There’s a Mouse in My House

BY CARRIE COSTELLO
ADAPTED FROM THE BOOK BY SHEREE FITCH
DIRECTED BY PABLO FELICES-LUNA
PRODUCED BY CAROUSEL PLAYERS
LIVE THEATRE IS AN ACTIVE EXPERIENCE!

Ground Rules:
As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Please review the following theatre rules with your students prior to your LKTyp visit.

• Food, drinks, candy and gum are not permitted in the theatre.
• LKTyp is a nut-free zone. Many children have severe life-threatening allergies; NO PEANUTS or NUT products may be brought to our theatre.
• No electronic devices are permitted in the theatre because they affect our sound system. Photography, audio and video recording during a performance is prohibited by the Canadian Theatre Agreement.
• Students are not permitted to leave the theatre unless they are accompanied by an adult.

Theatre is a two-way exchange:
Actors are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the theatre. However, please be considerate audience members. Talking, whispering and excessive movement during a live performance is distracting for the actors, and disruptive for other audience members.

Enhance your visit by encouraging your students to look at different aspects of the production. Before the show, identify tasks for your class. Have one group of students looking at the set, another listening for the music and sound effects, a third watching the lighting and a fourth, the costumes. Compare notes after the show about what they observed. Your students will be more informed and they’ll be surprised by how much they noticed. Ask them to be prepared with one question for the actors after the show. Brainstorm with them about possible topics to get the most out of the experience!

SEASON PARTNER

EDUCATION PARTNERS

Additional support for our Study Guides is generously provided by the J.P. Bickell Foundation.
The need to tell one's story comes from a need to be remembered; a need to be preserved. For Sherry, her desire to tell her story is driven by an actual need to survive. History is the recording of events and people from the past. The people and events are kept “alive” by the recounting of their stories. Their experiences are not forgotten and therefore remain in our consciousness.

In this study guide you will find discussion questions, as well as character creation, improvisation and visual arts exercises that will explore perseverance, empathy, kindness and caring.

Students will be challenged to investigate and identify important people and events that have had a significant impact on their lives. In addition, the study guide will elaborate on formal elements of the play, such as: storytelling, gesture and expression, and audience participation. On page 8 you will find a play review worksheet inspired by an article Jon Kaplan has contributed to our study guides for more senior grades. Using Mr. Kaplan’s approach to play reviewing, we have created this sheet for younger students to help them begin thinking about plays in a critical and analytical way.

This year at LKYP we are exploring the theme of True Character. The characters in the play exhibit qualities of their character in several ways; Sherry the mouse is a clever story teller and engages Dinah and Aaron by getting them to participate in her stories, Aaron takes responsibility for his family and protects them from what he thinks is a danger. Dinah opens Aaron’s mind and helps him see that Sherry and Mother Mouse are kind and interesting creatures and that Aaron and her mother have nothing to fear.

There’s a Mouse in My House provides students with an opportunity to explore the complexities of relationships by demonstrating skills in negotiating, cooperating, and living with others.

Strands and Curriculum Connections

Curriculum Connections: Relationships: Rules and Responsibilities, Music, Social Studies

Character Development Connections: Empathy, Fairness, Perseverance, Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility

In addition to Drama and Language Arts, There’s a Mouse in My House directly relates to student development in the areas of:


Social Studies: Relationships, Rules and Responsibilities.

The Arts: Drama - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing, Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts.
Sherry—short for Scheherazade—is a young mouse who lives with her mother in the Saunders' house. A charming, quick-witted creature, Sherry is charged with the task of asking the Saunders for permission to live in their home, but Aaron—who seems to believe his mother’s assertion that all mice are unsavory characters—immediately opposes Sherry and demands that she and her mother leave. His sister Dinah, however, proves more empathetic and demands they listen to Sherry’s life story, and so the negotiations commence. As Sherry narrates her life’s tale, Aaron and Dinah become increasingly sympathetic and finally, as her tale ends, she and the Saunders siblings have become fast friends. Although a mere mouse, Sherry demonstrates her capacity for kindness and caring and motivates the other two to do the same. Together, they learn the value of open-mindedness, patience and forbearance and gain the ability to peer into another’s life simply by listening.

