

Theatre Works

FOR SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PERFORMANCE GUIDE

INTO THE WOODS

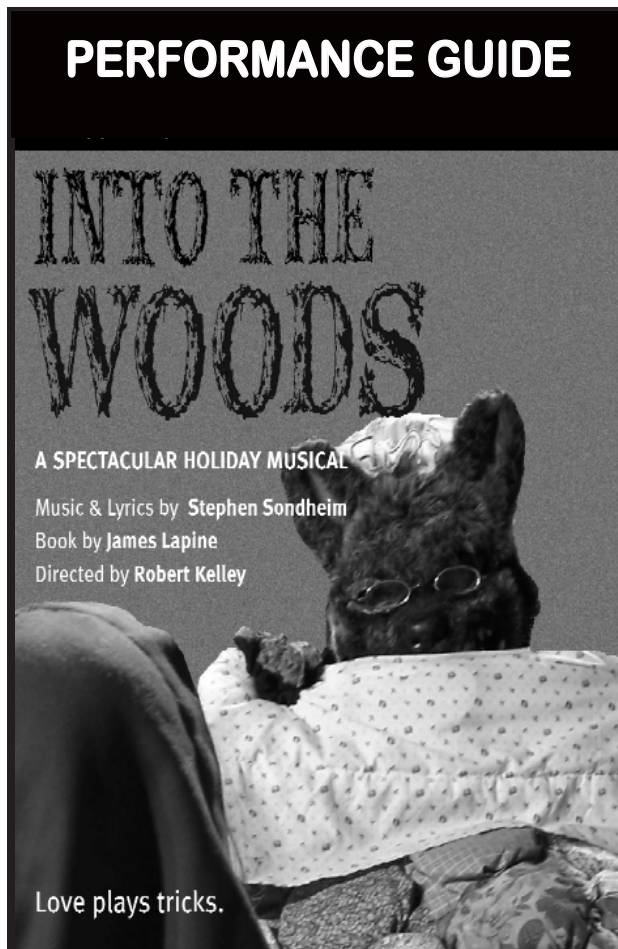
A SPECTACULAR HOLIDAY MUSICAL

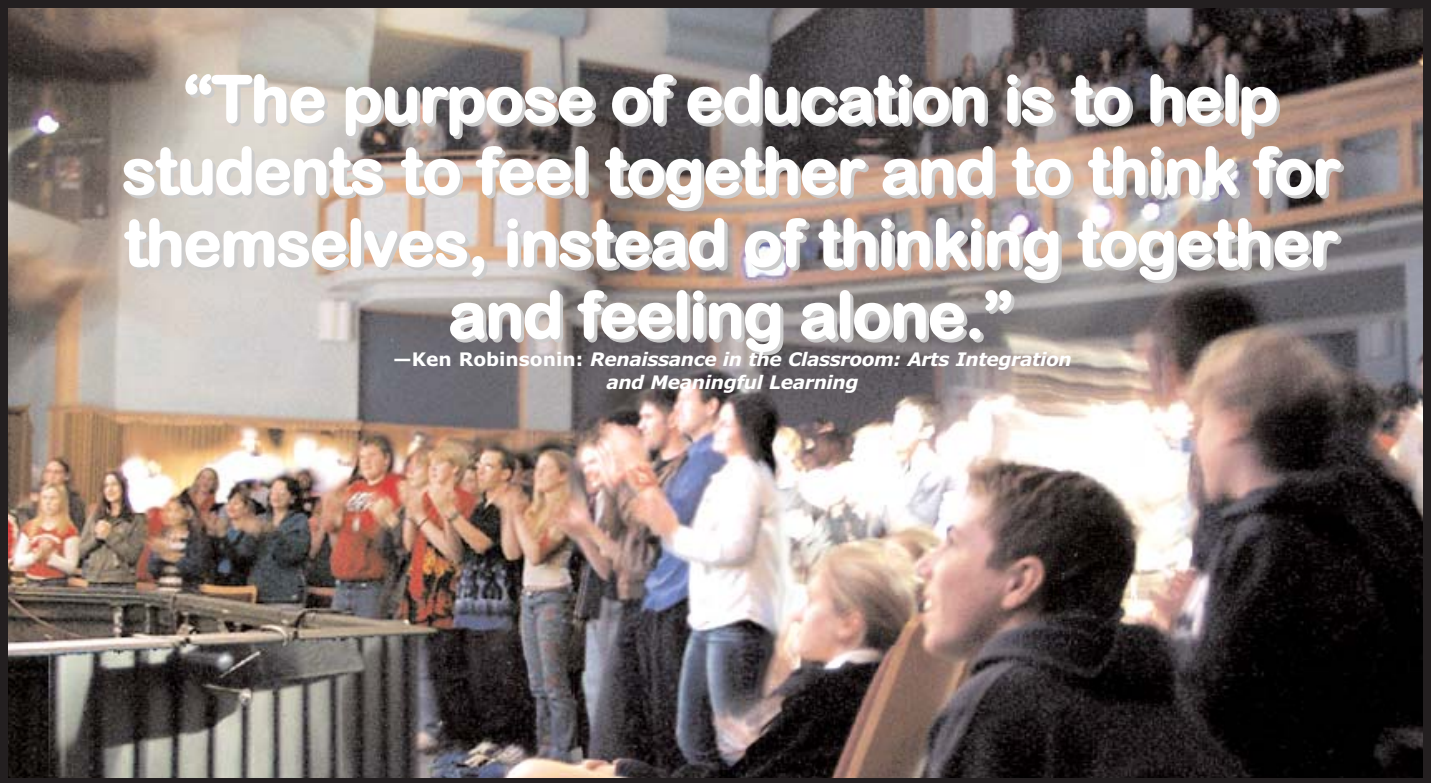
Music & Lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim**

