



TEACHER'S GUIDE

2009-2010 season
sponsored by **Siciliano** INC

The Little Engine that Could

Monday, February 22, 2010
10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

SANGAMON AUDITORIUM 



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Dear Educator,

Welcome to *Class Acts* at Sangamon Auditorium, UIS! We hope this guide will help you expand on concepts from this particular performance and incorporate them into your classroom teaching, both before and after the performance.

Before arriving at the Auditorium, you can prepare your students by helping them understand the story or by sharing basic information about the performing art form. Preparation also includes learning about theater etiquette. (See page 2-3 for Sangamon Auditorium's behavior guidelines.)

After the performance we strongly encourage you to talk to your students about their experience. Did they like the performance? What did they learn? How was the performance different than what they expected? We want students to think of the arts as an integral part of their lives, not just a one-time isolated event. We hope the information and activity ideas included in this guide will help your students gain a deeper understanding of the performance they see.

We look forward to seeing you! If you have any questions about these materials, please feel free to contact me at 217.206.8286 or Shank.Carlyn@uis.edu.

Carly Shank
Director of Audience Development



Youth programming in the *Class Acts* series and in conjunction with other Sangamon Auditorium events is supported in part by the Helen Hamilton Performing Arts Endowment for Youth Fund, gifts from Elizabeth and Robert Staley, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.



Theater Etiquette

Please use this information to help prepare your students for attending a theater performance. For many, this may be their first experience with live theater. By reviewing the guidelines with your students before arriving at the auditorium, we can help make sure everyone has an enjoyable experience. Please note that students whose behavior is disruptive to others will be asked to leave the auditorium.

Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. Therefore, theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

Sangamon Auditorium Guidelines:

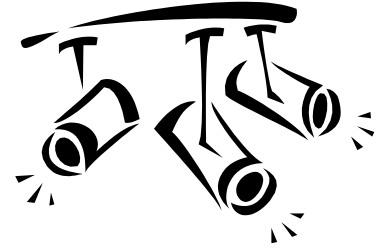
- **Turn off and put away cell phones, iPods, electronic games, beeping watches, or anything else that can light up or make noise** – These can be very distracting to the performers and your fellow audience members.
- **Do not eat, drink, or chew gum in the auditorium** – Even the quietest chewers and slurpers make a great deal of noise in the auditorium! The noise is very distracting to the performers and to the other people around you. Also, even if you are very careful, food and drinks can sometimes make a mess in the auditorium. We try to keep the auditorium as clean as possible so that it will be just as nice for the next audience.
- **Never throw anything in the auditorium** – This is distracting and dangerous for the performers and people in the audience.
- **Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you**
- **Use the restroom before the performance begins** – As soon as your class arrives and is seated in the auditorium, your teacher can arrange visits to the restroom before the performance begins. The ushers will help you find the closest restroom. Of course, if you *must* use the restroom during the performance, please be as quiet as possible about leaving your seat. Once you get to the aisle, an usher will help you find the way.
- **Please do not wear a hat inside the auditorium** – It is difficult for the people behind you to see the stage if you're wearing a hat.
- **Do not take pictures during the performance** – The flashes can be distracting to performers, and it is against the law to take pictures or recordings of many performances.
- **Refrain from talking, whispering, singing along, or tapping in time to the music during the performance** – Remember that live performers can see and hear you from the stage. It is very distracting to the performers and the other audience members if you talk during the performance. After all, the audience came to hear the professionals perform, not you! Save your singing for the ride home.



How to be a good audience member:

- **Ask the ushers if you need help with anything** – The people who wear red coats are volunteer ushers, and they want to make sure everyone is able to enjoy the performance. They will guide you to your seat, and they can help you find a restroom. In any emergency situation, the ushers will help guide your class to safety. Please follow the instructions of the ushers at all times. There may be as many as 1700 people coming to see the performance. The ushers have a lot of work to do to be sure that everyone gets into the auditorium safely and has a seat.

- **When the lights begin to dim, the performance is beginning** – This tells the audience to stop conversations, get settled in their seats, and focus their attention on the stage. A person will come out and make an announcement before the performance begins. Pay close attention to the announcement because it might include special instructions that you will need to remember.



