

Appleseeds Teacher's Guide for "The Play's the Thing"

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Teacher's Guide created by Peggy Epstein, Language Arts Teacher with 25 years experience in the Hickman Mills School District, Kansas City, Missouri. Epstein has a Master's Degree in Instruction and Curriculum from the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

Following is a plan for approaching this issue by dividing the material into four parts:

Activity One: Dickens' Oliver Twist

1. Summarize the material on page 12 for students, explaining the background for the scene on pages 13-16.
2. Invite students to read the various parts (the dialogue) aloud while you serve as narrator. If possible, enhance the experience by first showing the video of that scene (or another one which features the orphans, perhaps the "Food, Glorious Food" number) from the movie based on the Broadway musical.

Activity Two: Kids in the Theater

Based on the following four articles: "Oliver! The Play's the Thing in North Carolina"(pages 7-11) "Rising Stars" (page 22) "Ready for Life" (pages 24-25) and "Building Character Onstage" (pages 26-28)

1. Ask students to talk about any experiences they have had as actors. Also ask if they know the names of any kids who are professional actors (from the movies and TV).
2. Divide students into groups, assigning one of the above named articles to each group (notice the first one is lengthier).
3. Ask students to design posters advertising each theater company. The poster should include information about the theater company from the article, such as the motto if there is one, ages of the actors, plays the company has performed, etc.
4. Ask each student to write a short paragraph with a topic sentence such as "I would (or would not) like to be an actor." Paragraph will be developed with reasons the student would or would not like to appear on stage, on TV, or in the movies.

Activity Three: Theater Info Dialogue

1. Divide students into pairs. Each pair will write a dialogue between two young actors using as much theater information as they can cram into two pages. The information is to come from pages 2-6 and pages 29-31.

To get things off to a fast start, here is the beginning for a possible dialogue:

Bryant: Ashley, the tickets are all sold for tonight's show—the guy in the box office told me even the boxes sold.

Ashley: Great, but the sound technicians are having trouble backstage—and worse than that, I heard one of them tell an actor who was sitting there knitting to break a leg.

Activity Four: Shakespeare

1. Start by reading aloud some of the phrases from the article and the sidebar on pages 21-22.
2. If you are a Shakespeare fan, you might like to read a favorite Shakespearean quote for the students and then "translate" it into modern English.
3. Ask students to read "**Meet William Shakespeare**"(pages 17-19) and be prepared to play a game of Twenty Questions based on Shakespeare's life and works.
 1. Born in what country?

2. Born in what town?
3. Married at what age?
4. Had how many children?
5. Joined a traveling what?
6. Lord Chamberlain's Men was a what?
7. Opened a theatre called what?
8. Rich people sat where and common people did what?
9. His characters behaved like real what?
10. Serious stories in which bad things happen are called what?
11. The name of one of these serious stories in which the main character feels haunted by his father's murder is what?
12. Fairies fool with humans' romances, creating some funny scenes in what comedy?
13. Shakespeare wrote how many hundreds of years ago?
14. Shakespeare liked rhyme and what?
15. An example of a word Shakespeare made up is what?
16. Shakespeare died when?
17. He wrote how many plays?
18. He wrote how many poems?
19. Some of Shakespeare's plays have been made into what?
20. Audiences still like Shakespeare's plays because . . . ?

If possible, you might enjoy showing a five-minute clip from "Shakespeare in Love." Near the end of the film, the Elizabethan audience is caught in rapt attention—just as intrigued as we are today watching a great movie with wonderful special effects. The clip will give students an opportunity to see just what it was like to go to the theater in Shakespeare's day.