Book by **James Lapine**

Directed by **Robert Kelley**

Love plays tricks.





“The purpose of education is to help students to feel together and to think for themselves, instead of thinking together and feeling alone.”

—Ken Robinson: *Renaissance in the Classroom: Arts Integration and Meaningful Learning*

TheatreWorks would like to thank our TheatreWorks for Schools partners, whose financial support enabled us to provide in-depth arts education throughout Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area. We served more than 12,000 students, patients and community members with 34,000 student contacts during the 2004-2005 season.

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Theatre Works

What to bring to the theatre —

Introspection
Curiosity
Questions
Respect
An open mind

What to leave behind —

Judgements
Cell phones, etc.
Backpacks

a hand out for our student audiences

The Matinees will begin at 11:30 am on December 7, 2005 and January 5, 2006 at the Lucie Stern Theatre in Palo Alto. The play is approximately 2-1/2 hours long plus one 15 minute intermission. The play will be followed by a discussion with actors from the show. Student audiences are often the most rewarding and demanding audiences that an acting ensemble can face. Since we hope every show at TheatreWorks will be a positive experience for both audience and cast, we ask you to familiarize your students with the following theatre etiquette.

- ▷ When the performance is about to begin, the lights will dim. This is a signal for the actors and the audience to put aside concerns and conversation and settle into the world of the play.
- ▷ The performers expect the audience's full attention and focus. Performance is a time to think inwardly, not a time to share your thoughts aloud. Talking to neighbors (even in whispers) carries easily to others in the audience and to the actors on-stage. It is disruptive and distracting.
- ▷ There is no food in the theatre: soda, candy, and other snacks are noisy and, therefore, distracting. Please keep these items on the bus or throw them away before you enter the audience area. There are no backpacks in the theatre.
- ▷ Walking through the aisles during the performance is extremely disruptive. Actors occasionally use aisles and stairways as exits and entrances. The actors will notice any movement in the performance space. Please use the restroom and take care of all other concerns outside before the show or at intermission.
- ▷ Pagers, watch alarms and other electronic devices should be turned off before the performance begins. When watch alarms, cell phones, and pagers go off it is very distracting for the actors and the audience.

prepare
your
students

Live theatre offers students an opportunity to experience new ideas, challenge the status quo, and discover people previously unknown to them. It is our hope that this study guide will help your students get the most out of their TheatreWorks matinee.

**for our
teachers**

How to use this Study Guide

This guide is arranged in worksheets. They are labeled in the bottom right corner. Each worksheet or reading may be used independently or in conjunction with others to serve your own educational goals. Together, the worksheets provide a scaffolded unit to prepare students for seeing the production at TheatreWorks and for discussing the performance afterwards. (Certain worksheets will be more appropriate for different ages. Please choose accordingly.)

What is in this Study Guide

- Worksheet 1 Overview: What is a fairy tale?
- Worksheet 2 Exploring Plot: About the Play
- Worksheet 3 Writing Exercise: Re-imagining Fairy Tales
- Worksheet 4 Exploring Metaphor: What is "the woods?"
- Worksheet 5 Exploring Theme: "Temptation and Growing Up"
- Worksheet 6 Exploring Theme: "Good versus Evil"
- Worksheet 7 Exploring Theme: "Community Responsibility"
- Worksheet 8 After the Production For Older Audience: "Our Universe of Obligation"
- Worksheet 9 After the Production: "Happily Ever After"
- Worksheet 10 Storytelling Through Song and Music
- Worksheet 11 Elements of Live Theatre: Costume, Set, Lighting
- Worksheet 12 For the Teacher Feedback Form
- Worksheet 13 For the Student Feedback Form
- Resource Page

standards

Theatre Arts Content Standards:

