

Miss Nelson Is Missing

Based on the book by Harry Allard
Illustrated by James Marshall

Adapted by Joan Cushing

Production Team

Directed by
Madeleine Major

Scenic & Sound Design by
Ron Stoffregen

Costume Design by
Joe Anderson

Lighting Design by
Mandy Hart

Technical Direction by
Mike Bettenhausen

Stage Management by
Kristine Sherwin

Cast

Miss Nelson/Viola Swamp
Hope Parow

Mr. Blandsworth/Det. McSmogg
Beatus Hoang

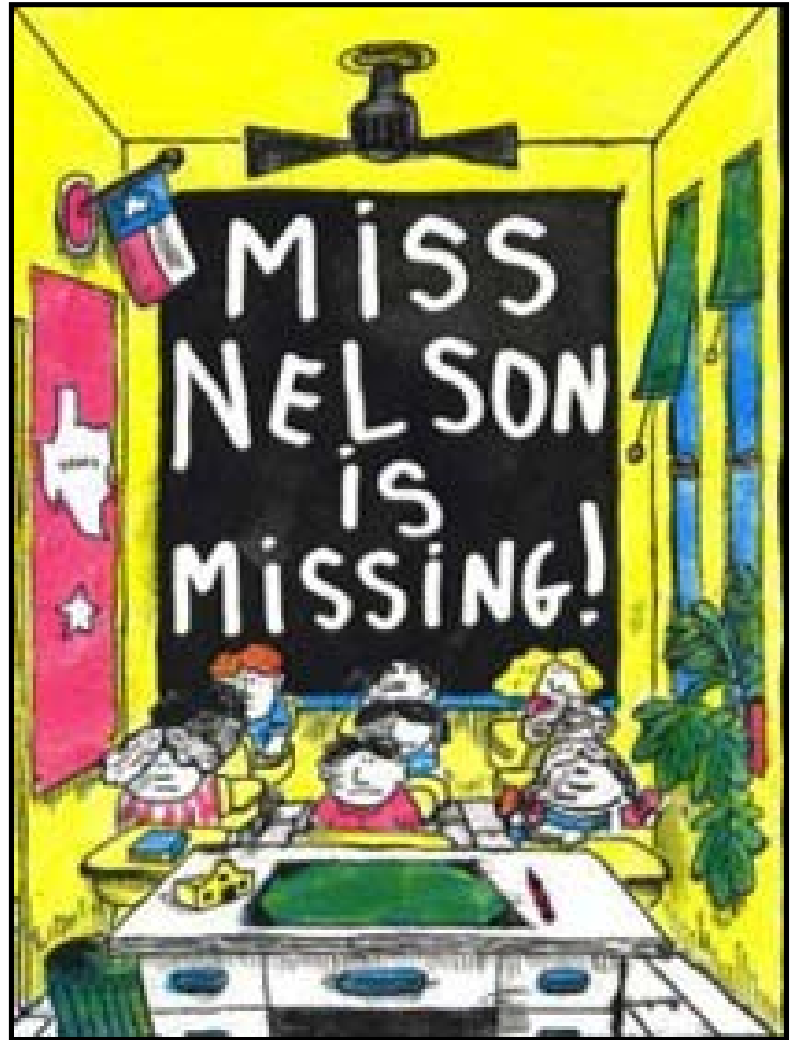
Adam
Garret Martin

Allison
Karen Horns

Gregory
Elijah Carlson

Cheryl
Laura Paulson

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
Department of Theatre Arts



School Performances

April 7-9, 2010

9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.

About the Story

The students in Miss Nelson's class have difficulty following the rules and being respectful. One day Miss Nelson concocts an ingenious plan and disappears, making it necessary for substitute "Viola Swamp" to take over. Soon the children are inundated with homework and have their story time taken away. Eventually, Miss Nelson comes back to a much improved class that appreciates her for the wonderful teacher she is.

What's Inside

Theatre Etiquette

About the Author, Illustrator & Playwright

From Page to Stage

Adapting a Play Activity

Theme/Activity: Good & Bad Behavior

Theme/Activity: Missing Things

Theme/Activity: Disguises

Other Post-Show Activities

Science & Aerodynamics

Math/Telling Time

Detective McSmogg Geography

Miss Nelson Vocabulary/Definitions

Word Search

Character Comparison/Matching

Recommended Reading List

Theatre for Children Introduction

Theatre Vocabulary/Definitions

Theatre & Drama Games

Theatre in the Classroom

Theatre Etiquette

The UW-La Crosse Department of Theatre Arts encourages active participation during the children's show performance of Miss Nelson is Missing. Children, teachers and chaperones are often seating on the stage to be close to the action. Don't be surprised if we ask the children to yell or shout during the performance.

However, we do ask that you prepare your students for the theatrical experience by teaching them to be good audience members.

- Do not play with or move the props that are on the stage. Having the props in their appropriate location allows for a successful production.
- Respect the actors and other audience members by listening quietly during the performance.
- Laugh (like crazy) when something funny happens. It's okay to respond to the show.
- Show your appreciation to the actors and crew by applauding at the end of songs, scenes and especially at the end of the show.
- Stay in your seat until the play is over. Wait for your teacher to tell you where to go.
- Food, drinks, and candy are not allowed in the theatre.
- Most importantly, have fun and enjoy the show!



About the Author

Harry Allard was born on January 27, 1928 in Evanston, Illinois. After graduating from Amundsen High School in 1946, he went to Northwestern University where he received a B. S. in art. After he graduated in 1949, he was a soldier during the Korean War.

After the war he lived in France. He learned to speak French so well he later taught French. Still thirsty for knowledge, he continued his studies, completing his Master's degree at Middleburg College and his Ph.D. in French Literature from Yale University in 1972. He taught French at the college level for many years. He has used his foreign language skills to translate two books from German to English. He has also prided himself on being fluent in Spanish. Although he never planned to write children's books, Harry teamed up with his friend James Marshall in the early 1970s.

