

PLAY GUIDE



Afternoon of the Elves

By Y York. From the Newbery Honor Book by Janet Taylor Lisle.

Presented on the LCT Learning Stage: March 18 - March 25, 2018



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Dear Educator -

Lexington Children's Theatre is proud to be producing our 79th 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 Jeremy Kisling, our Associate Artistic Director in Charge of Education, at jkisling@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

Hillary Lenox is one of the coolest kids in the 4th grade, especially now that she's friends with Jane and Alison. Jane and Alison match their dresses, their jackets, and even their hair – and they want Hillary to match them, too! When Jane, Alison, and Hillary are walking home from school one day, they're stopped by Sara Kate Connolly, Hillary's neighbor, who is an outcast in their school. Sara Kate invites Hillary over to her backyard after school, because elves have built a village there – or so she says.

When Hillary goes to Sara Kate's house, she sees the elf village. She and Sara Kate play in the world of the elves until a mysterious figure appears in Sara Kate's window. Sara Kate then makes Hillary go home. Hillary writes about the elves in her diary as soon as she gets home. When Jane and Alison come over that weekend, Hillary notices that her diary has gone missing. Jane and Alison blame Sara Kate, since she has a reputation for stealing. Sara Kate then comes to invite Hillary over to see the improvements in the village of elves, but since Sara Kate won't allow Jane and Allison to come along, Hillary stays behind. Hillary eventually goes over to Sara Kate's to look for her diary, which causes an argument between Hillary and Sara Kate. They quickly make up when Hillary realizes the diary is not in Sara Kate's backyard. Sara Kate notices the time of day and realizes that she has to go to the bank and the supermarket – tasks usually reserved for adults. She invites Hillary along. When Hillary returns home late with no explanation of where she's been, her parents feel that Sara Kate has become a bad influence on Hillary. Against her parents' wishes, Hillary returns to Sara Kate's house, where she sees Sara Kate curled up with her mother, who is very ill. Sara Kate kicks Hillary out.

A week later, Hillary finds her diary in her father's garden shed and realizes that she needs to apologize to Sara Kate. When she arrives in Sara Kate's backyard, Sara Kate reveals that because her mother is so sick, Sara Kate can't leave her, and she asks Hillary for help getting food. When Hillary brings the groceries, Sara Kate tells her that she does all of the adult things because if she doesn't, her mother will be taken away. As Sara Kate and Hillary talk, Mrs. Lenox comes over and sees the state the Connolly house is in. Sara Kate tries to deflect her, but Mrs. Lenox finds Mrs. Connolly sick in her bed and realizes how serious the situation is.

Mrs. Lenox gets medical care for Mrs. Connolly, and Hillary stays home from school to recover from what she saw. After learning that Sara Kate has gone to live with her father, Hillary finds a less well-kept area in her garden and moves the elf village there.

Frozen Pictures

Have students stand in their own space around the room. On the teacher's signal, students shape their bodies into a frozen picture – or tableau – of the following characteristics; someone who is: happy, sad, wealthy, poor, has a secret, manipulates others into doing what they want, or has lost something precious to them. Select a few students to walk around the room and observe the other frozen pictures; what have their classmates done to clearly show the characterization? How might they improve? Challenge the students to only use their bodies to clearly show these characteristics and give opportunities to revise. Next, have students walk around the room with the above characteristics, but to not interact with each other. To take this activity one step further, have students interact with each other or try combining two of the mentioned characteristics (i.e. someone who is sad about being poor, or someone who has a secret about manipulating others, etc...) Ask questions like: How does your physical characteristic change the way you interact with someone? Do certain characteristics change your inner thoughts, the way you walk, or the way you speak?

What to know - before the show!

What is the Difference Between Elves and Fairies?

When first reading this story people may wonder why these mythical creatures are depicted as elves and not fairies. In a modern day context, elves usually cause people to think of *Lord of the Rings* or the Elf on the Shelf. However, through the years elves have been used in folklore as different kinds of creatures and were even considered synonymous with fairies. Folklore changes over time just like language and culture does and so it is interesting to track how the same name has described many different characters over the years.

Elves have appeared in a wide variety of folktales over the years and have taken on many different forms. In English folklore they tend to be associated with witches and in Iceland they are “hidden folk” that live in rocks. In other stories they were thought to cause hiccups and nightmares. Some even believe that the well-known character Rumpelstiltskin was an elf. Other stories that feature different kinds of elves are the *Harry Potter* books and *The Elves and the Shoemaker*.

Elves originally seem to have come from early Norse mythology and are generally associated with trees. Nordic elves were said to come in pairs, light elves and dark elves, representing good and evil. They had pointed ears and had excellent hearing. Fairies came from Anglo-Saxon mythology and are said to be born of flowers; they are normally associated with butterflies and dragonflies, and have wings.

Elves and fairies seem to be incorporated into the same stories and legends in the 1500s and by the 1800s elves and fairies were widely considered to be simply different names for the same magical creatures. Both were considered to be magical but also have a dark side. In some stories fairies and elves were said to steal children and replace them with their own kind. When traveling in the woods people would bring tokens to give to the elves and fairies to stay in their good favor and hope they would give them safe passage.