Grades 4	Standard	1.0	Observe environment and respond, using the elements and vocabulary of theater
9-12		1.0	Use the vocabulary of theater, such as acting values, style, genre, design, and theme, to describe theatrical experiences.
4		1.2	Identify a character's objectives and motivations to explain the character's behavior
8		1.2	Identify and analyze recurring themes and patterns (e.g., loyalty, bravery, revenge, redemption) in a script to make production choices in design and direction.
9-12		1.2	Document observations and perceptions of production elements, noting mood, pacing, and use of space through class discussion and reflective writing.
4		4.0	Critique and derive meaning from works of theater, film/video, electronic media and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities
5		4.0	Develop and apply appropriate criteria for critiquing the work of actors, directors, writers, and technical artists in theater, film, and video.
4		4.1	Develop and apply appropriate criteria or rubrics for critiquing performances as to characterization, diction, pacing, gesture and movement
5-6		4.1	Develop and apply appropriate criteria for evaluating sets, lighting, costumes, makeup, and props.
7		4.1	Design and apply appropriate criteria or rubrics for evaluating the effective use of masks, puppetry, makeup, and costumes in a theatrical presentation.
8		4.1	Develop criteria and write a formal review of a theatrical production.
5		4.2	Identify examples of how theater, television, and film can influence or be influenced by politics and culture.
9-12		4.2	Report on how a specific actor used drama to convey meaning in his or her performances.
4-12		5.0	Apply what they learn in theater across subject areas (in particular language arts)

Language Arts Content Standards:

- Contrast the actions, motives (e.g., loyalty, selfishness), and appearances of characters.
- Understand that theme refers to the meaning or moral of a selection and recognize themes.

For additional information, contact Elissa Stebbins, Education Associate at 650.463.7154, elissa@theatreworks.org.

We look forward to seeing you and your students at the theatre.



Once Upon a Time. . .

. . . in a far off kingdom
lived a young maiden,
a sad young lad,
and a childless baker
with his wife.

So begins, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's musical *Into the Woods*, a fairy tale journey of characters, both familiar and new, searching for their "happy ever after" ending.

For Older Students:

To begin your study of this musical, take a moment to review some of their favorite fairy tales. Brainstorm a list of stories with your students, reviewing the plots briefly. As you discuss the stories, ask students to look for elements that many of the stories share. Older students may be interested to learn that many of the fairy tale versions we are familiar with are very sanitized and different in tone than their original versions (primarily thanks to Disney movies!). Most of the characters in *Into the Woods* come from a collection of tales by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, commonly referred to as The Brothers Grimm. Older students may enjoy comparing the darker versions to the versions they remember from their younger years.

For Younger Students:

Create a list of familiar tales that include *Cinderella*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Rapunzel*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*. Perhaps read aloud a different fairy tale each day or embark on a more in-depth study of fairy tales with your class. In so doing, create a chart that identifies elements that the stories share such as:

- "Once upon a time"
- good characters versus evil characters
- a beautiful princess or a handsome prince (or both!)
- the use of magic
- talking animals
- a happy ending

Students of all ages, may find it interesting to compare and contrast differing fairy tale versions. The *Cinderella* story, in particular, is found in many different cultures around the world. A list of multi-cultural fairy tales can usually be found at your local library.





mix it up/ the plot

ACT I

In a far off kingdom, we meet a childless Baker and his Wife. They learn from the Witch next door that because the Baker's father had stolen magic beans from her garden, she made his father and mother pay by giving up their daughter, Rapunzel, to her. The poor Baker didn't even know he had a sister! To his further dismay, he learns the witch also placed a spell on him to ensure that he would not be able to have children. She promises to reverse the spell if the Baker will collect four items for her

within three days—"ONE: THE COW AS WHITE AS MILK, TWO: THE CAPE AS RED AS BLOOD, THREE: THE HAIR AS YELLOW AS CORN, FOUR: THE SLIPPER AS PURE AS GOLD." The Baker (unknowingly followed by his wife) sets out on a journey through the neighboring woods to find the items. Meanwhile, Little Red Riding Hood is making her way through the woods to her grandmother's house, while Cinderella is going to visit her mother's grave in the woods, and Jack is off to the market in order to sell his cow, Milky White, to get money for food. In the course of their journeys, these characters and others meet and intermingle in ways familiar and unexpected, but by the end of Act I, the characters have all been granted their wishes and prepare to live their lives happily ever after.

ACT II

At the top of Act II, we see that the "happily ever after" for which our main characters wished, did not turn out quite the way they thought it would. And to make matters worse, a great disaster in the kingdom suddenly sends them back into the woods fleeing for their lives. Not everyone survives this disaster and characters face tough decisions about how to carry on. Many learn for the first time the value of depending on one another.

connections

Explore merging characters in different stories to create new stories with this improvisation exercise:

1. Select four students to act as "storytellers."
2. Ask the audience for the names of three characters from famous fairy tales and a special location.
3. The teacher should serve as the story starter and "conductor." Begin the story for the group (being sure to set the stage and include a conflict). Then point to one of the storytellers to continue where you left off. At varying points in the story, point to a different storyteller to indicate they should continue the narrative.
4. Stop the narrative when it comes to a natural conclusion (sometimes this must be prompted).
5. Repeat with new storytellers, characters, and locations.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Instruct the students that the main characters cannot die in the first round of the game.
- Keep it moving fast in attempt to prevent "planning ahead."

worksheet

2



re-imagining

fairy tales

As briefly summarized on worksheet 2, the plot of *Into the Woods* draws on the plots of many well known fairy tales. Continue to have students explore this concept of adapting and changing stories to create new stories of their own with the following writing exercises (select exercises most appropriate for your students' level). The story map to the right can be copied and enlarged.