They collaborated on as many as twelve titles, among them the misadventures of the Stupid family and the Miss Nelson books.

Harry Allard is now retired as a professor from Salem State College and currently lives in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Books by Harry Allard

Bumps in the Night
The Cactus Flower Bakery
Crash Helmet
The Hummingbirds' Day
It's So Nice to Have a Wolf Around
the House
Miss Nelson Has a Field Day
Miss Nelson Is Back
Miss Nelson Is Missing!
The Stupids Die
The Stupids Have a Ball
The Stupids Step Out
The Stupids Take Off
There's a Party at Mona's Tonight
The Tutti-Frutti Case

About the Playwright

Joan Cushing, a former elementary school teacher and cabaret performer, has adapted 7 popular children's books as musicals, *Junie B. Jones & a Little Monkey Business!*; *Miss Nelson Has a Field Day!*; *Petite Rouge: A Cajun Red Riding Hood* and others.

Ms. Cushing lives in the Nation's Capital with her husband Paul and their son Ben.



About the Illustrator

James Marshall a children's author and illustrator was born in San Antonio, Texas on October 10, 1942 and grew up on his family's farm. He played viola and enrolled at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA. However, after injuring his hand, his music career ended. He returned to Texas, where he went to San Antonio College, then transferred to Southern Connecticut State University where he received degrees in French and History.

He is well-known for his Fox Series, as well as the Miss Nelson books, the Stupids, the Cut-ups, and many more. James Marshall can elicit wild delight from readers with relatively little text and simple drawings. His illustrated characters are able to express a wide range of emotion, and produce howls of laughter from children and adults.

Marshall won a University of Mississippi Silver Medallion in 1992, and received the Caldecott Honor in 1989 for *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

In 2007, the American Library Association honored Marshall with the Laura Ingalls Wilder medal for his "substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children."

From the PAGE to the STAGE

When a playwright takes a book and *adapts* it into a play, he or she must answer many questions, including:

- Can this book be an effective play?
- Who are the most essential characters? What are the most essential events?
- How can I confine the action to the space of the stage?
- Do I need to suggest ways to stage certain actions, changes of location, etc.?
- Is there anything *not* in the book that should be in the play?

Theatres like to produce adaptations because typically the plays are based on well-known books that will bring in audiences. But almost always, books are not intended to be turned into plays, and so translating them into scripts can seem “unnatural” or awkward. The playwright must find what is “theatrical” about the book and concentrate on those elements in order to create a successful adaptation. Theatrical elements might include conversations between characters, supernatural or imaginary characters, actors playing more than one character, multiple events taking place at the same time in different areas of the stage, stylized movement, and use of masks or puppets.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were a playwright, would you rather write an adaptation of an existing book or write an original play? Why?
2. Do you like seeing plays based on books you’ve read? Why or why not?
3. How are plays different from TV shows or movies? What are the limitations of a play (things that can’t be done on stage)?
4. What parts of the book *Miss Nelson is Missing* do you think will be difficult to stage? Why?
5. What other books do you know of that have been turned into a play?

Activity: Adapting a favorite book into a play

Objective- Students will begin to understand the process of adapting a book for the stage.

1. Have each student choose a favorite book. Tell them they will be reimagining a scene from that book as a play scene.
2. Students choose a scene from the book to adapt. The scene should have dramatic action (characters dealing with a problem), and students should have an idea of how to stage the action.
3. Show students a page from a script if they are unfamiliar with script format.
4. Students write their scenes, starting with stage directions setting the scene and continuing through dialog and action until they reach a resolution.
5. Students trade their script pages and read each other’s work *or* cast their scenes (with teacher guidance) and read them in reader’s theatre style.
6. Students give each other feedback on how the scene translated from page to stage (focusing on what was clear and what confused them or caused them to “tune out”) and suggest directions to go next with the script.

For older students: Have older students plan a scene breakdown for their entire book. How many scenes need to be included? Do any need to be added? Where is the climax of the book/play? How can they use the elements of the stage to tell the story of the book? They can do this using a storyboard format.

For younger students: Have younger children draw a picture of a scene from the book as it would appear on the stage, create a tableau image (frozen picture) of the scene, or dramatize the scene using minimal set and costumes or puppets.

THEME 1: GOOD AND BAD BEHAVIOR

Pre-Show

In this play, Miss Nelson's classroom is "out of control." They won't listen to Miss Nelson, they won't do their lessons, and they make fun of each other. A classroom is an important part of a child's life where they learn not only about academic subjects, but also about social skills. Sometimes children turn to bad behavior when they are angry or bored, so teachers also learn how to understand their students and help them.



Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been in a class or on a field trip where you thought the students were out of control? How did that affect what you were doing?
2. Who decides what is right or good behavior? Do you think those decisions are fair? Why or why not? Is there ever a time when it is OK to break the rules or "misbehave?"
3. How would you explain to someone from another culture how students are expected to act in your classroom?
4. What might you do if you were a teacher and your class refused to behave?

Post-Show Discussion Questions:

1. How "bad" was Miss Nelson's class? What would it be like to be in her class at the beginning of the play?
2. How did the class's behavior affect Miss Nelson? How do you think your class's behavior affects your teacher?
3. What did Miss Swamp do to motivate Miss Nelson's class to behave better? How would you have responded to Miss Swamp?
4. How did the small group of students work together to try and solve the mystery of Miss Nelson's disappearance?
5. Do you think they would have worked with each other had Miss Nelson not gone missing?

