

PLAY GUIDE



**Lexington Children's Theatre
Summer Tour 2024**

Dear Educator -

Lexington Children's Theatre is proud to be producing 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 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!

About the Play

Little Girl just moved to Heretown from Thereville. Bossy Best Friend teaches Little Girl to play “Mother May I” and “Barbie”. The two girls have even planted tomato plants but only according to Bossy Best Friend’s rules. Little Girl cares for her plant every evening, while Bossy Best Friend neglects hers. When Little Girl’s plant flourishes and Bossy Best Friend’s wilts, Bossy Best Friend makes Little Girl give her the healthy plant.

Bossy Best Friend visits her grandmother out-of-town for a few days and leaves Little Girl with the instructions not to touch the tomato plant. Little Girl, worried for the plant’s survival, decides to move the plant back to her side of the garden. She tries to pull the plant up but the roots have grown very quickly. She keeps pulling until two hands, a face, then, a whole body, messy and covered in dirt, emerge from the ground. Little Girl doesn’t know what to do with a confused and lonely Tomato Plant Girl. At first, Little Girl hopes that Tomato Plant Girl will go away so she can replant the tomato plant and have things back to normal when Bossy Best Friend returns. When the Tomato Plant Girl doesn’t leave, Little Girl begins teaching her the ways of Heretown. She feeds her the dirt and water she wants so much, and tries to teach her to speak and play “Mother May I”.

Through Tomato Plant Girl’s confusion, they create a new game that encourages creativity and allows them to make their own rules. Little Girl finds a new, true best friend in Tomato Plant Girl. By learning what friendship really means, Little Girl becomes more independent and gains self-confidence.

Communicating without language

Tomato Plant Girl does not speak the language of Heretown. In pairs, have the students imagine that they can only communicate with their partner using sounds and gestures. Give each pair one of the following situations. Have one of them try to communicate this situation to their partner.

- You are lost, and you need directions to the bus station.
- You have lost all of your money and don’t have a place to stay for the night.
- You missed your train and need to know when the next one is.
- You received the wrong food at a restaurant.
- You sprained your ankle and need to go to the doctor.
- You just stained your laundry and need to go get it cleaned.
- You need change for a dollar.
- You are shopping and need to know the price a loaf of bread.
- You need to know the weather forecast for the day.
- Your car has broken down, and you need a ride to the next town

After this exercise, discuss how successful the students were and why. When people don’t speak the same language, it causes confusion. Discuss the difficulties created by a language barrier.



What to do - before the show!

Something Different

In *Tomato Plant Girl*, both the Little Girl and Tomato Plant Girl came to Heretown from another place. Both these characters had to learn things about the people of Heretown (what games they played, etc.) in order to fit in.

We have all been in situations where we felt like outsiders. Maybe it was the first day of school or the first day at a new summer camp where we did not know anyone. Write about a time when you felt like an outsider. What things were you afraid of? Who or what made you feel comfortable? Was the experience a good experience after you got used to your new environment?

Caretaker

In the story *Tomato Plant Girl*, you will see how hard it is for Little Girl to take care of another living being. Write a story about a favorite toy or object coming to life. It could be a doll, a stuffed animal, a plant, or anything. How do you care for your object? Can you tell people about it? How does this affect your life/schedule? You may write a poem, short story, or script. If written as a script, feel free to act it out!

Draw an illustration from your story.



Cycle of Life: Pantomime

Find an open space. Pretend you are a seed by curling up into a little ball. Slowly begin to grow into a little plant and then a large plant and at last a plant that produces a fruit or vegetable.

Find a piece of music and repeat the exercise. Have the plant grow along with the music.



How to grow - after the show!

New Kid in Town

The Tomato Plant Girl was very different from both the Little Girl and the Bossy Best Friend. In the beginning, the Little Girl was afraid that the Tomato Plant Girl was different and she tried to change her. The Little Girl eventually discovered that the Tomato Plant Girl could teach her new games and things that she never knew.

In pairs, perform skits where a “new kid” gets to know someone from your class. How does the new kid feel? What does the classmate think of the new kid? What does the new kid discover and see when he/she enters your classroom? What can the new kid and the classmate teach one another? Encourage these skits to have a clear beginning, middle and end: Will the two become friends? Do they view each other differently at the end of the skit?



Your own planter...

Find a milk jug, coffee can or other container and decorate it according to your taste or liking. Once the container is decorated fill it with soil and plant a seed of your choosing. Nurture and water the seed until it becomes a plant. See if you can raise the plant to full maturity or until you can harvest it. See if you have the same magic green thumb as Little Girl.

Communication...

Imagine you are traveling to a new country where you do not know the language or the customs of the people. Think about how you would try to communicate with the people you meet. Think about the first thing you need when you arrive. Is it food, water, transportation, housing, or something else? Have the class move around the room and try to explain to each other what they need without words. When two people understand each other they move on to another person and try to explain their needs to him or her.



How to grow - after the show!

READING LIST!

Great Girl Stories: A Treasury of Classics from Children's Literature Edited by Rosemary Sandburg

This collection contains sixteen excerpts from classic stories that feature girls as protagonists.

Afternoon of the Elves by Janet Taylor Lisle

Two girls find friendship in this enchanting story which reveals the beauty, wonder and mystery that lies within the imagination.

Cut from the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale by Robert San Souci

Stories from different American cultures find a common thread in that they contain female folk heroes as courageous, irascible, and noble as any of their more famous male counterparts.

The Serpent Slayer and other Stories of Strong Women by Katrina Schana

18 stories adapted from fairy tales from around the worlds showcase the courage, cleverness, and integrity of women who dare to go beyond their traditional roles and stand up for themselves and their people.

Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls by Jane Yolen

Drawing from diverse cultures around the world, renowned author Jane Yolen celebrates the smart, strong, and sassy heroines



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- 1.) Tomato Plant Girl cannot speak Little Girl's language. Why is it that people can sometimes communicate through pantomime or gestures? Why are some gestures universal and others not?
- 2.) Little Girl and Bossy Best Friend liked to play together; however everything had to be done exactly the way that Bossy Best Friend wanted it to be. Do you think that was fun for Little Girl to play the way the Bossy Best Friend wanted to play Do you think it was fair for Bossy Best Friend to set the way that the girls play together? What would you do differently?
- 3.) Friendship is an important part of Tomato Plant Girl, Little Girl and Bossy Best Friend claim to be friends forever. Little Girl also befriends Tomato Plant Girl. Why are these friendships so different? What does each person look for in a friend? What does Tomato Plant Girl learn about friendship? What do you look for in a friend? What qualities do you value in someone you consider a friend?