Fractured Fairy Tale

Select a well know story such as *Cinderella*. Brainstorm with students ways in which the story might be altered. For example:

- Cinderella is homely but good at heart. (a la *Shrek* style)
- The prince can't dance and is very shy.
- Cinderella doesn't want to get married.

Outline a new story based on one of your ideas. After modeling, allow students to select a story of their own and change the tale to create their own story.

From A Different Perspective

Read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieska aloud. Talk about how the story changes when told from the wolf's perspective. Have students select a different fairy tale and tell the story from one of the other character's point of view.

For example:

- The evil stepmother in *Snow White*
- The wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*
- The Giant's mother in *Jack & the Beanstalk*
- The stepsister in *Cinderella*

Predictions

Read the synopsis for *Into the Woods* on page 2. In small groups, allow students to make predictions about Act. II. Have them create their own story.

Options for all writing exercises:

1. Write the story in script format and perform it.
2. Write the story in picture book format.
3. Write the story and perform as a puppet show.

Story Map	
Main Characters:	Setting:
Problem (conflict):	
Event (action):	
Event (action):	
How the problem is solved (resolution):	
What the characters learn (moral):	

“the woods”

Top of ACT I

**INTO THE WOODS
TO GET MY WISH
I DON'T CARE HOW
THE TIME IS NOW...**

THE WAY IS CLEAR
THE LIGHT IS GOOD
I HAVE NO FEAR,
NOR NO ONE SHOULD.
THE WOODS ARE JUST TREES
THE TREES ARE JUST WOOD.
NO NEED TO BE AFRAID THERE—
THERE'S SOMETHING
IN THE GLADE THERE...

End of ACT I

THOUGH IT'S FEARFUL,
THOUGH IT'S DEEP,
THOUGH IT'S DARK,
AND THOUGH YOU MAY
LOSE THE PATH,
THOUGH YOU MAY
ENCOUNTER WOLVES,
**YOU MUSTN'T STOP,
YOU MUSTN'T SWERVE,
YOU HAVE TO ACT!**
YOU CAN HAVE YOUR WISH,
BUT YOU CAN'T JUST WISH—
NO, TO GET YOUR WISH
YOU GO...INTO THE WOODS
AND THROUGH THE FEAR...

End of ACT II

THOUGH IT'S FEARFUL,
THOUGH IT'S DEEP,
THOUGH IT'S DARK,
AND THOUGH YOU MAY
LOSE THE PATH,
THOUGH YOU MAY
ENCOUNTER WOLVES,
**YOU CAN'T JUST ACT,
YOU HAVE TO THINK.**

THERE ARE ALWAYS WOLVES,
THERE ARE ALWAYS SPELLS,
THERE ARE ALWAYS BEANS,
OR A GIANT DWELLS THERE...

**INTO THE WOODS,
BUT NOT TOO FAST
OR WHAT YOU WISH
YOU LOSE AT LAST.**

INTO THE WOODS, BUT MIND THE PAST.
INTO THE WOODS, BUT MIND THE

connections

Lyricist and composer Stephen Sondheim uses the journey through the woods to represent the characters' journey through life's challenges.

The boxes above contain excerpts of lyrics from the title song in its various forms throughout the play. Read each set of lyrics and see if you can tell what Sondheim is trying to say about the woods, about life, and about how we should approach obstacles in our lives. Look specifically at how the lyrics change from one act to the next. What do you think the characters learn in their journey?

a metaphor:

1. A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison
2. One thing conceived as representing another; a symbol.



temptation and growing up

Read the lyrics (left) sung by Little Red Ridinghood in the musical *Into the Woods*. Use the song and what you know of Little Red's story from the traditional fairy tale to answer the following questions:

- How did the Wolf trick Little Red Ridinghood?
- Why do you think she listened to him even though she knew it was forbidden?
- What did she learn from her experience?
- What does she mean by her final two lines?

connections

A moral is a lesson that the character learns in the story that we can apply to our own lives.

- Can you learn from Little Red's lesson?
- Have you ever been tempted to do something you knew you shouldn't do? What happened?

Use your experience (or make up a new one) to write your own fairy tale with a moral at the end. Share with your classmates.

after the play

Many of the characters in *Into the Woods* (both young and old) are tempted to do things that they may know are not exactly the best choices to make in life in order to get something they want. In return, each of them learn valuable life lessons. After seeing the production, discuss which characters make mistakes in their journey through the woods. Do they learn from these mistakes?

I KNOW THINGS NOW

(SUNG BY LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD)

MOTHER SAID
"STRAIGHT AHEAD."
NOT TO DELAY
OR BE MISLED.
I SHOULD HAVE HEHEDED
HER ADVICE...

BUT HE SEEMED SO NICE.