**GLOSSARY**

- **Story telling**: the conveying of events in words, images, or sounds through improvisation.
- **Narrative**: the spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening.
- **Narrative point of view**: the perspective of the character from whom the story is being told.
- **Doubling**: the practice of using one actor to play two or more roles.
- **Audience participation**: audience engagement in the form of call answer or repeat after me.
- **Gestures**: physical movement that expresses meaning.
- **Dilemma**: a situation in which a choice has to be made between two equally undesirable alternatives.
- **Sequence**: succession, coming after or next.
- **Charter**: a nation’s constitutional bill of rights that guarantees each citizen protection from the policies and actions of all levels of government.
UNITS OF STUDY—ALL GRADES

The discussion questions and the activities follow a progression; the questions and activities become more advanced and it is up to the teacher to decide how far to take the lesson with their students.

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS—ALL GRADES

• What makes a good story?
• What are some of students’ favorite stories?
• What stories do students know of that have animals in them?
• Why are many children’s stories based on animals?
• How does a story change based on who the storyteller is?
• How does the telling of a story keep a person “alive”?

PRE-SHOW UNIT—ALL GRADES

Curriculum Expectations

By participating in the following activities students will:
• adopt a role and maintain focus in role; communicate character traits and character choices through body language/movement and gestures; sustain belief in character, vary voice.
• express their thoughts and share experiences.
• develop empathy for others, and acknowledge and respond to each other’s feelings.
• describe how they follow the rules about respecting the rights and property of other people and about using the shared environment responsibly.

Warm up activity

Directions:
• With the class, brainstorm a list of toys they might find in their homes and in the classroom and record them on chart paper.
• Ask students to choose one toy from the list.
• Ask students to move around the room as if they were that toy. (How would they move? Do they have feet or paws or wheels? Do they move on all fours? Or do they stand on two feet? Are they a truck or a doll? Are they made of plastic or are they stuffed? How does that change how they move?) Pick a few other toys from the list and repeat.
• Ask students: what kind of sounds would their toy make? What kind of voice would they have? (A loud voice? A quiet voice? A high pitched voice? A low rough voice?)
• Once the students have depicted several toys vocally and physically, ask students to imagine what the toys might want to do when no one is looking. (For example, would they want to go to sleep in the comfy bed? Would they want to try on clothes? Would they want to open the blinds?)
Activity #1

Directions:
- Ask students to become one toy of their choosing.
- Divide the class into two groups and have students from group one assist as audience members.
- Have students from group two create a frozen picture (tableau) of all of the toys sitting on the shelf or in the closet.
- Ask group one to respond to the stage picture in front of them. What do they see? Do the toys look like they are frozen in the closet? What kind of positions might the toys be in if they are stuffed in the closet or on the shelf? Would they be piled on top of each other or face down? Or neatly sitting in a row?
- Ask the students from group one to choose one thing from the list that the toys might want to do (or a goal they want the toy to achieve) when no one is looking.
- Have students from group two create a second tableau of the toys performing an action suggested by group one.
- Ask group one what they see in the stage picture. Do the toys look like they are on their way to do something or to get something they want? How would the toys look if frozen in motion? How do they focus to maintain their balance?
- Have the students from group two create a third tableau of the toys doing the thing they want to do when no one is looking.
- Ask group one what they observed? Did all of the toys freeze? Did any of the toys lose their balance? Did any of the toys speak or laugh? Did that break the illusion?
- Have students from group two be the audience while group one repeats the exercise.
- What kinds of characters appear in the fairytales?