Activity: Creating an Ideal Classroom

1. Tell students they are going to plan "the perfect" classroom. They will be designing how it looks and works.
2. Talk to students about the difference between needs and wants. What does a person need to be healthy and happy? What does a person want? How are they different? Discuss what needs and wants might look like in a classroom.
3. Divide students into small groups. Give each group several pieces of paper (one blank).
4. Ask students to make a chart with 4 boxes. Label the boxes: daily tasks, free time, rules, and consequences.
5. As a group, the students fill out the chart and draw a map of their ideal classroom. When filling out the chart, they should consider what *needs* to happen and what they would *like* to happen. When making the map, they should consider use of space, arrangement of desks, classroom equipment (including technology and library resources), etc.
6. When groups have finished, have them share their ideal classrooms with their classmates, explain why they are ideal, and consider whether they are practical. Talk as a class about how they might apply some of their ideas to their actual classroom.



For older students: Have older students design an entire ideal school. What would it look like? How would it function? Would there be teachers? Classrooms? How would it be different from the school they attend?

For younger students: Have younger students draw an ideal classroom (or create tableau images of one). Talk about why classrooms have rules and ask how they would revise the rules for their ideal classrooms.

THEME 2: MISSING PEOPLE, PETS, AND THINGS

Pre-Show Introduction (to read aloud or for your knowledge):

Every year, people go missing in the United States. Some are the victims of crime, but some choose to leave and create new lives for themselves. In this play, Miss Nelson disappears, and her students wonder where she might have gone. Pets also go missing or are abandoned by their owners. And of course, we all lose things every day. Sometimes we don't find them, but most of the time we do and it is always an adventure to look for them.



Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever read or heard about someone disappearing? What protections are in place to help missing children? (AMBER alert, police and community searches)
2. If you have pets, do you have a system in place to identify them so they can be returned to you? What is it?
3. Are you someone who loses things easily? Why do you think this is? What objects do your other family members lose the most? Where do they usually find them?
4. If you could attach one object to an electronic "locator," which object would you choose? Why?
5. Pick one thing you lose easily and identify a place where you could always "store" that object. Where would it be? Who could you ask for help?

Post-Show Discussion Questions:

1. What were some of the things the students imagined might have happened to Miss Nelson? How realistic do you think their guesses were?
2. If you were Principal Humlecker, what would you have done after Miss Nelson had been missing for a few days?
3. Under what circumstance do you think Miss Nelson might "go missing" again?



Activity: Letter from lost toy

1. Students identify a toy they own that has a specific "personality."
2. In whole group, brainstorm some places toys might like to go.
3. Students write a short letter from their toy explaining where it is and what it is doing. They might also include a drawing of a "souvenir" the toy has sent with the letter or create postcards using parts of their letters.
4. In whole group or small groups, students read their letters aloud in character as their toy.

For older students: Have older children write a series of letters from a favorite object as it goes on a trip to locations they've researched.

For younger students: Have younger children draw "photographs" of their toy on its trip and tell the story of the trip in pairs.

THEME 3: DISGUISES AND DECEPTION

Pre-Show

Disguises have been used since ancient times to hide people's identities. Sometimes they are used for entertainment- at Halloween, for example, or a costume party. Actors wear disguises (costumes and makeup) to help the process of playing a character—imagining themselves as someone else. Sometimes the stakes of disguises are very high- spies and law enforcement officers must pretend to be someone else so that they can solve crimes or bring criminals to justice. Pretending to be someone else can be a crime in itself. Posing as a police officer deceives the public and can be a way to abuse the trust people put in law enforcement officers. Pretending to have the knowledge and ability to do something like fly a plane or operate in a patient also puts people's lives at risk.



Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever worn a disguise? Why? Did it work?
2. What are some characters from stories and movies you can think of that wear disguises? Why do they wear them?
3. Do you think it is right to trick people by wearing disguises? If so, under what circumstances? What would happen if it were illegal to disguise yourself for any reason?
4. Are there any aspects about you that you cannot disguise? (fingerprints, DNA, a unique marking)

Post-Show Discussion Questions:

1. How did you know that Miss Nelson was in disguise? When did you figure it out?
2. Do you think it was right for Miss Nelson to disguise herself?
3. If you were one of Miss Nelson's students and found out that she tricked you (like Raymond did in the play), what would you say to her?
4. If you were Miss Nelson, would you reveal your trick? When and why?



Activity: Trying on disguises

Before the lesson, gather objects and costume pieces for students to try on as disguises, or have students bring these items from home. Also bring a few mirrors and/or an instant/digital camera.

1. In small groups, students try on costume pieces and look at themselves in the mirror (or take some instant photos and give them to the students).
2. Individually, students develop a character profile based on their costume. Have them outline traits such as: name, age, job, friends/family, favorite object, greatest wish, and greatest fear.
3. Students share their characters with the class (in costume, speaking as their characters, if you wish).

For older students: Have older students use this activity as the basis for writing a play or short story about their character. You may have them combine their character with others' to create interesting situations.

For younger students: Have younger students try on the costume pieces and then draw a picture of their character. Ask them about their character, write some of the profile information on the drawing, and create a classroom character gallery.

Other Post-Show Activities

Create an “Opposite Self”

Miss Nelson created a disguise for her opposite self Miss Viola Swamp. Have your students create an opposite for them. To do this, they may need to think about what their appearance tells the world about who they are and decide what their opposite should wear, how it would act, etc.? Have an opposite day where the students come dressed like their opposite.

Multiple Roles

Two actors in the show play multiple roles. How do they disguise themselves as new characters in a short amount of time? What do they change about their appearance (hair, makeup, costume)? What do they change physically (voice, movement, posture)?



Write an Apology Letter.

The students wrote Miss Nelson a letter apologizing for their bad behavior and begging her to return. Imagine you are stuck with Ms. Viola Swamp as a substitute and write a letter to your own teacher asking her to return to your class.