AND HE SHOWED ME THINGS,
MANY BEAUTIFUL THINGS,
THAT I HADN'T THOUGHT TO EXPLORE,
THEY WERE OFF MY PATH,
SO I NEVER HAD DARED.
I HAD BEEN SO CAREFUL
I NEVER HAD CARED,
AND HE MADE ME FEEL EXCITED —
WELL, EXCITED AND SCARED.

WHEN HE SAID "COME IN!"
WITH THAT SICKENING GRIN,
HOW COULD I KNOW WHAT WAS IN STORE?
ONCE HIS TEETH WERE BARED,
THOUGH, I REALLY GOT SCARED —
WELL, EXCITED AND SCARED —

BUT HE DREW ME CLOSE
AND HE SWALLOWED ME DOWN,
DOWN A DARK SLIMY PATH
WHERE LIE SECRETS THAT I NEVER
WANT TO KNOW
AND WHEN EVERYTHING FAMILIAR

SEEMED TO DISAPPEAR FOREVER,
AT THE END OF THE PATH
WAS GRANNY ONCE AGAIN.

SO WE WAIT IN THE DARK
UNTIL SOMEONE SETS US FREE,
AND WE'RE BROUGHT INTO THE LIGHT,
AND WE'RE BACK AT THE START.

AND I KNOW THINGS NOW,
MANY VALUABLE THINGS,
THAT I HADN'T KNOWN BEFORE:
DO NOT PUT YOUR FAITH
IN A CAPE AND A HOOD —
THEY WILL NOT PROTECT YOU
THE WAY THAT THEY SHOULD —
AND TAKE EXTRA CARE WITH STRANGERS,
EVEN FLOWERS HAVE THEIR DANGERS.
AND THOUGH SCARY IS EXCITING,
NICE IS DIFFERENT THAN GOOD.

NOW I KNOW:
DON'T BE SCARED
GRANNY IS RIGHT,
JUST BE PREPARED.

ISN'T IT NICE TO KNOW A LOT!

... AND A LITTLE BIT NOT ...

good and evil



**OF COURSE WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS THE
BLAME,
SOMEONE YOU CAN BLAME.
FINE, IF THAT'S THE THING YOU ENJOY,
PLACING THE BLAME.
IF THAT'S THE AIM, GIVE ME THE BLAME —
JUST GIVE ME THE BOY...
NO...
YOU'RE SO NICE.
YOU'RE NOT GOOD, YOU'RE NOT BAD,
YOU'RE JUST NICE.
I'M NOT GOOD, I'M NOT NICE, I'M JUST
RIGHT.
I'M THE WITCH.
YOU'RE THE WORLD.**

Traditionally, fairy tales have one character who serves as the "bad guy." This stock character is often depicted as very evil and out to get the main character through no fault of their own. Think of the following fairy tales and name the "bad" character.

Hansel & Grethel
Rapunzel
Cinderella
The Little Mermaid

Little Red Ridinghood
Sleeping Beauty
Snow White & the 7 Dwarfs
The Three Little Pigs

These characters seem to act out of pure evil. They are just simply bad. In *Into the Woods*, Sondheim and Lapine take the character of the witch, a traditionally evil character, and make her much more complex. The witch is given a story of her own, with a mother who was not very nice to her and a daughter who she loves very much. She makes mistakes and she is punished for those mistakes, but she is much closer to a human being with her ability to love and to learn.

Likewise, the other characters are also more complex. They, too, make decisions that are selfish and ultimately cause harm to themselves or others. Like in real life, the line between good and evil is blurred. Each character has the capacity to act very "good" and very "bad." Sometimes a character is trying so hard to get what they want, they don't realize that they are hurting someone else. They don't even recognize the consequences of their actions.

After the Play

Read the quote above, what is the witch trying to say to the other characters.

After seeing the play, trace the journey of one character. What do they do that seems bad or selfish? What do they do that seems good or selfless? Do you think of them as a good or bad person?

Does doing a bad thing mean you are a bad person?

What is your definition of a good person?

Can you think of a time in your life when you did something that hurt someone else, even though you did not intend for that to happen? How did you feel afterwards? What did you do?

When we read a story, we assume that a character called the witch is going to be an evil person. We usually assume that the beautiful princess is going to be a nice, good person. Can you create a story in which the reverse is true? You can use a traditional fairy tale and re-write it or write a new story all on your own.

After the Play

community responsibility

***It takes two.
I thought one was enough.
It's not true.
It takes two of us.
You came through
When the journey was rough.
It took you.
It took two of us.***

—*The Baker, Act I Scene III*



***Mother cannot guide you.
Now you're on your own.
Only me beside you.
Still, you're not alone.
No one is alone. Truly.
No one is alone.***

—*Cinderella, Act II Scene II*

Into the Woods is about learning how to care for one another in times of need. This can be called having a sense of "community responsibility." Choose one of the sets of lyrics above. Write about what was happening in the play when they were sung. How does the scene portray this idea of "community responsibility?" When you have finished, draw a picture below the description illustrating what happened in the scene.

