

Pushcart Players

STUDY GUIDE

Little Red Riding Hood

And Other Stories

In this fast paced, frenetic world, isn't it comforting to know that some things never change? One of them is the joy and enchantment of stories that begin with "once upon a time," - classic tales that can be told and heard over and over again - tales that explore the human condition in terms that are accessible even to the youngest of listeners.

Pushcart Players has chosen four of these time honored fables - *The Princess and The Pea*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *All's Well That Ends Well* - and our title piece, *Little Red Riding Hood*. We've dressed them with a twinkle, a grin and a contemporary spin and brought them to life on stage for our Story Theatre Series.

While providing a perfect introduction to live theatre and delightful hour of entertainment, *Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories* also offers a gentle opportunity to discuss values, ethics and moral considerations that are well within the range of reasoning for very young viewers. This study guide is designed to familiarize parents and teachers with the material included. It also offers some suggestions for projects, art work and discussion that can further amplify themes presented in the play.

Here's to "happily ever after!"



Opening Song - "Once Upon A Time"

As castles begin to move and characters appear the audience is invited to join in the journey to once upon a time — a time that can be any time at all — long ago or just the other day.

THE PRINCESS & THE PEA

Summary

A charming, bright, and likable prince, Henri, is told he soon will become King and must find a princess to be his bride. A proclamation is sent throughout the kingdom and neighboring lands for princesses to come forward to meet the prince. He is overwhelmed by the endless line of contenders, but remembers that he will know a real princess by her sensitivity. The test, of course, is a pea, placed under a cushion. A full week of "princess meeting" fails to reveal a real princess. Just as the last is interviewed, a young woman stops at the palace for directions. She has lost her way and the prince, familiar with the area, helps her read her map. She sits — but not for long. Something about the seat is very uncomfortable. An overjoyed Prince Henri and an equally pleased Princess Penelope begin a lifelong friendship. A closing song tells us that they did marry, their love and respect for each other grew, they lived in harmony, had a family and found happiness together.



Some things to think about and discuss:

In the story, the real princess is defined by her sensitivity to something she sits upon (or, in some versions sleeps upon.) Some other ways of describing a sensitive person are: sympathetic, tender, understanding, perceptive, insightful receptive, compassionate.

- Talk about those words and encourage students to think of someone they know who did something to fit any of those descriptions.
- Tell a story or draw a picture of what happened when that person was like one of those words.
- What color(s) would you use to illustrate one of those words? What musical instruments?
- Why are the qualities described by those words qualities that we strive for?
- Why would we like to choose friends who have those qualities?

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Summary

An Emperor who is very vain and loves being dressed in finery hears that there are weavers who can make splendid cloth that possesses magical qualities for it can only be seen by those who are intelligent and well suited to their job. He summons the weavers to make this cloth. They begin working and the Emperor, about to have a look, realizes that he might not be able to see the fabric. He sends others in his court and one by one they return with glowing reports. Upon completion of the garment there is fanfare and a grand procession. "The Emperor's worst fears are realized when a child in the crowd calls out, "The Emperor is wearing nothing but his underwear!" As the weavers scurry off, the Emperor realizes he has been swindled. But, while recovering his dignity, he recognizes his misplaced priorities. Both the swindlers and the child have helped him grow in wisdom and honesty.



Some things to think about and discuss:

- Discuss the difference between inner beauty and outer dressing; defining or judging ourselves or others by how they look or what they wear.
- Discuss concepts such as group pressure, conformity and the risk of not going along with the crowd or popular opinion.
- Discuss bending the truth because of fear of humiliation or other penalties (i.e. loss of job, status, etc.) Discuss honesty, integrity and strength of character.
- Discuss having the courage of our convictions and saying what we believe is true though it may not be the popular sentiment.
- Discuss perspectives and priorities. (What seems so important at the moment may not be next week; Focusing on what we have rather than what we don't have, etc)
- Draw a picture or write or tell the story of what life was like for the Emperor after the procession in the invisible garment.



LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Summary

A little girl, Elisabeth, lives on the outskirts of the city with her mother. Her grandmama, who lives in the city, loves Elisabeth dearly and makes a special red cloak for her birthday. Elisabeth loves the cloak and wears it all the time, so everyone who knows her calls her “Little Red Riding Hood.” One day her mother gives her a basket of goodies to bring to her Grandmama who is ill. Little Red meets a shady character along the way who sends her on a long route to Grandmama’s apartment while he takes a shortcut. When Little Red gets there, he pretends he is Grandmama, but the real Grandmama arrives with help before he can do any harm. The shady character is captured and sent away so that he will never try to harm anyone again.

Some things to think about and discuss:

- Encourage students to discuss why Little Red Riding Hood’s mother told her to go directly to Grandmama’s apartment and not to talk to strangers along the way.
- Why was this difficult for Little Red Riding, Hood? (Discuss Little Red’s personality, sunny disposition, friendly nature, etc.)
- What were some alternatives for Little Red when she felt uncomfortable about talking to the person who seemed to be so “nice?”
- What were some alternatives when she got to Grandmama’s apartment and sensed something peculiar about Grandmama? (Optional: You may want to discuss seeking help from a neighbor, calling 911 or other emergency measures.)
- Write a newspaper article (or draw a series of pictures) that tells what happened when Little Red set out to bring her Grandmama a basket of goodies.
- Role play some of the situations presented in the story. , (i.e. Divide the class into groups and have each of them have the opportunity to be both the “stalked” and the “stalker;” the loving parent or grandparent and the innocent child, etc)

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Summary

An elderly farmer and his wife have lived happily together on a poor old farm for many years. They are devoted to each other and satisfied with what they have. One day, the farmer decides to go to the marketplace to trade his old horse for something more useful. His wife agrees. He meets a peasant with a cow, and though a cow is worth less than a horse, he thinks the cow will please his wife and so, makes a trade. Soon he sees another person with a sheep and trades his cow for the sheep; then the sheep for a goose and the goose for a hen. When he tells of how he got the hen, a friend bets him that his wife will be furious. The farmer accepts the challenge. In a delightful surprise ending, we see the farmer win the bet.



Some things to think about and discuss:

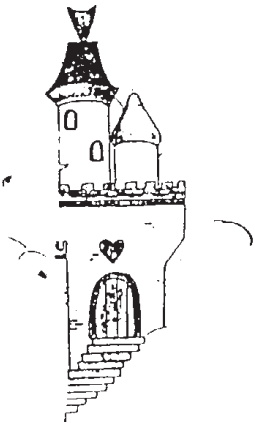
- Why do you think the farmer and his wife were happy, even though they had very little in the way of possessions?

Some value concepts to explore:

- True sources of joy (Can something you own bring you sustained happiness?)
- The pleasure that comes from wanting to please a friend or family member.
- Devotion (some synonyms: commitment, dedication, affection, attachment, fondness, tenderness, esteem, adoration). How did this loving couple fulfill some of these words?
- The difference between greed and generosity.
- The beauty in aging.

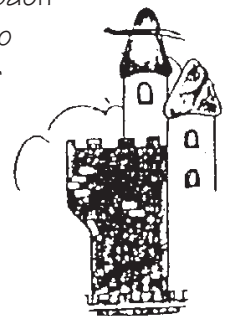
Some related activities:

- Draw a picture or write a poem or short story about someone who always wanted more; about someone who loved whatever it was he or she had.



Write or tell a short story beginning with the phrase, "After the farmer won the bet . . ." (Note: This could be a group game by seating class in a circle and having each student contribute a phrase or sentence to keep the story going. It can also be done in smaller groups of 3 or 4 and then have each group share their story with the class.)

- Draw pictures or act out one of the scenes from the story.



FINALE "Once Upon A Time"

actors provide a "wrap" and bring the show full circle with a closing song.

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The Prudential



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