Clue Hunt

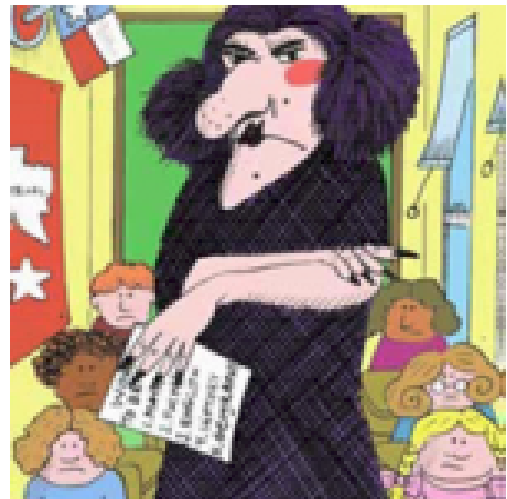
Students will probably figure out who Miss Viola Swamp really is. Brainstorm with them the clues that led them to that conclusion. Use the book as a guide for clue-seeking.

Letters/Drawings to the Performers

Have your students write a review of the performance and send it to the UW-L Department of Theatre Arts. Ask them to include what their favorite character, their impression of the set and costumes and their favorite part of the performance. You could also have them write the letters to the actors!

Send these to:

The *Miss Nelson is Missing!* Cast
c/o UW-L Department of Theatre Arts
154 Center for the Arts
1725 State Street
La Crosse, WI 54601



Science and Aerodynamics

The students of Miss Nelson's class like to throw paper airplanes. This is considered inappropriate behavior. Create an experiment with your paper airplane. You will need a ruler, a stopwatch, pencil, paper, and an open area. Check out *Kid's Paper Airplane Book* by Ken Blackburn, or *The World's Greatest Paper Airplane* by Keith R. Laux for ideas. Choose four different styles of planes to make. Each person in the group as a different style. After you have made your plane, form groups of four to conduct the experiment.



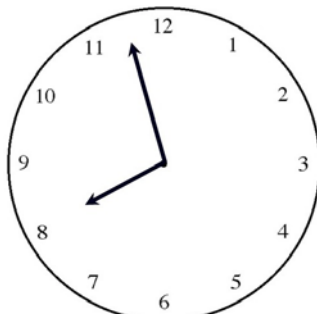
On a separate sheet of paper, label and write down the length, height, and wing span of each plane in the group. Then, using the stop watch, take ten test flights and record the length of time the plane was in the air as well as the direction of flight. Calculate the average flight time for each plane. Record any other observations about each flight. Do you see any patterns in the flights? What conclusions can you make about your plane? What can be said about the style of plane versus its performance? As a group present your findings to the class. When each group has completed their presentation, discuss the results as a whole.

Math and Telling Time

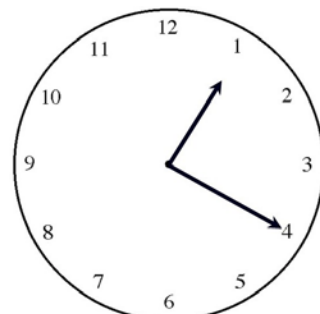
Every class has a schedule to follow for each day. Miss Nelson begins her class with Math then Geography, and then as a special treat, story time. On the clocks below, place the hands in their correct position for the time, and then write the correct time for the clocks on the bottom row.



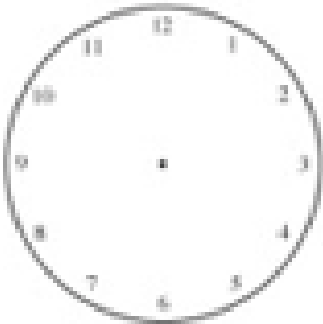
Math 8:32 a.m.



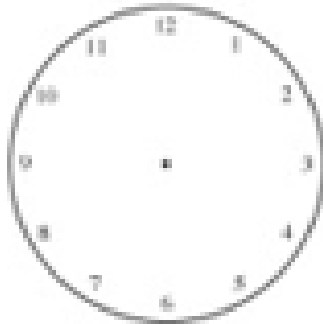
Geography 8:58 am



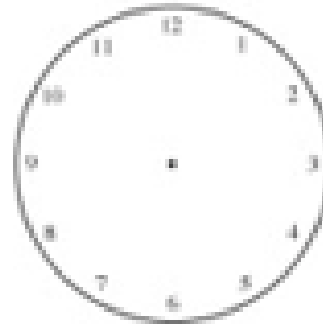
History 1:20 p.m.



Lunch _____



Grammar _____



Science _____

Now list the subjects in chronological order (which one comes first?). Then determine the length of time for each subject. Finally, make a list of your classroom schedule and determine the amount of time the class spends on each subject.

Time Conversions: Using 60 minutes (min.) = 1 hour (hr.), convert the following.

30 min. = _____ hr.

120 min. = _____ hr.

75 min. = _____ hr.

8 hr. = _____ min.

1 3/4 hr. = _____ min.

0.25 hr. = _____ min.

Detective McSmogg's Geography



Where in the World...?!

The students in Miss Nelson's class decided to go to the police to get help finding their missing teacher. If you were in Miss Nelson's class, who else could you have asked to help find Miss Nelson?

Detective Smog mentions several where to look for Miss Nelson. From the places below, plan a one week detective search. With the aid of an atlas and an encyclopedia, locate three places you'd like to go. Then find out about the climate and types of transportation available for that area. Then make a list of clothing and supplies you might take in two suitcases.