Can you think of any other instances in which characters showed a sense of "community responsibility?"

“Among other things, the show is about community responsibility...you can’t just go and chop down trees and tease princes and pretend that beans are worth more than they are. Everybody has to pay for that.”

--Sondheim about *Into the Woods*

our universe of obligation

Communities are not built of friends, or of groups of people with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other. They are built of people who feel they are part of something that is bigger than themselves: a shared goal or enterprise, like righting a wrong, or building a road, or raising children, or living honorably, or worshipping a god. To build community requires only the ability to see value in others; to look at them and see a potential partner in one's enterprise.

Historian Helen Fein offers the phrase "universe of obligation" to help people understand an operational definition of community. She believes that communities often expand and contract to include or exclude members, and that this expansion or contraction involves not only circumstances, but real choices, moral and ethical choices, about how to see "other" people.

Fein's phrase, "universe of obligation," describes "that circle of individuals or groups toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends."

connections

After seeing the play, break out into small groups and have each group read this definition of "Universe of Obligation." Report back and spend a few minutes jotting down on the blackboard what is powerful or significant about the definition. Make a list of all the communities that members of your class belong to. What does the definition suggest to you about the "communities" we belong to? Can your class name two or three groups or communities with which they identify in particular?

With a partner, discuss how your definitions of Universe of Obligation might relate to the themes in *Into the Woods*.

Think about the journey of the characters; specifically consider where each "family" began at the start of the show and how new families were created by the end of the show.

Did this fairy tale version of life reflect our own society in any way?

Now consider, the recent tragedies surrounding Hurricane Katrina. How did this concept of "Universe of Obligation" play out in the response to the victims of the hurricane?

- Can you think of examples in which some people expanded their universe of obligation?
- Can you think of examples in which some people did not?
- Do you think we learned anything as a country about our interconnectedness?

***You move just a finger.
Say the slightest word.
Somethings bound to linger.
Be heard.***

—the Baker & Cinderella, Act II Scene II

Now consider your own community, are there bridges that need to be built to expand your universe of obligation?



happily ever after?

What begins so innocently as a simple wish for each of the characters in *Into the Woods* sends them on a journey that changes them forever.

The characters in this fairy tale do not all find a happily ever after ending...or at least not the one they imagined they would have at the start of the story.

Can you match the character with their lines from the show? Draw a line from the character to the quote. Discuss with your classmates the lesson that each learned. Did they get what they want? Was it what they expected?

*I was perfect.
I had everything but beauty.
I had power,
And a daughter like a flower,
In a tower.
Then I went into the woods
To get my wish
And now I'm ordinary.
Lost my power and my flower.*

*I thought that if you were
mine, that I would never wish
for more. And part of me is
content and as happy as I've
ever been. But there remains
a part of me that continually
needs more...I shall always
love the maiden who ran
away.*

*My father's house was a
nightmare. Your house
was a dream. Now I
want something in
between.*

**The
Baker**

**Cinderella's
stepsisters**

**The
Prince**

Cinderella

**The
Witch**

*No more giants,
Waging war.
Can't we just pursue our lives
With our children and our wives?
Till that happier day arrives,
How do we ignore
All the witches,
All the curses,
All the wolves, all the lies,
The false hopes, the goodbyes,
the reverses,
All the wondering what even
worse is still in store?
All the children...
All the giants....
No more.*

*I was greedy.
I was vain.
I was haughty.
I was smug.
We were happy.
It was fun.
But we were blind.
Then we went in to the woods
To get our wish
And now we're really blind.*

What lesson do you think these characters learned?

The Baker's Wife _____

Jack _____

Little Red Ridinghood _____



storytelling through song & music

America's greatest original contribution to the theatre is the musical; yet the genre is too often dismissed as escapist entertainment. The reasons for the musical's disrepute are many. In its infancy, in the early years of this century, musical theatre was unsophisticated. The plot line was thin. There was little attempt to integrate song and dance, and a basic formula of delight and diversion, beautiful girls, slapstick comics, and romantic ballads prevailed. The simplistic moralism, the naive optimism, the noble hero and simpering heroine were adopted, unaltered, from the nineteenth-century melodrama. The commercial success of these pieces encouraged their fossilization into a predictable pattern of sensational extravaganzas. Artistic merit was deemed less important than financial gain. The musical was viewed solely as a commercial commodity.

The evolutionary progression of the musical from *Showboat* to Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* is well documented in histories of the American musical. The form changed and became increasingly complex. Integration became the key word as Rodgers and Hammerstein wove the texture of song, dance, and plot closely together. Yet despite the fact that such themes as racial prejudice (in *South Pacific* and *Finian's Rainbow*, for example), marital disharmony and infidelity (in *Carousel* and *The Most Happy Fella*), and capitalist venality (in *Allegro* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*) were introduced, this kind of theater retained an essential naivete. The musicals of the forties and fifties were escapist in that they transported their audience into a larger-than-life world where emotions were expressed in melody and the evening

was capped with a reassuring reprise at the final curtain. The climate of progress and promise that prevailed during the creative period of Rodgers and Hammerstein's career no longer existed by the late 1960's. From that point on, for an artist in the commercial theatre to comment on, or attempt to change, prevalent attitudes has been an invitation to financial disaster and obscurity.