Culminating Exercise

Directions:
- You will play the parent/teacher and come into the bedroom or classroom to clean up.
- Ask the class to choose another action from the list of what the toys might want to do when no one is looking.
- Ask group one to perform with group two as the audience.
- The students “as toys” and working as a group, will set out to achieve a goal when no one is looking (students should agree on this goal prior to starting the activity). When the adult enters the room or playing space the toys will freeze in one of the three tableaux. The toys can resume trying to achieve their goal when the adult turns his/her back to them but must freeze as soon as they are visible to the adult.
- Ask group two some observational questions. Was it fun to watch the toys try and achieve their goal without getting caught? How did the toys maintain their balance and concentration when the teacher/parent entered unexpectedly?
- What kind of stories came to mind?
- Have students from group one be the audience while group two repeats the exercise.

Extension Exercise

Directions:
- Have each student come up with a line of dialogue for their toy character in each of the three tableaux creating a scene or the beginnings of a story.
POST-SHOW QUESTIONS—ALL GRADES

• Which characters were the most fun to watch? Why?
• What did students like about the play? What didn’t they like about the play?
• Whose story is being told?
• Who is Sherry? What kind of animal is Sherry?
• Sherry’s full name is Scheherazade. Who is Scheherazade?
• How is Scheherazade’s story relevant to the play?
• How would the story change if it were told by one of the other characters? (Aaron? Dinah? Mouse Mother? Mom?)
• What makes a family?
• Who is related to Sherry?
• What happened to Sherry’s father and Uncles?
• How do students feel about what happened to them?
• Where is Dinah and Aaron’s father?
• How does Aaron feel about his missing father?
**POST-SHOW UNIT GRADES JK—4**

**Curriculum Expectations**

By participating in the following activities students will:

- identify people with whom they have significant relationships, and the rules and responsibilities associated with people, places, and events in their lives and communities
- express personal responses and make connections to characters, themes, and issues presented in their own and others’ stories

**Teacher prompts:**

“Compared to all of the drama experiences we have had, in what ways was this experience unique?” “Describe a moment in the activity where you learned something new about your classmates.” “Which student’s situation did you empathize with?”

**Activity #1**

**Directions:**

- Create flash cards with five plot points from the play and arrange them in random order on the board.
- Ask the students to rearrange them in the correct order.
- Ask each student to identify five plot points in the story of their own life.
- Using markers, crayons or pencil crayons, have the students draw five pictures depicting each plot point.
- Once the students have completed the drawings have the students map in sequence each event in the story of their life.

**Culminating Activity**

**Directions:**

- Have each student present their life story.

**Extension Activity**

**Directions:**

- Pick one student’s story plot points.
- Divide the class into 5 separate groups.
- Assign each group one of the five plot points.
- Ask students create a tableau of the plot point.
- Ask each group to present their tableaux in the proper sequence.

You can choose to share this information with the class or give them a library research assignment.

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**REVIEWS A PLAY**

There’s a Mouse in My House Theatre Review

“Theatre is, for me, an art form that tells me something about myself or gets me thinking about the world in which I live.” - Jon Kaplan

**A summary of Jon Kaplan’s guidelines for student reviewers**

- First encourage students to experience the play emotionally. Ask them “How did it make you feel?”
- Begin to analyze those feelings using the review questions provided.
- Bring to students’ attention how much time and effort went into building the show. Weeks, months, maybe even years.
- Ask them to consider the set, lights, costumes and performances.

Jon Kaplan is senior theatre writer at NOW Magazine in Toronto, where he has worked for the past 28 years.

