

THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY

is committed to creating theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire young people. It is our hope that by presenting significant themes that affect young people's lives in our community, we can help to foster dialogue and active participation in important areas. It is with this in mind that we offer...



CTC'S 2007-2008 SEASON IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY TARGET.



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 IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE for a fun break in your school routine. However, you may walk away having glimpsed a significant truth about the world and how we live in it. It is important to take the time to process your experience of the theatrical event itself. Even more important can be using the topics introduced by the play to springboard into other areas of your curriculum.



The Big Ideas:

- IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE is based on the storybook by Laura Numeroff. It retains the same wild construction that reminds us that each action has a consequence - predictable, or not.
- There is nothing a powerful, energetic, transformative, mind-blowing or fun as the imagination.
- Our imaginations can take us on amazing and mind blowing adventures, and there is no end to the cycle of ideas and exploration.

NOTE: In the performance of IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE two grown men play the mouse and the boy. The matter of scale (i.e. the proportion of mouse to milk bottle and so forth) is dealt with on a purely imaginative level. You will be astonished to realize that you can watch a man encounter a bag of regular sized cotton balls and imagine right along with him that he is a highly energetic mouse discovering the fluffy white possibilities. These two actors are extraordinary physical comedians!



IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE is a virtuoso performance by Dean Holt and Reed Sigmund, two CTC company members that have worked together for years. It goes something like this: the Boy settles down with a comic book just as the Mouse shows up, and an innocent milk-and-cookie snack time goes from mishap to calamity to catastrophe faster than the twitch of a whisker! This mouse talks fast, thinks fast, moves fast, and leaves a trail of creative chaos in his wake. It is pure physical energy and imagination! This is one wild ride, and the end takes you right back to the beginning – just like you knew it would.

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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. Read, understand, respond to, analyze, interpret, evaluate and appreciate a wide variety of fiction, poetic, and nonfiction texts.

Reading and Literature: Writing: The student will write in narrative, expository, descriptive, persuasive and critical modes.

Language Arts: Writing, Speaking, Listening and Viewing: The student will compose various pieces of writing (informative, expressive and persuasive) and the student will communicate effectively through listening and speaking in a variety of forms.

Theater: The student will understand components of theater including vocabulary; and create a character based on fiction of life experience using movement, voice, costume and props.

Our production of IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE doesn't look a thing like the book you've read. The style of the design is fresh and surprising. You will be amazed that a grown man wearing ears and a tail can convince you he's a mouse - even though he's at least as tall as the Boy - also played by a man - standing right beside him. Have your class read the book and talk about what it will be like to translate it into a play. Look carefully at the illustrations and talk about the fact that a man will play Mouse. Have each student draw a costume design for the Boy or the Mouse - or a set design for a scene. After they have seen the show they can talk about whether the designers for the show had similar or different ideas. Did their ideas work?

FOR PROCEDURE OR EXACT RUNNING TIME CALL THE
 CTC BOX OFFICE: 612-874-0400.



IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE A Synopsis



Dean Holt and Reed Sigmund

“It all began so simply,” the Boy remembers. He’s got fresh cookies. He’s got a new comic book, *JUNGLEMAN, BEASTMASTER OF THE AMAZON*, so he heads for the backyard. Then the Mouse shows up, hungry – talkative – and not to be ignored.

The Boy gives the Mouse a cookie, milk, and a straw to drink it with. Tidying up after, the Mouse needs a napkin and a mirror, which leads to a haircut. What a mess! The boy begins to feel like he’s on a roller coaster ride and still on the way up. There’s no stopping this Mouse! Not only can he talk and cut his own hair and use a handkerchief, he can dance with his own reflection. And he’s only getting started.

The Mouse is anxious to help – he helps at home he says – and he wants to clean up his own messes. The only problem is that his clean ups leave a bigger mess behind than when he started. (Still, it’s awfully fun to watch him try.) The Mouse is like the

Energizer Bunny – he just keeps going and going and going – and the Boy can think of nothing to stop him, short of a nap. So, they build a soft, sweet smelling bed...they find a way for the Mouse to undress...they find a blanket...a pillow...and the Mouse settles down...but there’s still one big problem: He’s not tired.