Yet Sondheim and his collaborators have blazed a trail of creativity and commitment on Broadway. Rather than an esoteric style, they have chosen the popular form of American theatre and invested it with a truth and vitality rarely associated with Broadway musicals.

Sondheim and his collaborators choose both complex subjects and consistently experimental techniques, and their musicals begin after the traditional happily-ever-after has run into trouble. In an interview with Hubert Saal of *Newsweek*, Harold Prince explains his and Sondheim's commitment to "truth" in the musical theatre: "I work in the theatre, not in the musical theatre... Who says to be entertained means to be tickled?... I think it's more stimulating to be upset. I try to be part of what I want to see. And I go to the theatre to see a little blood drawn."

Sondheim is the preeminent exponent of this new musical form. His work has redefined the genre and, as a result, the gulf that separated "serious," "legitimate" theatre from the musical theatre has effectively been bridged."

—excerpted from *Art Isn't Easy, The Theatre of Stephen Sondheim* by Joanne Gordon

connections

Heightened Language in Musicals

Obviously, in musicals actors suddenly burst into songs—this is called a convention. Different conventions exist in all art forms. For example, in movies and television, characters don't really get from one place to another as quickly as they appear to, but we understand that the boring part of their journey has been cut. Conventions help the poetry of the work of art come to life. A song is often described as "poetry to music." Characters in the theatre live in a heightened state of reality or a heightened sense of life in which they experience emotions with great force. It is almost as if their passion, their pain, their happiness is so overwhelming, that it can only be expressed through song.

What heightened moments were expressed through song in the musical *Into the Woods*? Could you tell how the characters were feeling (happy, sad, angry) by the way the actors delivered the song? Did the tone of the songs change from Act I to Act II? Why are we drawn to listening to stories through song?

elements of live theatre

Before Seeing the Production

DIRECTION

1. Discuss the role of director and the meaning of a "director's concept" (overall vision of the play based on themes including time period, setting, etc.).
2. Identify what your concept for the play would be. How would you communicate this concept to the audience?
3. Prepare a cast list for the major characters in *Into the Woods* based on the short summary on Worksheet 2. Using the summary and your knowledge of the original fairy tales, list characteristics you would look for in the performers selected for each role. After completing your list, select actors from film, television, and theatre who best suit the criteria.

ACTING

1. Discuss the role of the actor, the meaning of characterization, and the tools of an actor (voice, body, imagination).
2. Consider one of the major characters. What kind of advice would you give to the actor portraying that role?

DESIGN

1. Discuss the roles of each of the designers (set, costume, light).
2. In *Into the Woods*, the set designer has to create designs for a lot of different locations including the Bakery, Cinderella's house, the Castle, Jack's house, and the woods. How might you solve that problem?
3. The tone of the play changes from Act I to Act II. In Act I, the woods are not as sinister as in Act II. How might the set and lighting design reflect that.
4. Choose a character and design a costume for him or her.

After Seeing the Production

DIRECTION

1. Can you identify the director's production concept? Consider:
 - a. Where and in what time period the play appears to take place? What is this saying about the themes and messages of the play?
 - b. What themes received the most emphasis?
2. In your opinion, did the director's concept suit the play and help the audience's understanding of the play?
3. Compare your group's casting ideas with those of the director. What are the areas of agreement or disagreement? Did you agree with his selection?

ACTING

1. After a rehearsal or performance, a director gives each cast member "notes" (suggestions or observations about their performance). Ask each student to prepare detailed "notes" for at least one cast member, citing what they liked, disliked, and would change about their performance.
2. In discussing the notes, consider clarity of communication and ensemble in addition to credibility and characterization.

DESIGN

1. Set design:
 - a. Was the set design more realistic or abstract?
 - b. Can you identify any characteristic visual patterns in the set (i.e. the use of color or shape)?
 - c. Did the design provide a variety of opportunities for stage movement (multiple exits, playing levels, etc.)?
2. Lighting design:
 - a. Was the stage clearly illuminated? If not, did this appear to be by accident or design?
 - b. Did the lighting evoke a particular mood or feeling?
3. Costume design:
 - a. Were the costumes appropriate to the characters?
 - b. Did they support the director's production concept?

After the Performance FOR TEACHERS:

In order to maintain our matinee program's quality and obtain the funding that subsidized our affordable prices, we need your feedback. Please take a moment following the performance to obtain written responses from your students.

Would you participate in this program again? What more can TheatreWorks do to help you and your students have a positive experience?

What about this experience was most valuable to you?

How did this program impact your teaching: i.e. ideas for lesson plans and activities.

After this experience will you consider incorporating theatre arts into your curriculum if TheatreWorks offers teachers development?

Did you use the study guide for preparation? If not, why? If so, how was it useful?

