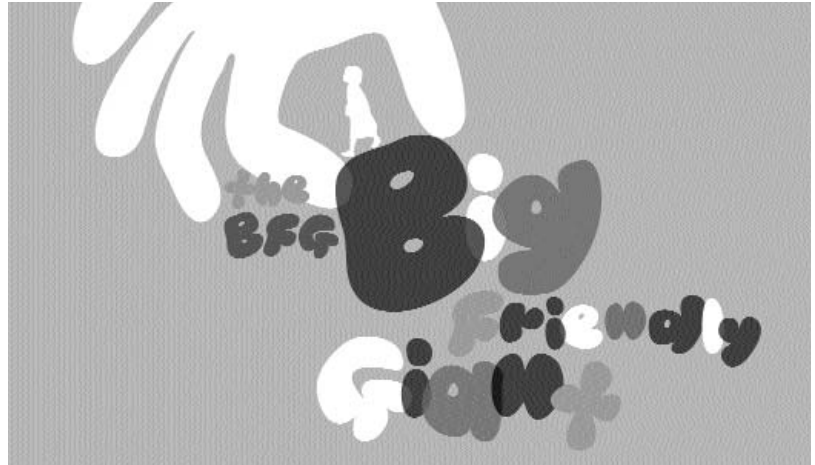


THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY is committed to creating extraordinary theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire young people. It is our hope that by presenting significant themes that affect the lives of young people in our community we can help to foster dialogue and active participation in the arenas that affect their lives. It is with this in mind that we offer...



The BFG is sponsored by
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An experience in theatre can be a gateway into a greater understanding of who we are; it can enhance our understanding of life. You may come to **The BFG (Big Friendly Giant)** thinking that it is fun to break routine and go on a field trip to, and after having seen it, walk away with a feeling of having glimpsed a significant truth about the world and how each of us lives in it. So, while it is crucial to take the time to process the experience by talking and exploring the exciting theatrical experience itself, the time spent in the theatre can also serve as a springboard into many areas of your curriculum.



The Big Idea...

Sophie and the Big Friendly Giant have the kind of friendship we want every child to have - one that surpasses any surface similarities or differences and is based on a deep connection and loyalty between two people. Their friendship surprises them, challenges them, and expands them. It makes them happier and braver than they've ever been before. Embedded in this classically Roald Dahl world that imagines a reality ever so delightfully similar to and different from our own, Sophie and the BFG model the kind of friendship that can change the world.



Soon you and your class...

will see **The BFG (Big Friendly Giant)** at The Children's Theatre Company, and we want your experience in the theatre to support your curriculum and classroom life. This Study Guide is designed to cover a broad range of needs, so please choose what is most useful in your own classroom.

NOTE: the vertical section identifiers along the left edge of each page which help you navigate the Guide.



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Minnesota Academic Standards Addressed:

Arts:
The student will understand and use artistic processes to create, perform, and interpret art works in theater.

Language Arts:
Writing, Speaking, Listening and Viewing: The student will compose various pieces of writing and the student will communicate effectively through listening and speaking.

Mathematics:
The student will recognize ratios and comparative proportions as applied in particular situations.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT PROCEDURE OR EXACT RUNNING TIME?
CALL THE CTC BOX OFFICE AT 612-874-0400.**



THE STORY OF The BFG (Big Friendly Giant) A synopsis of the play adapted by David Wood From the book by Roald Dahl

One night Sophie is awakened by a moonbeam. She knows she needs to stay in bed or Mrs. Clonkers, who runs the orphanage, will be angry, but she wants to see what the world looks like at midnight. She creeps to the window and sees...a giant! He plucks her out of her window and takes her away to his cave in Giant Country. He can't have her "*scuddling around yodelling the news*" that she's seen a giant. (He has a wonderful and unique way of talking). Since Sophie has seen him, the Big Friendly Giant can't let her go back to the orphanage. The good news is he won't eat her, like any other giant would do. This human gobbling that the other giants are doing is terrible! They kidnap and eat children all over the world. Neither Sophie nor the BFG like it – to say the least. They do like each other, though. They have a lot in common. They both think *snozzcumbers*, the BFG's main food, taste awful! *Froboscottle*, though, is a delicious drink! (Even though it causes *whizpoppers* – farts – something humans think are rude, but giants enjoy immensely).

The BFG is a dream-blowing giant. He collects dreams in jars, and blows them into the bedrooms of sleeping children. Some dreams are lovely, but others are nightmares! One night, while dreamcatching, Sophie and the BFG overhear the giants, Meatdripper, Fleshlumpeater, and Bloodbottler planning to go to England to eat children. The friends must tell the Queen! They go to Buckingham Palace and end up having breakfast with a very surprised Queen. The English Queen gets reports that children have indeed been eaten and confers with the Queen of Sweden who confirms that her country's children have been disappearing, too, eaten by giants. This calls for war! The BFG helps the Army and Air Force hatch a plan to go to Giant Land and capture the child-eating monsters. Helicopters fly over Meatdripper, Fleshlumpeater, and Bloodbottler as they sleep, soldiers tie them in ropes, and fly them to London Zoo where they are dropped in a colossal hole in the Zoo.