In modern day folklore we tend to think of elves as slender, human-like people with magical powers and fairies as small creatures with wings. However, the creatures depicted in *Afternoon of the Elves* sound more like what we know to be fairies. They are described as small creatures who hide and build villages out of junk. Sara Kate’s elf village could almost sound like what we know as fairy gardens. It is not clear why Janet Taylor Lisle decided to depict these mythical friends as elves instead of fairies. Lisle’s elves seem to be small and magical but do not have wings, which may be what keeps them from being fairies.



Privilege Basket

As students enter the classroom, give each of them a blank piece of paper. After all have taken their seats, inform students that for this activity, they all represent the population of the United States. They all have the chance to strike it rich and join the upper class. Point out a basket in the front of the room. All they have to do is throw their paper into the basket. However, all students must remain fully seated in their chairs.

As the activity progresses, students further back will begin to exclaim the unfairness of the activity. Use the activity as a metaphor for privilege. Too often, the people WITH the privilege don’t even see or have to acknowledge their own privilege. Have students make a short list of the ways they might be privileged over others (gender, race, socio-economic status). Acknowledge that privilege itself isn’t a bad thing; it’s what you do with it that matters.

How to grow - after the show!

Elven Soundscape

In *Afternoon of the Elves*, Sara Kate tells Hillary that the Elf language sounds like sounds found in nature. For this activity, begin by splitting your students into groups of three or four. Then, on strips of paper, list different emotions elves might feel such as anger, excitement, embarrassment, etc. Have each group draw an emotion from the slips of paper. Then have students create a soundscape for their emotion. Have groups consider the following as they work on their creations:

- What sounds in nature (i.e. – thunder, rushing water, wind, etc.) are associated with your emotion? Is it loud or quiet? Is the sound steady and repetitive or random? Are there moments of silence or intense activity? Consider the sound's tempo, pitch, force, etc. Can the sound be made vocally, with a musical instrument, etc?
- How can your piece show a beginning, middle, and end for your emotion? Think of ways to start small and grow larger throughout the piece.

At the end of the creation/rehearsal period, allow each group time to present their piece to the other groups and have the audience guess their emotion.

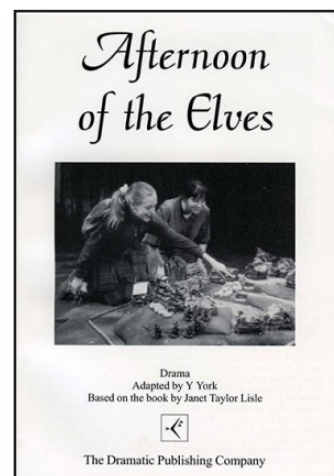
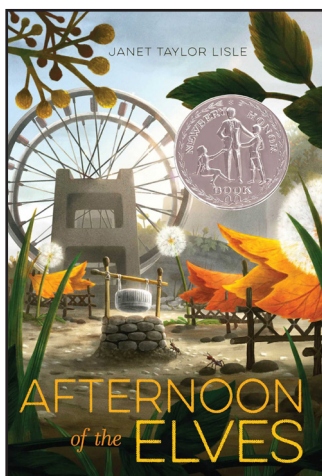
KAS:TH:Cr2.1.3.b; TH:Cr3.1.3.b; TH:Pr6.1.4

Authors and Books VS. Playwrights and Plays

The version of *Afternoon of the Elves* that you saw at Lexington Children's Theatre was an adaptation of the original book written by Janet Taylor Lisle. The playwright who adapted the book for the stage is Y York. Often when playwrights adapt a book for the stage, they tell the story differently than the author of the book from which they base the play. Read Janet Taylor Lisle's book and compare what happens in the book to what happens in LCT's production of Y York's adaptation. What was different? How were things the same? Make a list of the differences and similarities.

Differences:

Similarities:



KAS: TH:Cn11.2.3; TH:Cn10.1.4.

How to grow - after the show!

Kindness Project

One of the defining moments in *Afternoon of the Elves* is when Hillary agrees to help Sara Kate. She breaks open her bank and takes the forty dollars she had saved to buy groceries for Sara Kate and her mom. While everything does not work out exactly as Sara Kate or Hillary hope, Hillary still learned something from seeing Sara Kate's living situation and helping out.