Sands of Arabia
Himalayas of Tibet
Jungles of Botswana

Catacombs of Rome
Pyramids of Egypt
The English Channel

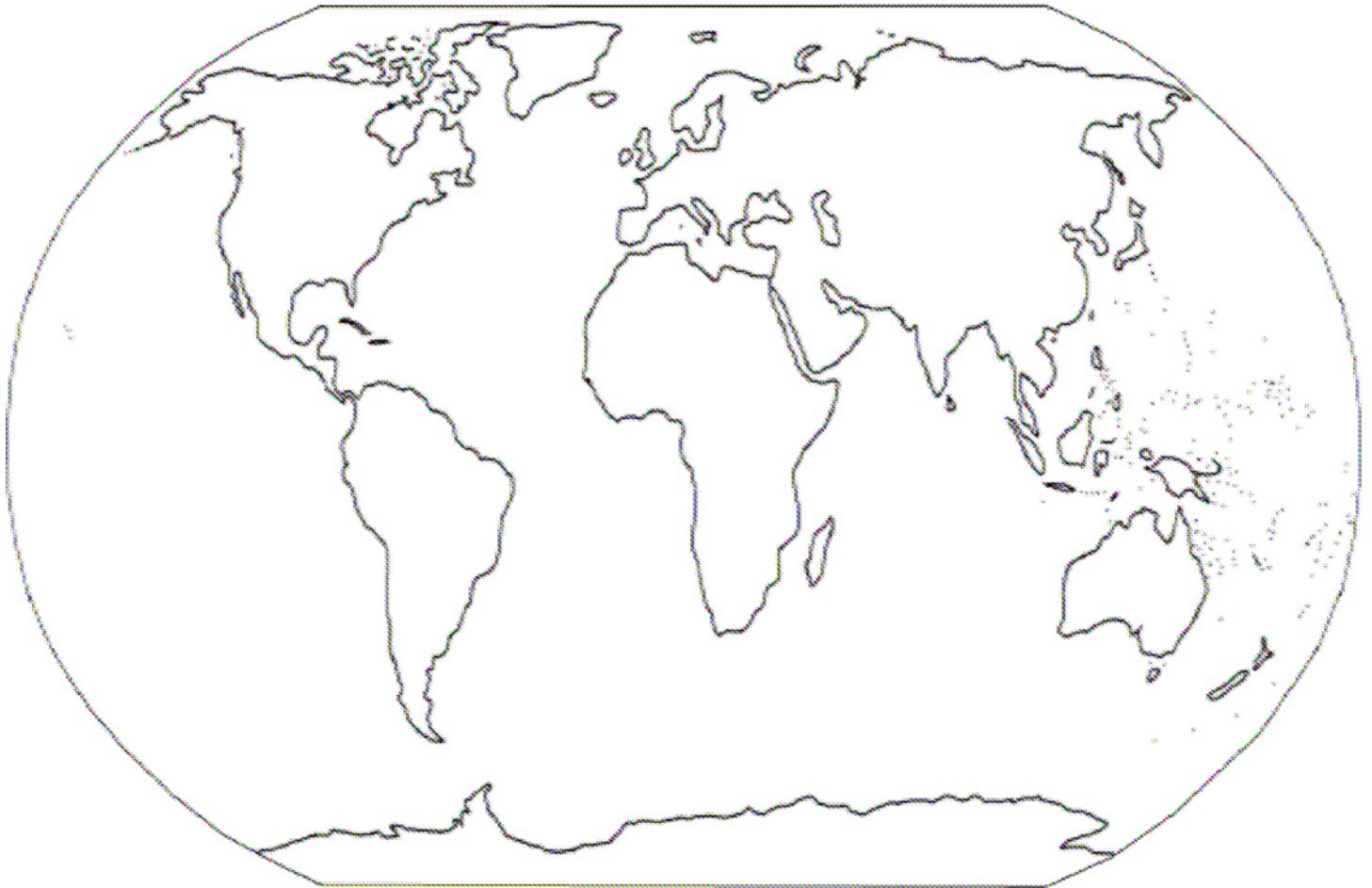
Seven Seas
Timbuktu
Bavaria
Peru

Nile
Siberia

Map Activity

When Detective Smog begins his pan of action to find Miss Nelson, he mentions several continents. On the world map below, locate and label the following continents. Color each continent a different color.

Africa Antarctica Asia Australia Europe N. America S. America



Vocabulary Words

Acting up—misbehaving, not following the rules

Affection—tender feeling toward another; love, fondness

Beijing—capital of China

Caper—a mischievous prank or plot

Catacombs—an underground cemetery with tunnels and chambers

Conduct—the way a person acts or behaves

Conscience—awareness of a moral/ethical aspect to one's conduct with the urge to prefer right over wrong

Discouraged—less hopeful or enthusiastic

Fray—a scuffle or brawl

Geography—the study of the earth

Golden Rule—to treat others as you would wish to be treated

Grotesque—outlandish or bizarre appearance

Hail—to salute or greet enthusiastically

Individuality—qualities and characteristics that distinguish one person or thing from another

Luster—glory, radiance or distinction

Maestro—a master in an art, especially a composer, conductor, or music teacher

Navigate—to follow a planned course

Peruse—to read or examine

Prank—a mischievous trick or practical joke

Quest—the act of seeking or pursuing something

Relationship—the condition of being related or connected

Respect—a feeling of esteem or appreciation

Romp—to play or frolic boisterously

Shenanigan—a deceitful trick

Tarantula—a large, hairy tropical spider

Miss Nelson is Missing Word Search

B P G I A T S S E A T R H U
A M M M C S M O G G P T S R
D I Y A C U A R S R A S S E
L R R H W B W E I M A R Y P
Y B O E P S E N A L P R I A
A O T A B T C S E M A L C G
L S S E V I T C E T E D T N
L C I I P T S I N T A E O I
S E H A R U L E R T A S I D
T E L I H T M N R C I C I A
T C E P S E R C H L M M A E
N U I O L T N E L W O N L R
C O G E O G R A P H Y I T A
E S C T R M T A N T N R T T

ADAM
AIRPLANES
ALLISON
BADLY
DETECTIVE
ELEMENTARY
GEOGRAPHY
HISTORY

MATH
MCSMOGG
NELSON
NILE
PERU
PRINCIPAL
PYRAMIDS
READING

RESPECT
RULER
SCHOOL
SCIENCE
SIBERIA
SUBSTITUTE
SWAMP
TEACHER

Character Comparison

Cut and glue the words (on the next page) that describe the characters.