- **Remember that the overture is part of the performance** – If the performance has music in it, there might be an opening piece of music called an overture before any actors appear on stage. Give this piece of music the same respect you give the performers by being silent and attentive while the overture is played.
- **It's ok to react to the performance** – Spontaneous laughter, applause, and gasps of surprise are welcome as part of the special connection between the performers and the audience during a live show. However, shouts, loud comments, and other inappropriate noises are rude and distracting to the actors and your fellow audience members.
- **Clap at the appropriate times** – If you are enjoying the performance, you can let the performers know by clapping for them. During a play or musical, you can clap between scenes (during a blackout) or after songs. During a music concert or dance performance you can clap after each song or piece is performed. In a jazz music concert it is ok to clap in the middle of a song when a musician has finished a solo. If a music ensemble plays a piece with several sections, called movements, the audience should only clap at the very end of all the movements.
- **The performers will bow when the performance ends** – This is called a curtain call. You should applaud to thank the performers for their hard work, but you should not move around or begin to leave the auditorium until the curtain call is over and the lights become brighter. If you really enjoyed the performance, you are welcome to give a standing ovation while you applaud. This is reserved for performances you feel are *truly outstanding!*
- **Respect the hard work of the performers** – You may not enjoy every performance you see, but I hope you will recognize that each performance requires a tremendous amount of dedication on the part of the performers and those who work backstage. It is polite to keep any negative comments to yourself until you have left the building.



Curriculum Connections

The Illinois State Board of Education identifies thirty State Goals in seven areas as required learning targets for elementary and secondary students and schools.

The Illinois Learning Standards in the Fine Arts (State Goals 25-27) address the language of the fine arts (visual arts, music, drama, and dance), sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive qualities and how the arts are similar, different, or related to each other. Students learn about production and performance in the arts and the role of the arts in civilization. When students study the arts they become informed audience members and informed consumers of the popular culture including electronic media. The standards in fine arts define a comprehensive arts education and reflect a commitment to a quality education for every Illinois school child.

Attendance at a *Class Acts* performance directly relates to the achievement of the following Illinois State Goals in the Fine Arts:

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
25A	Understand the sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive qualities of the arts.
25B	Understand the similarities, distinctions, and connections in and among the arts.
27A	Analyze how the arts function in history, society, and everyday life.
27B	Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society, and everyday life.

The concepts in this particular performance can also be expanded to relate to the following additional state goals:

Literature

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
1C	Comprehend a broad range of reading materials.
2A	Understand how literary elements and techniques are used to convey meaning.
4A	Listen effectively in formal and informal situations.
5B	Analyze and evaluate information acquired from various sources.

Social/Emotional Learning

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
SEL 1B	Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
SEL 2A	Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
SEL 2B	Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.



Discussion Questions & Activities

Below are some ideas for general questions and activities that can relate to any *Class Acts* performance. The following pages contain additional information and activity suggestions from the performance company.

Before the Show

1. Discuss the different types of performing arts (music, dance, theater) and different types of theater performances (plays, musicals). Have you experienced a live theater performance before? What did you see? What was it like?
2. How is live theater different than other types of entertainment like movies and TV?
You are sharing a one-time experience with other people.
The performance will never be exactly the same again.
3. Familiarize your students with the following theater terms
For younger students – box office, lobby, stage, spotlights, costumes, props, makeup, scenery, actor, director, program, plot
For older students – playwright, lyricist, composer, producer, proscenium arch, overture
4. If the show is based on a book, read the story with your class. If the performance is a presentation of a cultural art form, such as a particular style of dance, help your students understand the basic elements of that art form.

After the Show

1. What did you like? What didn't you like? What did you learn? It's ok if you didn't like what you saw, but you should think about why you didn't like it or what you would have done differently. How was the performance different than what you expected?
2. SETS AND PROPS: Describe the sets. What props or decorations were used? Did it represent a specific place or time period? How were the sets and props moved on and off stage? What materials do you think were used to build the sets? Think of a simple scene your students will be familiar with, such as a classroom, and have them describe what would be needed for a basic set and props.
3. LIGHTING AND SOUND: How did the lighting help create a mood, season, time of day, etc? What sound effects were used?
4. COSTUMES: What would you need to know to design costumes for this show? (historical or cultural research, sewing techniques, any special effects such as quick changes) How does a costume help you understand a character?

5. MUSIC: Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? Did it help develop the plot? What type or style of music was used? How did the music affect your feelings?
6. DANCE: Describe the type of dancing you saw – How is it similar to or different than the types of dancing you do? What purposes did dance serve in this show (emotional expression, portray movements of animals, communicate an idea or message, etc).
7. Draw a picture of your favorite scene or character.
8. Create a diorama of the stage and sets.
9. Design your own program or advertisement for the performance.
10. Learn about theater critics and then write a review of the performance.
11. Write a letter to the author or one of the performers.
12. Make a list of all the people needed to create this production (director; choreographer; performers – actors, dancers, musicians; designers – sets, props, costumes, lights, sound; stagehands; ticket office staff; marketing staff; ushers; etc).