The BFG is awarded the Queen's Medal for Gigantic Courage on behalf of England and the whole world; Sophie is invited to live at Buckingham Palace. And even though the BFG walks off into the sunset, we know that, as long as Sophie lives in the palace, he will be back.



Sophie is an orphan, which can be lonely. The Big Friendly Giant likes human beings, which for a giant can be lonely, too. (Most giants don't like people – except for supper.) It's no surprise Sophie and the BFG become best friends. He talks all squiff-squiddly, and she understands perfectly.

But wait, he's a giant! She's a little girl! Their fantastic friendship is pure Roald Dahl. Wickedly funny; surprising... and puppets, too!



LANGUAGE: CONTEXT & IMAGINATION

The BFG talks squiff-squidly. And yet we understand what he says! How do we understand words we've never heard before? And how much context is required for understanding new words?

- This poem is famous for being full of made up words that somehow make sense!! See if you understand it when you read it out loud. You and your friends may not think every word means exactly the same thing, but you can agree on the story being told. Discuss how you can understand what a new word means because of the words and ideas around it.

Jabberwocky, by Lewis Carroll (1872)

... "Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
 The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
 Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
 The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
 Long time the manxome foe he sought --
 So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
 And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
 The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
 Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
 And burbled as it came!...

(Find it at: <http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/jabberwocky.html>)



An illustration by Quentin Blake

- In contrast to **Jabberwocky**, this poem is famous for being difficult to understand. Yet it has no imaginary words in it at all - it is simply written in Middle English, an old language spoken more than 500 years ago. See if you can understand its meaning when it is read aloud. What is it that makes it more difficult to understand? The key is how much understandable context there is in proportion to the unusual words.

Canterbury Tales, by Geoffrey Chaucer (1400)

Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
 The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour...
 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages...
 And specially from every shires ende
 Of engelond to caunterbury they wende,
 The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

The BFG: *"You will be coming to an ucky-mucky end if Bloodbottler should ever be getting his goggles upon you. You would be swallowed up like a piece of frumpkin pie, all in one dollop."*

A Collection: As you are watching the play, notice the unusual words the giant uses. When you get back to your classroom make a list on the board of all the words your class can remember. Define the words together and talk about how you knew their meaning by using contextual clues from the play.



Friendship

The BFG is not what Sophie expects a giant to be, and he is definitely not what she expects a friend to be! What is it that turns someone who is completely and extraordinarily different than yourself into your best friend? It's impossible to know for sure...but it happens...in Giant Country, and our world, too. Sometimes when there's nothing on the outside of two people that looks matchable there is something inside that matches in a way only they can see. Then they recognize each other as exactly compatible and become friends; extraordinary friends. And if you are lucky enough – like Sophie and the BFG - to know that kind of friendship, you know that it gives you courage and joy and someday just may make you a hero.

UNLIKELY FRIENDS • STEREOTYPES • FEAR OF DIFFERENCE • HEROES • FAMOUS FRIENDS

• UNLIKELY FRIENDS:

Why is friendship important in the world? What would it be like if no one had a friend?

Sometimes people just don't expect two people to have anything in common, and then they find out they are friends! You've probably thought that looking at two other people...thought, "Why on earth are they friends?" Sophie and the BFG are like that. Nobody would expect a giant and a little girl to be friends! But they are. Do you have this kind of friend? If you don't can you make one up?

- Draw a picture of that friend whether real or imagined.
- MORE ADVANCED: Write a detailed description of an unusual friend, real or imagined.
- THE NEXT LEVEL: Write a short story or dramatic scene which hinges on an unusual friendship which must withstand some kind of pressure.



• STEREOTYPES

How do stereotypes affect the choices we make in our lives? How do we overcome them?

One way to think of stereotypes is as a set of expectations. Have you ever heard someone say, "I didn't expect you to like sports," or "I expected you to look more like your sister?" We all walk around collecting information about what we think might be around the next corner. That's the way we learn. The problem is that sometimes what is around the next corner is very different from what we've learned in the past. The BFG is nothing like the giants Sophie has read about or heard about in stories.

- Make a list together of the kinds of things we use to create stereotypes or expectations:
Examples: gender, age or grade level, ethnicity, hair style.
Now have a discussion about whether or not these expectations are accurate.
- MORE ADVANCED: Play this game and experience turning expectations upside down.

What Are You Doing?

Students line up in two lines that both feed into the center of the play space.