Miss Nelson is Missing Matching Game



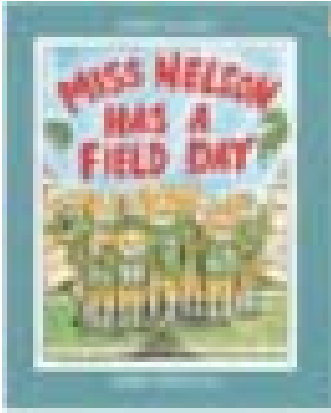
Miss Nelson *Miss Nelson*



Miss Swamp *Viola Swamp*

Sweet	Mean
Ugly	Pretty
Happy	Angry
Strict	Nice
Black	Pink
Soft	Loud
Quiet	Rough
Snaps	Praises

Recommended Reading Booklist



The Miss Nelson Series:

Miss Nelson is Missing by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall

Miss Nelson is Back by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall

Miss Nelson Has a Field Day by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall

Following Rules

Following Rules by Robin Nelson

Rules of the Wild by Bridget Levin

Delila D. at the Library by Jeanne Willis

Disguises

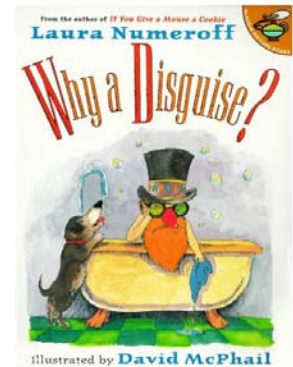
Strega Nona's Magic Lessons by Tomie DePaola

Why a Disguise? by Laura Joffe Numeroff

Trupp: A Fuzzhead Tale by Janelle Cannon

Boo! by Colin McNaughton

Bad Boys by Margie Palatini



Looking for Clues

The 13th Clue by Ann Jonas

The Missing Mitten Mystery by Steven Kellogg

Young Cam Jansen and the Molly Shoe Mystery by David A. Adler

Young Cam Jansen and the Missing Cookie David A. Adler

Detective Small in the Amazing Banana Caper by Wong Herbert Yee

Jake Gander: Storyville Detective by George McClements

Who Killed Cock Robin? by Kevin O'Malley

Missing Persons

Young Cam Jansen and the Double Beach Mystery by David A. Adler

Nate the Great and the Big Sniff by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Mystery by Arthur Geisert

Substitutes

Jamaica and the Substitute Teacher by Juanita Havill

Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia by Peggy Parish

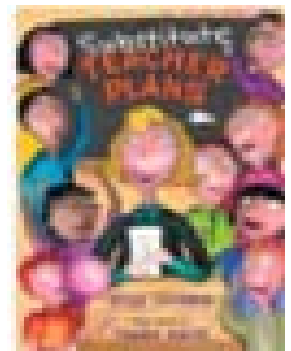
Substitute Teacher Plans by Doug Johnson

Young Cam Jansen and the Substitute Mystery by David A. Adler

Conflict Management

No Dessert Forever! by George Ella Lyon

The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig by Eugene Trivisas



Theatre for Children

The important aspect of drama with young children is that, when approached in a positive and focused manner, it builds confidence, develops speaking and listening skills, encourages positive group interaction and increases children's self-awareness as part of their social circle. Even simple "throwing and catching" games have their basis in drama and can help to develop the fine motor skills that young children will require. Drama does not have to take up a tremendous amount of curriculum time and can be utilized in the classroom environment whenever you have few moments to spare. Drama can also be used within the context of other subjects, such as history and literature, as a method for exploration or to enhance understanding.

Age appropriate activities are the key to making drama a powerful tool in the classroom. For very young children, drama activities include:

- Play physical games to establish rules and appropriate responses (i.e. walking tag)
- Use clapping games to develop speaking and listening skills. These work well also when used as icebreakers and name games.
- Simple movement exercises, such as mirrors, robots, statues, etc., will increase spatial awareness and further develop concentration skills.
- Follow-the-leader and copying games are good for building confidence and introducing work in a non-threatening way.
- Mime work is excellent for introducing the concept of "pretending."
- Use any stimulus like nursery rhymes, fairytales, songs, stories, or pictures.

Remember that much of the drama work with this age range is a natural extension of their play.