Write to Us!

We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to audonstage@uis.edu or through the mail to

Class Acts
Sangamon Auditorium, UIS
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397
Springfield, IL 62703-5407

We love sharing student work with our *Class Acts* sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.

CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE



OMAHA
theater
COMPANY

The Little Engine That Could

Dear Educators –

Thank you for choosing the Omaha Theater Company! In addition to presenting great shows, we strive to make the theatrical experience both meaningful and educational to the youth in our audience. This study guide has been created to help identify the themes and lessons from *The Little Engine That Could* and move them into your classroom where they can be further developed through discussions, activities and assignments. Please feel free to take the ideas we've suggested here and modify them to match your classroom's grade level and curriculum.

Sincerely,

Brian Guehring, Omaha Theater Company Education Director



Pre-Show Activities

The Book Vs. The Play

In-chair or out-of-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

Objective: To teach students the difference between a book and a stage musical.

Activity: Read *The Little Engine That Could*.

Discussion: What is a musical? How is a musical different from a book?

What can you do in a book that you can't do on stage?

Definition: A playwright is a person that writes the lines the actors say on stage.

Activity: Choose one page of the book. Closely examine the illustrations and discuss them. Then, ask for volunteers to act out that one page in front of the class. How do you think the playwright James Larson will turn the book into a play?

The Special Line

Out-of-chair activity • 2-4 minutes per student volunteer

Objective: Students will encourage each other by coming up with reasons for why they are special.

Transition: In *The Little Engine That Could*, each toy tried to convince the Freight Train that they are more special than the next – only to realize they are all equally as special. Each student in the classroom is also equally as special.

Activity: Lay a piece of rope or string on the floor to be The Special Line. Pick a volunteer from the class and have them stand a few feet away from the line. It is the job of the rest of the class to get the student to The Special Line. They will do this by saying nice things about the volunteer and recognizing the things that make that person special. For each nice thing, the volunteer can take one step forward until they reach The Special Line.

Take A Look Inside!

Page 1 – Pre-show activities and questions

Page 2 – A behind-the-scenes look at the show

Page 3 – Ideas for post-show activities

Page 4 – References and additional information

Behind the Scenes Spotlight on Choreography

An interview with *The Little Engine That Could* choreographer Sue Gillespie Booton

The Little Engine That Could

Adapted by James Larson
Based on the book by Watty Piper

Production Team

Director James Larson
Composer Stuart Kenny
Scenic Designer Carl Dumicich
Costume Designer Sherri Geerdes
Musical Director Kevin Smith
Choreographer Sue Gillespie Booton
Stage Manager Suzanne Withem

Explore the Job of a Choreographer

Creative Movement (Dance)

Out-of-chair activity •
5 minutes

Objective: Students will learn to identify rhythms unique to different styles of music.

Activity: Bring in different types of music. Have the students find their own space in the room. Play different types of music (reggae, classical, opera, pop, country) and different rhythms. Have the students use their imagination to create a dance movement to go along with that type of music. What does the music sound like? What type of dance does that remind you of?

What is a choreographer?

A choreographer is a person who makes up the dances in a musical and then teaches them to the actors.

How long have you been dancing?

I started taking ballet, tap and jazz lessons when I was four years old. Later, I took creative movement and musical theater. I loved dancing so much, I never quit. Even now that I'm a choreographer and dance teacher, I continue to learn and take dance classes.

What was your first choreography project?

I choreographed my first project when I was 17 years old. And, it was a real professional job! One of my drama and music teachers was a great mentor to me. He came to me one day and said, "Sue, have you ever thought about choreography?" I really hadn't, but I was open to the idea, so he directed me to a job choreographing show choir dances for kids in western Nebraska. I was really nervous, but I did it. I've been choreographing ever since.

How do you choreograph dances for the actors?

I first read the script, then I listen to the music. Next, I close my eyes and let my mind go free. Many times, I begin to see the movement right before me. Then, I write it down right away so I don't forget it. Sometimes a musical will feature dances that are known to a particular time period – such as the jitterbug, a minuet or a special kind of square dance. If I need to, I will do research on the internet to find out how those dances are performed, so I can learn them and teach them to the actors.

What is your favorite type of dance?

I have many favorite types of dance, but I have a special fondness for tap dance. I was trained as a ballet dancer, which was important. Ballet is the backbone of all dance, so I'm glad I started my training in the ballet world. When I starting seeing other people tap dance though, I wanted to join them. I'm actually a self-taught tap dancer who learned from watching others. I've been doing it ever since, and use a lot of tap in the shows that I choreograph.