One student begins by walking to the center. He or she silently pantomimes a recognizable activity. Example: brushing teeth.

A second student walks in from the other line and copies the first, doing exactly the same thing. She or he then asks, "What are you doing?"

The first student must then answer with an activity that is anything EXCEPT the expected answer. Example: walking my dog. Then the first student leaves and rejoins a line.

The second student immediately begins to pantomime the activity that was named and when that is established another enters.

The pattern repeats endlessly.

Afterwards...talk about it.



• FEAR OF DIFFERENCE

Have you ever been afraid of someone who acts, speaks, looks, or thinks differently than you? Why do you think you were frightened? Can difference ever be positive?

Most of us are drawn to people and circumstances that are familiar to us; while that may be a safe choice, it may not be the best choice to be fully engaged in the world. Some fear of difference comes as a by-product of our desire to find a sense of commonality with others. This activity is a chance to explore that idea.

- It can be done together as a class, individually, or in small groups.
- It can be done using drawings or verbal descriptions.

1) Imagine a set of several students you might find in a classroom. Make sure the description or drawing includes at least three characteristics. Example: A freckle faced Caucasian girl in a chess club t-shirt who uses a wheelchair. A tall African American boy wearing glasses who is carrying *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*.

2) Now, imagine that you are a new student on the first day of school, and must ask someone to help you find your classroom. Choose who you would be MOST and LEAST likely to ask for help and why. Write it down or take turns. Usually, it is because something visible makes it seem there is a similarity shared, or that there is nothing in common. Example: You like chess; you are African American, OR you don't know anybody who uses a wheelchair; you detest Harry Potter.

3) Finally discuss as a group how imagining some options felt easy and comfortable and others felt awkward or even frightening. Talk together about what that might mean to a person, especially in situations where s/he might feel no one is similar at all, and also how it's possible to learn new things when contact with a person who is similar in some ways also acquaints you with differences. Example: I chose the girl with freckles because I have them and I learned to play chess (which I thought was impossible).

• MORE ADVANCED: This activity quite naturally expands and becomes a deeper experience with older students and more mature students. It could serve as a springboard into poetry or essay writing.

• HEROISM

What does it mean to be brave? How do ordinary people find ways to do heroic deeds?

Discuss this statement: We become courageous when what needs to be done is more important than our fears.

- Think of examples and write them on the board. You can start very basic. Example: going to the dentist.
- Discuss what it is that is frightening about each example and why the things mentioned are important to do.
- Ask questions such as: If Sophie and the BFG were both afraid of the dentist would it help to go together?
- Finally, talk about what kind of misbehavior might result from fear when there is no perceived importance or friend to help us do the right thing.



Illustration by Meri C Fox-Szauter

• Then write (together or separately) a new ending to the play in which all the giants, Bloodbottler, Fleshlumppeater, and the rest find a way to do something heroic and wonderful because they find good friends like Sophie to help them be brave enough to do what is right. In this new version they will not have to be captured and kept in a zoo!!

• MORE ADVANCED: Each progressive bullet point carries this activity deeper. In this way it expands and becomes a deeper experience with older students and more mature students.

• FAMOUS FRIENDS

Research and report on famous friendships in literature. Examples: Frog and Toad; Harry Potter, Ron and Hermione; Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson; Nancy Drew, George and Bess. Or think of some from real life!



FEEDBACK your response is valuable as we seek to redesign our study materials. Thank you.

- 1. Did using this Study Guide add to your theater experience?
 Yes Some No
- 2. How much of the Study Guide did you read?
 Didn't have time About a quarter All
- 3. What do you think of what you read? Mark as many as apply.
 Useful Enjoyable
 Nothing new Not for my students because
- 4. Did you get the Study Guide in time to prepare to see the play?
 Yes No Comment _____
- 5. What sections of the Study Guide did you find most important?

- 6. How did the experience of preparing for and then seeing the play impact you students?

- 7. Did you spend more time working with the material BEFORE or AFTER the play?
 Before After About the Same
- 8. Which of the following best describes you?
 I teach: middle school high school
 home school
 other _____

Comments: _____
(continue on separate page if desired)

**MAIL TO: THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY/2400 3RD AVE. SO.
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55404-3597/ATTN: EDUCATION DEPT.**

The Children's Theatre Company, awarded the 2003 Regional Tony Award for sustained artistic excellence, is nationally and internationally acclaimed as America's flagship theatre for young people and families. Each year, The Children's Theatre Company's public performances, school matinees, regional tour performances, and Theatre Arts Training Programs serve nearly 330,000 people.
Peter Brosius, Artistic Director
Teresa Eyring, Managing Director
Gregory Smith, Director of Education

Study Guide written by Chris Kliesen Wehrman, August '06.
Thanks to Gregory Smith, Stacy Hawkins, and Katie Leo.