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**Scheherazade:**

Scheherazade was a Persian Queen who convinced the King of Persia to spare her life by entertaining him with one story a night for 1001 nights. During these one thousand and one nights the King fell in love with Scheherazade and together they had three sons.
PLAY REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

The title of the play was ________________________________

The names of the characters in the play were ________________________________

My favorite character was ____________________________ because she/he ____________________________

If I were an actor in the play I would play the role of ____________________________

I liked it when ________________________________

My favorite part was ________________________________

I was surprised when ________________________________

The actors used movement and body gestures to show ________________________________

I felt bad for Sherry when ________________________________

I was proud of Sherry when ________________________________

The story of the play is like ________________________________

I experienced the same thing as Aaron and Dinah in my own life when ________________________________
### RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</td>
<td>demonstrates a limited understanding of the use of tableau to explore a range of perspectives</td>
<td>demonstrates some understanding of the use of tableau to explore a range of perspectives</td>
<td>demonstrates good understanding of the use of tableau to explore a range of perspectives</td>
<td>demonstrates a solid and confident understanding of the use of tableau to explore a range of perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMITMENT TO PHYSICALITY</td>
<td>adopts the attitudes and point of view of the character with limited ability</td>
<td>adopts the attitudes and point of view of the character with some ability</td>
<td>adopts the attitudes and point of view of the character with good ability</td>
<td>adopts the attitudes and point of view of the character with solid and confident ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Uses drama forms to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a limited way</td>
<td>Uses drama forms to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a satisfactory way</td>
<td>Uses drama forms to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas in an appropriate way</td>
<td>Uses drama forms to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a deep way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICAL ANALYSIS and APPRECIATION</td>
<td>Reflects on personal learning in character to a limited degree</td>
<td>Reflects on personal learning in character to some degree</td>
<td>Reflects on personal learning in character to a significant degree</td>
<td>Reflects on personal learning in character to a strong degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### RESOURCES


*LKTYP would like to acknowledge and thank Pat McCarthy for her expertise and advice on this season's study guides.*
Arts Impact: Making a difference in the lives of students

LKYP is proud to have Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life as lead sponsors for its Arts Impact program, which provides opportunities for schools in low-income areas of Toronto to participate in quality arts education. Arts Impact’s goal is to deepen students’ understanding of theatre, allowing them to be inspired by the material presented on stage and to think in ways that challenge their own perceptions.

Connections: Addressing the pattern of poverty

There is empirical evidence that children who live in poverty are at greater risk of dropping out of school. Studies have also proven that exposure to the arts improves scholastic ability and attendance. Thanks to the generosity of CIBC World Markets Children’s Foundation, LKYP can offer special subsidized tickets to qualifying schools.
Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People
(formerly Young Peoples Theatre) is the largest Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) company in Canada and a significant institution in the Canadian professional theatre community. Over our 44-year history we have produced many of the most important works that now form the canon of plays for young audiences in this country. At the heart of founder Susan Rubes’ idea for Young Peoples Theatre (YPT) was a belief that children deserve a theatre of their own – with resources and standards no lesser than those for adults. She believed – as we do today – that young people deserve good theatre because theatre is good for young people.

Through the communal experience of the theatre we create for them, children can receive indications of what is important, funny, trivial; positive, negative, wrong, right, rightish, wrongish; frightening, reassuring, empowering, unavoidable; familiar, new, eternal …. We strongly believe that even through the most playful of plays, we are speaking powerfully to children about the community and the world in which they live.

Therefore, at the centre of the artistic policy of LKYP is a desire to have a positive and lasting impact on the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young people.

We want children to be imprinted with experiences that will increase their access to the world, in order for them to grow into the unique and wonderful people they were born to be. To do this, our programming is drawn from the world classics of children’s stories, from contemporary works, from the new plays we develop, and from productions showcasing the most innovative and accomplished theatre for young audiences by other Canadian and international theatre companies.

At LKYP, because we are serious about child development through theatre art, children can experience our work as either audience members or theatre creators. We extend the learning opportunities of our professional productions through our substantial Education & Participation Department. The Department’s services for teachers and students helps connect curriculum objectives and learning outcomes to the content of our professional productions; its Community Participation projects link our theatre skill with the educational aspirations of partners who are dedicated to the growth of young people; our interest-based Drama School offers young people the chance to engage deeply in the excitement of theatre art; and our Community Volunteer programme offers everyone who wants it, the opportunity to participate in the mission of LKYP.

LKYP is not only a professional theatre for young audiences but a vital community-based centre of arts education.