on this issue? What would you like to tell people about bullying? Let's use our words to express our feelings. Below are two po¬ems found at www.besteenpoems.com. Read them to your class to give them an example before they create their own poem.

Words Hurt
© Kaylynn

You should know, bullying hurts.
It starts with one word, one word you blurt.
Fat, ugly, worthless.
These are the words they hear.
Did you know, you're their biggest fear?

Day by day you torment them,
it takes so long for their hearts to mend.
All they ask for is one true friend,
but you make them want their lives to end.

Everyday they wake up with regret,
all they want to do is forget.
It's not just hitting and punching,
it's the words you say,
they hurt so much, they want to fade away.

This is when enough is enough,
they're sick of playing strong,
sick of playing tough.
But they know they can make it through,
you may not have known, but they always knew.

They put on a fake smile and pretend they're okay,
they believe they can make it all the way.
Of course your words still offend,
but they have been pieced back together again.

See Those People
© Amy

See that girl,
The one with the smile?
Do you know she's been hurting for a while?

See that boy,
''Yeah, he's so cool!''
Is that how he appears to be at school?

See that girl,
With that group alongside?
Do you know she considered suicide?

See that boy,
He seems so alive!
But everyday he struggles to survive.

See those people
All victims of hate.
Watch your words, before it's too late.

W.4.4; W.4.3

How to grow - after the show!

Wonders of Our Age

Miss Mason has her class do reports on the wonders of their age. Jack Beggles writes his about the Empire State Building. What are some of the wonders of our age? How are they different than the things the children of Room 13 might have written about? As a class, make a list of the wonders of our age. Then have each student choose a "wonder" to research and write a report on. Present them Room 13-style to share with one another.

W.5.2; W.4.7; SS.4.2.19

Four Square

Maddie, Peggy, Cecile and Elizabeth play four square in The Hundred Dresses. All you need to play this game is some chalk and a playground ball. Chalk out a grid of four squares on the ground. Going clockwise, one square will be "King," the next "Queen," the next "Jack" or "Knight," and the next "Baby." The person in the King's square always starts a round with the ball. All players' objectives are to advance through the ranks to become King. A player can do so by getting another player out.

The game begins when the King bounces the ball in his own square and then taps it so it bounces in the Knight's square. From there, play begins. Each player must let the ball bounce in their own square once and then tap it so it bounces in someone else's square. If a player lets the ball bounce more than once in their square, they are out, and all players below them in rank move up a square. If a player taps a ball out of bounds, they are out as well.

Once the basics of four square have been mastered, there are many variations that can be applied. A few favorites from The Hundred Dresses are listed below.

Around the World: If the King calls "Around the World," players must tap the ball to the square of the person immedi¬ately to their left. Play must continue this way until someone is out or the King calls out "Return to normal."

Around the World Peacefully: If the King calls "Around the World Peacefully," whoever has the ball may catch it and gently toss it to the person immediately to their left. Once the ball returns to the person that began the round, play resumes normally.

Bus Stop: If the King calls "Bus Stop," all players must rush to the center of the grid and put a foot on the corner where all four squares touch. The last player to put their foot on the corner is out.

Out of the Woods: If the King calls "Out of the Woods," all players must jump out of their squares and stand out of bounds. The last player to leap out of bounds is out.

Corner: If the King calls "Corner," all players must put their feet on the outside cor¬ner of their squares. The last player to reach their corner is out.

Popcorn: This rule must be called by the King at the beginning of the round and may not be called in the middle of play. Players may bounce the ball between their hands instead of simply using one tap to get the ball into another player's square.

There are many other rules and variations on four square. Once you've mastered these, research more or create your own!

HW:PE.4.2.35; HW:PE.4.4.1

How to grow - after the show!

What to Read Next

The Family Under the Bridge **by Natalie Savage Carlson**
The story of a Parisian tramp, Armand, who finds a ready-made family to live with him under the bridge.

Sarah, Plain and Tall **by Patricia MacLachlan**
Sarah, Plain and Tall tells the story of Sarah, who came from Maine to answer Jacob's advertisement for a wife and mother.

Wonder **by R. J. Palacio**
August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid.

When You Reach Me **by Rebecca Stead**
By sixth grade, Miranda and her best friend, Sal, know how to navigate their New York City neighborhood. They know where it's safe to go, and they know who to avoid. Like the crazy guy on the corner. But soon things start to unravel and life presents some changes.

Out of My Mind **by Sharon M. Draper**
Melody is not like most people. She cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory; she can remember every detail of everything she has ever experienced. But Melody refuses to be defined by cerebral palsy. And she's determined to let everyone know it…somehow.

LCT teaches in YOUR school!

Would you like to see some of these play guide activities modeled in your classroom?

Book a workshop for your class with one of LCT's teaching artists! In our pre-show workshops, our teaching artists will engage students in acting skills and themes from the play through drama activities. In our post-show workshops, students will extend their play-going experience by strengthening their personal connection to the play and deepening their understanding of the themes and characters.

Call us at 859-254-4546 x 226 to book a pre or post-show workshop for your class!

To learn more about Lexington Children's Theatre and our programming for your school visit:
www.lctonstage.org/for-educators/in-school-experiences/