They try a story, *JUNGLEMAN, BEASTMASTER OF THE AMAZON*. The Mouse imagines himself the hero, and gives a passionate performance of the plot. It doesn’t put him to sleep, but it does inspire him to make art. He colors a picture of his family, gives it to the Boy, signs it (so the Boy won’t forget him – as if he could!) and mounts it on the refrigerator, which is no small task.

Of course, being so near the refrigerator makes the Mouse think of milk, and he gets very, very thirsty. The Boy resigns himself to the inevitable, gives the Mouse milk and waits for the line we all know is coming... “As long as you’re getting the milk...could I have a cookie?” We groan, we laugh and we end up right back where we started!

THE STYLE in which IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE is performed is a rare treat! Both of the actors are masters of physical comedy and they enjoy a working relationship that has developed over years of doing shows together. Each of them has kept the creative energy that most often belongs only to the very young and honed it with the experience and discipline available to none but the most dedicated performers.

This show is WILD.

On a story level, one of the ways you can support feats of awesome imagination is to have your students write their own plot lines for a circular story - one that returns at the end to the first plot point - and then illustrate it as a storyboard. Any child who has read one of Laura Numeroff’s books will understand the format. The challenge you present will be to imagine totally outrageous adventures!



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Here are several different ways to bring the play into your classroom.

- **This story of a hungry – and imaginative – mouse ends where it started, with a cookie.** You can think of it as going round and round without ever finding an end (like “The Song That Never Ends” <http://www.zutroy.com/stuff/neverend/> - teach your students this song at your own peril!). You might call it a circular story. Laura Numeroff wrote several more, concerning a moose, a pig, and other adventures for Mouse. Of course each student could write his or her own circular story. Or, here is a class challenge: Create a huge circular story/event as a group.

- 1) Together decide on two central characters, one with some outrageous personality and the other a good facilitator - a relatively normal kid is a good choice.
- 2) Break into small groups and have each small group imagine one adventure the two could have.
- 3) Come back together and put the adventures in order - from simplest to most extravagant.
- 4) Together figure out how something at the end of each adventure can lead to the next one. Of course, when you get to the end you're going to look for a way to get back to the beginning.
- 5) Break into small groups once more and have each group find a way to perform their adventure.
- 6) Brainstorm ways to keep your central two characters going through each scene - even though they are played by different actors. This can be as simple as: the person playing the “mouse” always wears the same bright orange baseball cap with ears on it, and the “boy” always has on the same blue back pack.
- 7) Perform your story/event for another class; maybe for younger kids at your school.

- **Use this to start a discussion OR for a writing prompt:** In the story of the Mouse and the Boy “Endless Need” meets “Total Generosity.”

- 1) First, what does that mean, and how do you see it in the play?
- 2) Then, if you imagine the situation going on and on who do you think will finally have the last word, the Boy or the Mouse? Will the Mouse ever stop asking for one more thing? If so, what would finally satisfy him? Will the Boy ever say, “NO”? If so, where would he draw the line?
- 3) Can you imagine a satisfactory ending to the cycle?

- **Use this as an art prompt.**

- 1) Think about these things: If an animal came to your house to spend the day with you what kind of animal would you like it to be? How do you think you and your visitor would spend the day? What



Dean Holt and Reed Sigmund

kind of things might it (s/he) like to eat, drink, or do?

- 2) Draw a picture of one part of your day with your animal visitor OR draw a comic book (or strip) of your whole day.

- **Write or re-enact an interview with the Mouse** from the play. Ask him/her questions about family, friends, likes and dislikes. If you are acting out the interview it will be fun for the actor playing the Mouse to come up with the answers. (Make it clear that there are no wrong answers). For instance, you might like to ask a mouse whether the rumor you have heard is true: Do mice really love cheese, or is that just a stereotype?



Feedback your response is invaluable.
Please take a moment to respond. 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 Some All

3. What do you think of what you read? Mark as many as apply.
 Useful Enjoyable
 Nothing new Not for my students

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)

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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, CTC's public performances, school matinees, regional tour performances, and Theatre Arts Training Programs serve nearly 330,000 people. **Peter Brosius**, Artistic Director
Louise Thoreson, Interim Director of Education

This Study Guide was written by Chris Kliesen Wehrman, March 2008.
Thanks to Susan Schwegman. Photos Rob Levine.

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