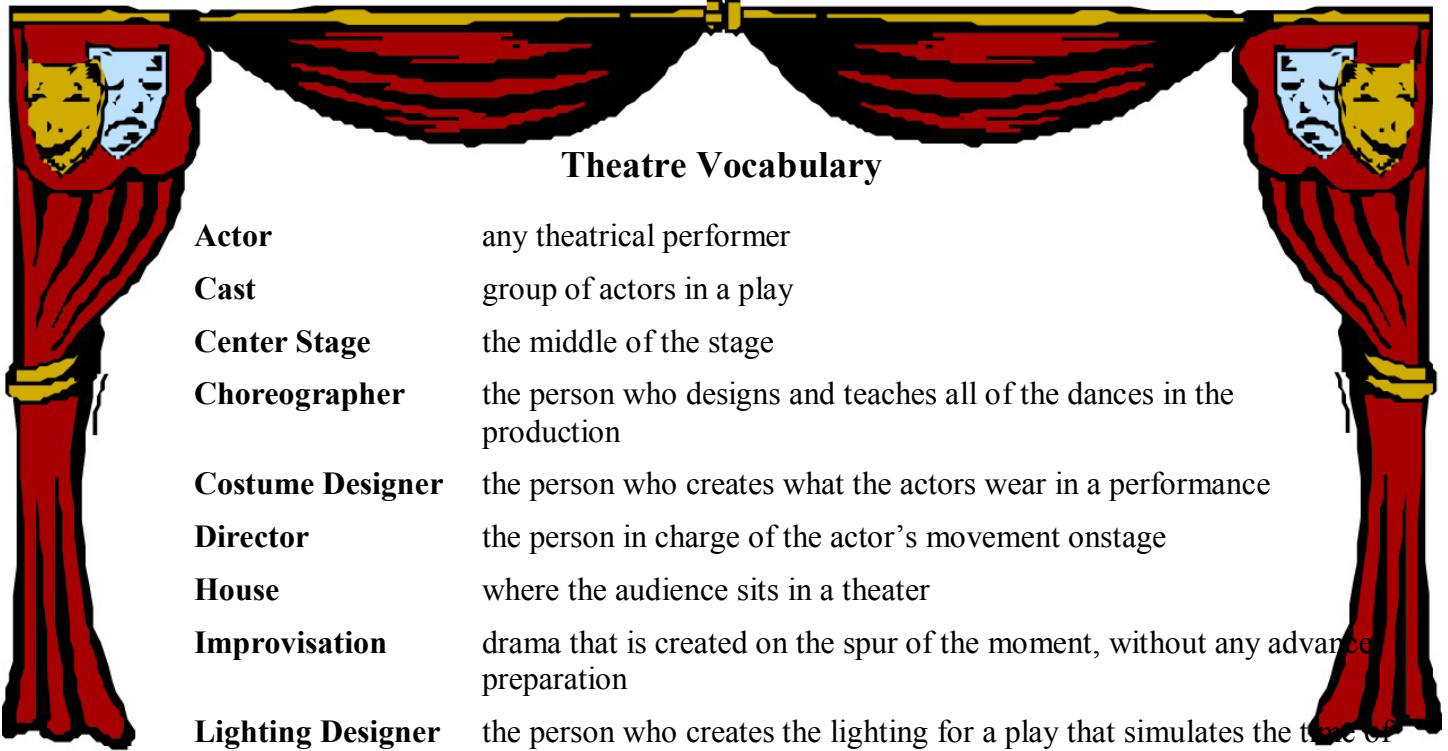
As children grow, they learn to listen and respond to instructions, and drama games contain this element as an implicit part of the activities. Children 5 or 6 years of age also respond well to familiar stories and are more willing to take an individual role in activities. This can be encouraged through drama and will develop the self-reliance and confidence required for their future learning. Much of the drama activities listed above are also used with this age group, but more complex instructions or activities may be added. For example:

- Include more balance physical games or more concentration games.
- Introduce more activities which require negotiation and working with others.
- Issue-based drama works well with older children, using dilemmas and problems which they can relate to.
- Implement the use of role-playing as a means of exploring new ideas, feelings, and situations.

As a teacher, the key is finding the correct method that works best for your classroom. Some methods include:

- **Games** are used to establish trust, build confidence, and to establish rules. They are useful for breaking the ice, are enjoyable, fun and enable a group to get to know each other.
- **Hot Seating** is interviewing a character or role-player who remains "in character". This encourages insights into characters and roles, highlighting motivation and personality, and reflective awareness of human behavior.
- **Small Group Play-Making/Improvisation:** Small groups plan, prepare and present improvisation as a means of expressing understanding of a situation, idea or experience. Requires excellent negotiating skills, sequencing ideas, selecting content, exploring characterization, devising dialogue and events, etc.
- **Mimed Activity** emphasizes movement, actions and physical responses rather than dialogue. This activity encourages participants to select movements to match the action and to use appropriate gestures and body language as well as increase spatial awareness and understanding of physical expression.

For more information or ideas on using drama in the classroom, check out www.artsonthemove.co.uk
Wendy Cruikshank is a resource teacher at Jerry Potts Elementary in Calgary, Alberta. This article was originally published in the January/February 2001 issue of Instructor.



Theatre Vocabulary

Actor	any theatrical performer
Cast	group of actors in a play
Center Stage	the middle of the stage
Choreographer	the person who designs and teaches all of the dances in the production
Costume Designer	the person who creates what the actors wear in a performance
Director	the person in charge of the actor's movement onstage
House	where the audience sits in a theater
Improvisation	drama that is created on the spur of the moment, without any advance preparation
Lighting Designer	the person who creates the lighting for a play that simulates the time of day and location
Mime	an actor who performs without speaking
Onstage	a part of the stage that is visible to the audience
Offstage	a part of the stage that is not visible to the audience
Pantomime	a performance without speaking
Plot	a storyline
Projection	to speak loudly
Prop	an object used by an actor in a scene
Set	the background or scenery for a play
Set Designer	the person who creates the scenery
Sound Designer	the person who provides special effects such as thunder noises or bird chirping
Stage Crew	the people who, during a performance, are in charge of changing and setting up scenery
Stage Manager	the person who helps the director during rehearsals

Theatre/Drama Games

The Directing Game

One of the jobs of the director is giving the actors ideas for how to say their lines and how to move onstage. Pick one person to be the director. Everyone else makes up a short scene that includes a lot of action. (Ex: Two kids are having a picnic in a park when all of a sudden it begins to rain. The kids hurry to pick up their blanket, food, and picnic basket. Other kids in the park hurry to the shelter to get out of the rain. Another kid splashes in a puddle. To begin the scene, the director yells “action” and yells “cut” when the scene is completed. The director then assigns a direction such as “slow motion” and the actors do the scene again using this technique. Other directions may include fast forward, overdramatic, doing the chicken dance, walking through Jell-O, laughing hysterically, on one foot, underwater, or backwards.

Tongue Twisters

Actors use tongue twisters to prepare for speaking in front of an audience. As you get better at them, try saying them faster and faster.

- Peter Piper, the pickled pepper picker, picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- A peck of pickled peppers did Peter Piper, the pickled pepper picker, pick.
- A knapsack strap, the strap of a knapsack.
- The big black bug bit the big brown bear and the big brown bear bled blood.