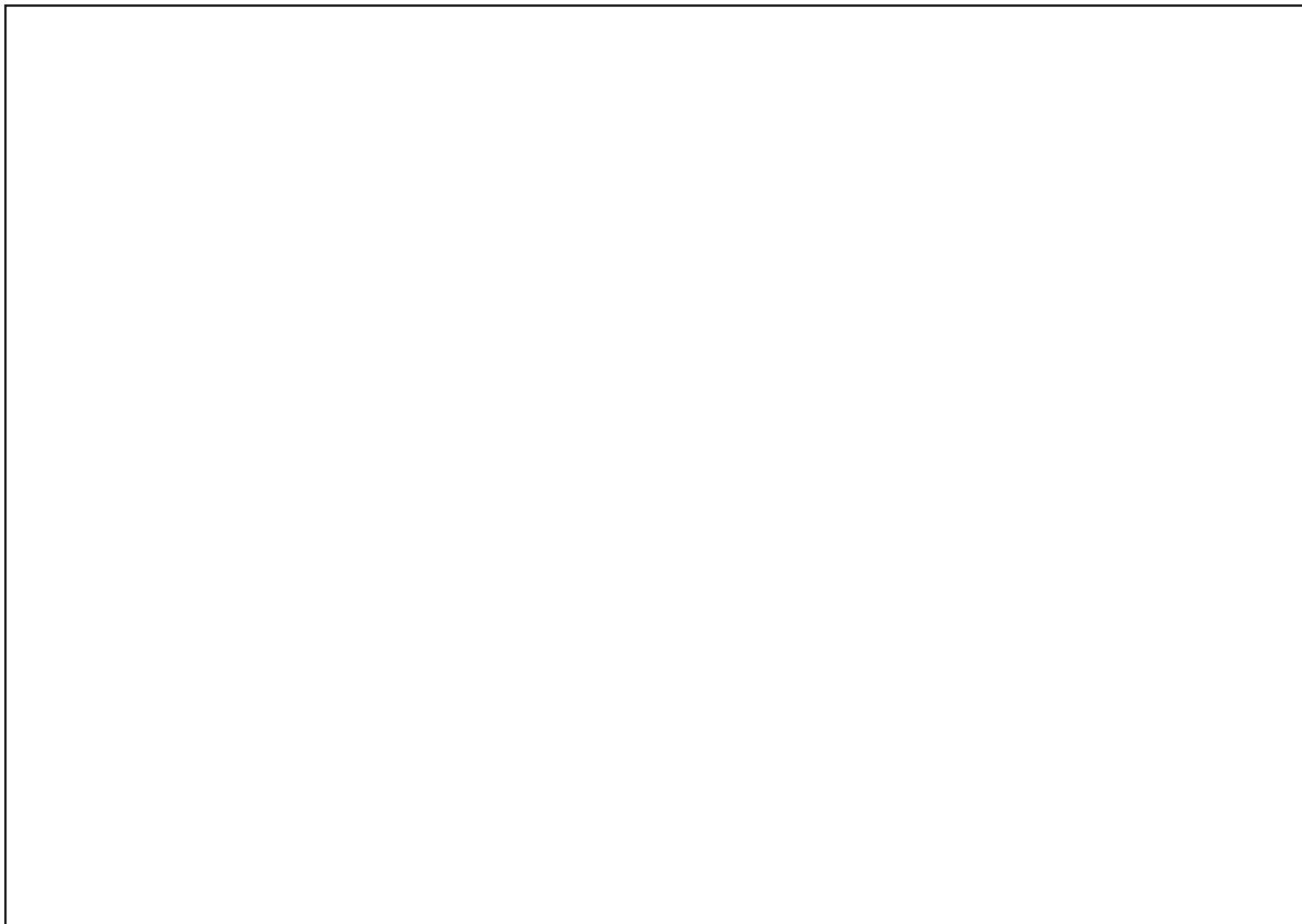
With your class, brainstorm some things you and your students can do to help others who might be in need. Maybe they want to start a pen pal program with residents at a nursing home or plant a tree at the park. Ideas can be big or small, as long as the class agrees on something that will spread kindness in their community. Once your class has decided on their project, work with them to put their kindness into motion. Get your school's administration involved or other classrooms and schools throughout your district. As students work to implement their project, have them keep a journal about how they feel about sharing kindness and what things they want to do to make their project better over time.

KAS: SS.2.16; SS.2.18

Design Your Own Elf Village

The elf village that Sara Kate and Hillary help maintain is filled with lots of exciting buildings and structures. In the box below, design your own elf village. Where do the elves go for fun? What do their houses look like? Are there roads to drive on? As you draw, label the different places in your village.

KAS: VA:Cr1.1.3; VA:Cr2.3.3



How to grow - after the show!

What to Read Next

Quicksand Pond

by Janet Taylor Lisle

Twelve-year-old Jessie spends the summer with her family on Quicksand Pond where she develops a star-crossed friendship with independent Terri and meets a reclusive old lady whose connection to a murder that took place decades ago still informs her present – and affects Terri in ways that Jessie gradually comes to learn.

Blubber

by Judy Blume

Jill goes along with the rest of the fifth-grade class in tormenting a classmate and then finds out what it is like when she, too, becomes a target.

The Doll in the Garden

by Mary Downing Hahn

After Ashley and Kristi find an antique doll buried in old Miss Cooper's garden, they discover that they can enter a ghostly turn-of-the-century world by going through a hole in the hedge.

Bridge to Terabithia

by Katherine Paterson

Ten-year old Jessie's life expands when he becomes friends with newcomer Leslie. Together, they create the fantastical world of Terabithia.

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 x226 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/