How long did you rehearse *The Little Engine That Could*?

We rehearsed *The Little Engine That Could* for three weeks. The first two weeks, we worked in the studio learning the music, dances, and blocking. Blocking is the process of mapping out where the actors will go on stage during each scene. The third week, we worked on the main stage. Lights, sound effects and props were incorporated into the rehearsal, as well as costumes and makeup.

What else do you do for the Omaha Theater Company?

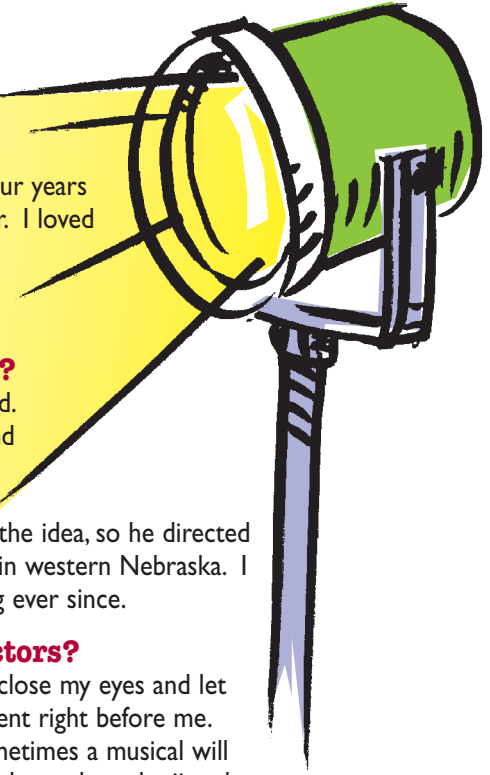
I've worked for the Omaha Theater Company for 13 years. In addition to being a choreographer, I'm also a performer and a teacher. I love being a teacher because I get to meet kids from all over the community!

Did you go to school to learn theater and dance?

I went to college and earned a Bachelors of Science in Communications. My best training for the theater came from the teachers that I've met as a dancer, as well as the directors and choreographers that I've been fortunate to work with all over the country. They are all accomplished professionals, and I try to remember the things they've taught me each time I start a new project.

What else do you like to do in your free time?

I like to spend time with my husband and children. We enjoy going to the park, swimming, and hanging out together. Outside of being an actor, I'm a regular mom just like your mom!



Post Show Activities

These activities are designed to help students further explore themes from the show through discussion, drama, art, and writing.

Expressive Faces

In-chair activity • 5-10 minutes

Objective: Students will use their imagination to pantomime and create different characters.

Transitions: Actors must use their faces to express how their characters are feeling. They practice and stretch their faces. Let's all practice using our actor faces to make lots of expressions!

Activity: The first thing that I need you to do is to reach up in the sky and pull down your magic box. My box is purple. What color is yours? Take your box and put it on the ground. Now reach into your pocket and pull out your key. Unlock your box. Put your key back into your pocket. Open your box. The first thing in our boxes is a set of magic strings. Reach into your box and pull out the first string. Stretch it out. Dangle it.

Now, reach into your box and pull out your magic glue. Put some on your string and place it on your forehead. (Repeat for all four sides of face). Once the four strings are on the face, play with different ways to pull the strings at the same time (all above your head, all to one side, all below, a big as you can make your face etc.) Take the strings off your face.

Extension: Now that we have the strings off, we need to get that glue off. Reach back into your magic box and pull out your magic washcloth and wash the glue off. But, oh no! Our magic washcloth has changed our faces into silly faces. Everyone show me your silly face. (Repeat for other faces: sad, happy, scary. Then, change your faces into different animal and character faces: teddy bear, doll, clown, train, etc.)

Now that we have our strings and glue back in our magic box, I need you to pick up your box and lightly toss it back up into the sky.

Acceptance

In-chair activity and out-of-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

Objective: Students will use their imaginations by saying "yes" to questions.

Transitions: The toys had to work together and be accepting of what everyone else said in order to get to the other side of the mountain.

Activity: The teacher will approach different groups of students and ask each of them three questions. To the first

Acceptance (continued)

two questions they must answer with "yes." To the last question, they can answer however they want to as long as it is school appropriate and not "I Don't Know." Finally the group has to pose as if they are a statue of this character! Show us with your body who you are!

Examples:

Is it true that you are a world famous Italian chef? (Yes.)
Is it true that you have a very special ingredient that you put in your pizza sauce? (Yes.) What is that special ingredient?

