

Teacher Quick Reference Guide

06/07 Children's Theatre Company Season

The Play

Tale of a West Texas Marsupial Girl

By Lisa D'Amour • Music and Story Consultation by Sxip Shirey
Enjoyed by ages



Synopsis

What happens when a very special girl is born in a “wiggly little Texas town”, where even the smallest difference can brand someone “an abomination”? And, what if this girl is born with a big difference, a great, big difference, like...a pouch? Tongues will wag and children will sneer as our heroine explores the age-old question, Who Am I? and even What Am I? The answer could be a number of colorful options—wallaby, bandicoot, centaur, minotaur, or simply, Marsupial Girl. Join Marsupial Girl as she struggles to define herself in the face of town gossips, bullies, and her own insecurities. This wonderfully quirky, funny, and ultimately touching play is peppered with delightful characters, music, and sound support from Dr. Pouch, a storyteller with a foley table and a unique point of view. If you have ever felt the strain of trying to fit in and making peace with your own special qualities, then this play is for you.

The Big Ideas

- Discovering and accepting one's identity
- Honoring differences in others as well as oneself
- Peer pressure or bullying

Examples of Activities and Standards Connections

Activity: Write a monologue and scene based on *Tale of a West Texas Marsupial Girl*.

State Standard: Writing:

A) Types of Writing:

The student will create informative, expressive and persuasive writing.

B) Elements of Composition:

The student will engage in a writing process, with attention to organization, focus, quality of ideas and a purpose.

Have students close their eyes and imagine that it is the day after the last scene in the play. Marsupial Girl goes walks into town, expecting everything to be okay, but she begins to feel like people are still talking about her and still staring at her. She sees her friend Sue in the hallway. What does she say to her? **Write this as a monologue.** A monologue is a speech said by a character in a play to another character. If you wish, you could use a prompt like “You’ll never guess what happened to me...”

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or “Why does everybody...?” Are people really being mean to her, or is it all in her imagination? How will she resolve her problem? Have students use this monologue to **write a scene** about what will happen next in Marsupial Girl’s life. What will Sue say in response? Use descriptive, concrete language that engages the reader. Will Marsupial Girl stay friends with Sue? Will she gain acceptance in the town? Will she stay in the same school? Will she move away? What if Marsupial Girl visits her mother at work to tell her what happened? **Introduce the idea of adding a conflict, or problem**, to the scene that gets solved somehow by the end. Be sure to **include dialogue** using standard dialogue notation that is appropriate to the characters and story. Have students pair off and read their scenes to each other and give **feedback**. Does the scene make sense? Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end? Is there a problem that gets solved? Introduce playwriting techniques, such as writing in stage directions, to make the scenes come alive. For example, the scene might look something like this:

(Marsupial Girl enters and stands in front of Sue)

Marsupial Girl: You’ll never guess what happened to me today, Sue.

Sue: Oh, hi. I don’t have time to talk right now. I have to get going.

Marsupial Girl: What’s wrong? I thought we were friends.

Consider giving students a chance to hear their scenes read out loud by other students who will “act out” the writing. This may be done over a period of days to allow time to make copies for all the actors.

Activity: The Lemon Exercise

National Health Education Standard (PreK-12): Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors.

Divide the students into small groups. Hold up a lemon. Have the students give five words that describe a lemon, i.e. yellow, funny-shaped, bumpy, tart, etc. Have each group pick a spokesperson. The teacher has a bag of lemons with at least 5 more lemons than there are number of groups. Each spokesperson picks one lemon from the bag and returns to his/her group. The teacher gives the students 5 minutes to look at the lemon and figure out what makes it unique. At the end of the time all lemons are returned to the bag. The bag is shaken. Then the spokesperson for each group comes back to the bag with the mission of finding the correct lemon for his/her group. The entire group must then decide if in fact it is their original lemon. If they decide it is not, then the spokesperson returns to the bag to try again.

Discussion: At first glance, the lemons all look alike, but with closer inspection it is easy to determine that every lemon has its own unique set of characteristics, which became valuable to each group during the game. The same is true for people. Have a discussion about the game but also the deeper implications in dealing with fellow students and their unique characteristics. Why do people pick on others for their unique characteristics, rather than valuing them? You may wish to refer back to Marsupial Girl, and how she was picked on for her uniqueness. What is empathy? How can empathizing with someone help combat bullying? Discuss how your classroom and school can end bullying.

Activity: Research vocab words from Tale of a West Texas Marsupial Girl.

State Standard (Grade 5) Reading and Literature: Vocabulary Expansion: The student will use a variety of strategies to expand reading, listening and speaking vocabularies.

Create a list of unfamiliar words from the play, including marsupial, wallaby, bandicoot, cyclops, minotaur, and centaur. You may also want to research the term foyle table. Use a variety of reference materials, including dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the Internet, to find the meanings. This may lead to an exploration of both the scientific diversity of marsupials as well as the varieties of mythical creatures.

Food for Thought: Discussion Questions

Below are possible questions that can act as jumping off points for deeper exploration.

- 1) Why did Sue treat Marsupial Girl differently in front of her other friends?
- 2) Do you ever feel pressured by your friends to treat others a certain way?
- 3) Is it ever hard to be true to yourself?
- 4) What is gossip? How does it affect you?