Number Game

Listening is an important skill for actors. They must hear what the other actors are saying in order to respond naturally and they must listen to their director. For the number game, everyone stands in a circle and counts off, remember their number. The last person always begins, so if there are six people, number six begins by saying someone else’s number (four, for example). Number four then calls out someone else’s number (two, for example). Number two calls out another number and so on. When you hear your number, say someone else’s number. It sounds fairly easy, but here are the rules: 1) No pausing. As soon as you hear your number, say another number. If you wait too long, you’re out. 2) Don’t say your own number. If you do, you’re out. 3) Don’t say a number that nobody has. 4) When you’re out, you go to the last place in the circle, and become the last number. Everyone moves up one number. The game gets tricky because everyone has to remember their new number and can’t say their own new number.

Body Sculptures

Acting isn’t just about memorizing lines. Actors have to express themselves with their bodies as well. Try this fun exercise with the children. Have the children evolve into frozen sculptures by calling out ideas: 1) Things you would find in a castle, 2) Things you would find in a classroom; 3) Things you would find at a movie theatre, etc. You can create your own lists. Encourage the children to explore their imaginations. For example, don’t just pretend to be the teacher in a classroom—maybe you are a crumpled piece of paper. Use your bodies to create a frozen object.

Family Portraits

A picture tells a lot about a character—the way she stands, the expression on her face, the way she looks at others, etc. In each group, choose one person to be the photographer. Everyone else in this group gets together and poses like they’re having their picture taken. The first picture should look like a nice family portrait. Once you are in your family portrait position, the photographer calls out a kind of family such as “sick family” and counts to three, allowing the posing players to change their position. Other family types might include “sleepy family”, “goofy family”, “dancing family”, etc. Remember, you are making a picture and pictures can’t move or make sound.

Storytelling Game

Set up a chair on one side of the stage, facing the audience. Choose someone to sit in the chair and be the narrator of a story. The person begins to tell a story that is made up as he/she goes along. The other players must act out the story as it is told including sound effects. As the narrator adds characters, a player should immediately jump in and become that character.

One Word Story

Sit in a circle. Start telling a story, one word at a time per person, going around the circle. Try not to pause. There are no wrong answers in this game. Just say the first word that pops into your head and see if the story makes sense. Continue the story until it comes to an end.

Pantomime

Mimes are actors who do not use words or sounds when they act. They rely on their gestures and expressions to show their feelings and let the audience know what they are doing. Try acting out the following pantomime scenes alone or with a group: tug-of-war game, volleyball game, baking a cake, cleaning a kitchen, walking a dog, etc.

Paper Plate Masks

Supplies Needed: paper plates, colored markers, scissors, yarn, glue, decorating supplies such as feathers, buttons, sequins, etc. Using the plate as your mask, cut out eyeholes and decorate using markers, sequins, feathers, etc. Cut a slit on each side and insert pieces of yarn so that the mask can be tied at the back of your head. Now you're ready to perform. All you need to do is decide on who, what, and where.

Sound Effects

Most theatrical sounds can be made by using your voice, hands, and/or body. Have one player call out a sound effect and the other players must make the sound using their voice, hands or body. Suggestions for sound effects include frog, galloping horse, rain, thunder, doorbell, snoring, popcorn popping, train, birds singing, etc.

Mirror Exercise

Pair up actors. One actor is the mirror and must copy everything the other actor does.

Shrinking Box

Actors pantomime that they are in a very large box. Show audience all the sides. Then the box gets smaller. Show the audience how small it is getting. Then they must figure out a way to escape. The actor must do a good job showing the audience how they have escaped so they can correctly guess how.

Group Stop

Everyone quietly mills about the room. One person will elect to freeze in position unexpectedly. As soon as one notices that someone else has frozen in position they freeze as well. So the effect of one person freezing causes everyone to freeze. Once everyone is still the group starts milling around again. The goal is to see how quickly the group can freeze in position.

Theatre in the Classroom Resources



101 More Drama Games for Children by Paul Rooyackers

Drama and Music: Creative Activities for Young Children by Janet Rubin and Margaret Marion

Drama with Children by Geraldine Brain Siks

Easy-to-Read Folk and Fairy Tale Plays (Grade 1-3) by Carol Pugliano and Carolyn Croll

Great Scenes for Young Actors from the Stage by Craig Slight and Jack Sharrar

Improvisation for the Theater by Viola Spolin

Kids Take the Stage by Lenka Peterson

Little Plays for Little People: Theatre, Games and Activities by Chari Greenberg

Make-up, Costumes and Masks by Bruun Rasmussen and Grete Peterson

Making Make-Believe: Fun Props, Costumes and Creative Play Ideas by Maryann Kohl

Multicultural Plays for Children (Grades 4-6) by Pamela Gerke

Multicultural Plays for Children (Grades K-3) by Pamela Gerke

On Stage by Lisa Bany-Winters

Plays Around the Year (Grades 1-3) by Liz Schafer

Plays Children Love: A Treasury of Contemporary and Classic Plays for Children by Coleman A. Jennings

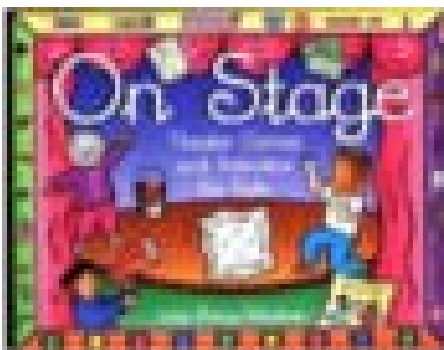
Plays from Famous Stories and Fairy Tales by Adele Thane

Teaching with a Purpose: Using Child Drama with Younger Children by Phyllis Lutley

The Art of Storytelling by Daryl Bellingham

The Wonderful World of Theatre by J. B. Priestly

Theater Games for Rehearsal by Viola Spolin



Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook by Viola Spolin

Theatre for Young Audiences by Coleman A. Jennings

Theatre Games for Young Performers: Improvisation and Exercises for Developing Acting Skills by Maria Novelly

Theatre Magic: Behind the Scenes at a Children's Theater by Cheryl Walsh Bellville

Wings to Flying: Bringing Theatre Arts to Students with Special Needs by Sally Dorothy Bailey