Is it true that you are a professional dancer? (Yes.)

Is it true that you were one of the back up dancers in the movie *Disney's High School Musical*? (Yes.)

My dance moves look like this (show example.) What do yours look like?

Hot Seating

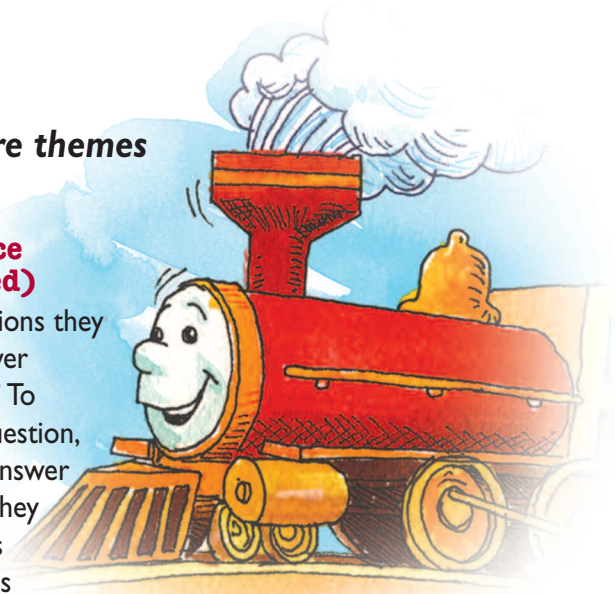
In-chair and out-of-chair activity • 10-20 minutes

Objective: Students will put themselves in the characters' shoes and imagine what they are thinking and feeling.

Warm Up: Have students begin walking around the room. After a moment of walking have the students imagine one of the characters from *The Little Engine That Could*. Have the students begin to walk around as the character. Continue to challenge them by asking them to better define their character through appropriate movements. After a moment of walking, ask the students to introduce themselves (in character) to other students.

Coaching: How does your character move? How does it speak? What does it think about the situation?

Activity: Bring five chairs to the front of the room and ask five volunteers to sit in the chairs as if they are one of the characters from the play. Have the audience ask them questions about how their character felt during moments of the play and why they reacted as they did.



Bibliography

Did you enjoy *The Little Engine That Could*? If you did, then you may want to check out these other great reading materials.

Please
feel free to
contact the
cast!

Letters may be
written to:

*The Little Engine That
Could* Cast

Omaha Theater Company
2001 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Emails may be sent to:
Michael Wilhelm at
michaelw@rosetheater.org

OMAHA
theater
COMPANY

Resources for Students and Teachers

Books

Other Books by Author Watty Piper

The Little Engine That Could Storybook Treasury

The Little Engine That Could ABC Time

The Little Engine That Could Helps Out

The Little Engine That Could and the Snowy, Blowy Christmas

Other Stories About Trains

Clickety Clack by Rob and Amy Spence

Freight Train by Donald Crews

I Knew You Could by Craig Dorfman

Down by the Station by Will Hillenbrand

I'm Taking a Trip on My Train by Shirley Neitel

Chugga-Chugga Choo-Choo by Kevin Lewis

Little Red Caboose by Steve Metzger

This Train by Paul Collicutt

Engine, Engine Number Nine by Stephanie Calmenson



Web Sites Of Interest

For information about trains and locomotives like the Little Engine, visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locomotive>.

Some of the characters in *The Little Engine That Could* are dolls. For information on the history of dolls, visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doll>.

For information about Watty Piper and the history of the *Little Engine* story, visit <http://tigger.uic.edu/~plotnick/littleng.htm>

View a five-day lesson plan about reading and train stories and reading. Visit http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/little_engine_that_could.html

Omaha Theater Company Workshops

Pre-show Acting Workshops (For Pre-K – 4th Grade)

This one-hour interactive workshop features creative drama activities, exploration of our basic acting tools (body, voice and imagination), a review of basic theater etiquette and short scene development.

Intro to Theater Workshops (For 2nd – 6th Grade)

This hands-on workshop will introduce students to acting, design, directing and playwrighting. Students will also explore the set, costumes and make-up designs from the show.

Intro to Musical Theater Workshops (For 4th – 12th Grade)

Students will learn the basics of singing, acting and musical theater dancing in this interactive workshop.

To book a workshop, please contact James Larson, Omaha Theater Company Artistic Director, at (402) 502-4618 or jamesl@rosetheater.org. For more information about the workshops, contact Carla Podraza, Omaha Theater Company Tour Coordinator at (402) 502-4626 or carlap@rosetheater.org.