Please mail or email responses to:
TheatreWorks
PO Box 50458
Palo Alto, CA 94303-0458
attn. Elissa Stebbins
elissa@theatreworks.org

We need to hear from you!



After the performance FOR STUDENTS:

Write a letter to the director, actor, or author of the play telling them what you appreciated or did not appreciate about the show.

Write a review of the show as if it were to appear in the school newspaper.

Would you recommend it to others?
What did you like?
What did you dislike?
What character did you relate to the most?
What affected you the most?
What was the mood of the piece?
What did the piece have to say to you?
Was the playwright successful in communicating the theme?
What stage craft did you like the most?
How did you feel watching the show?

Please answer the following questions thoughtfully, so that we can better serve our students.

If you participated in a workshop before the performance, what did you like best about it? What didn't you respond to in the workshop?

Tell us what were the top three things about your experience of going to the theatre?

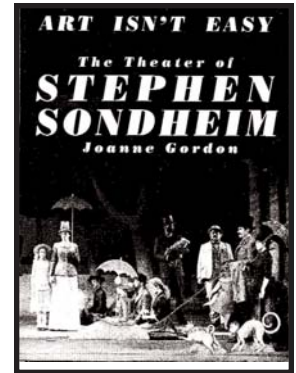
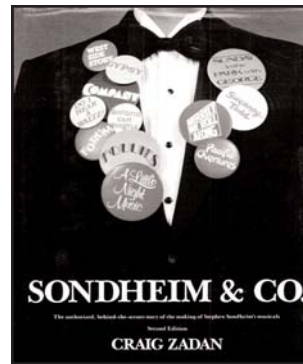
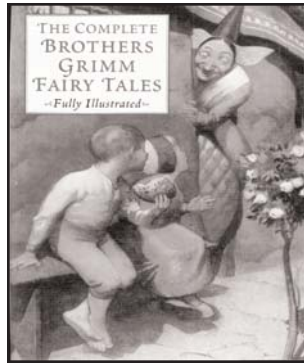
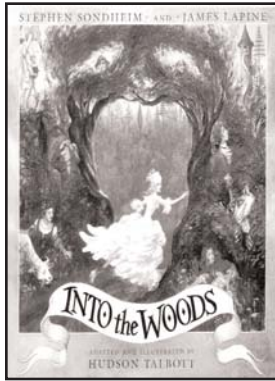
Would you like to go to theatre again? What kinds of things would you like to see on stage?

Please mail or email responses to:
TheatreWorks
PO Box 50458
Palo Alto, CA 94303-0458
attn. Elissa Stebbins
elissa@theatreworks.org



worksheet

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Resources

books:

Into the Woods

adapted & illustrated by Hudson Talbott

a picture-book adaptation of the Broadway Musical

The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales

edited by Lily Owens

Sondheim & Co., Second Edition by Craig Zadan

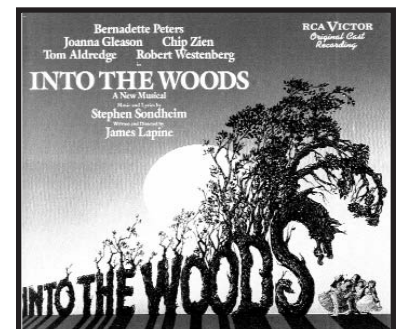
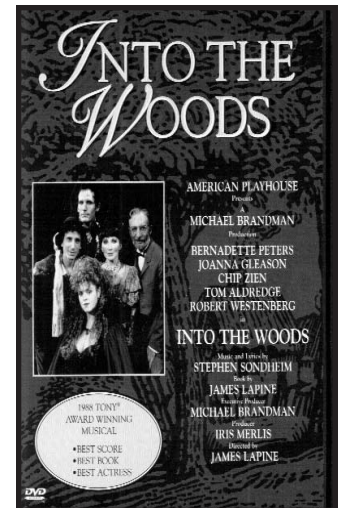
the authorized, behind-the-scenes story of the making of Stephen Sondheim's musicals

Art Isn't Easy: The Theater of Stephen Sondheim

by Joanne Gordon

Stephen Sondheim: a life

biography by Meryle Secrest



videos & cd:

Into the Woods

original Broadway cast DVD (1990)

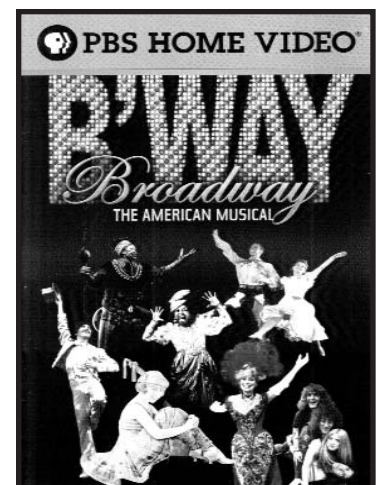
Into the Woods

original Broadway cast CD (1987)

revival Broadway cast CD (2002)

Broadway: The American Musical

PBS Video Series (2004)



resource page