

STUDY GUIDE

theater simple's

MYTH UNDERSTANDINGS

A play by theater simple

Compiled for the YEP program of the
2006 Adelaide Fringe

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Myth Understandings

Age Recommendation: year 1-6

Length: 50 minutes

Myth Understandings

A funny, physical & sideways look at myths and fairytales and their battle to survive in our world of technology. We guarantee you've heard of these stories before, but probably not this way. Fantastic, incredible, preposterous, absurd, superlative and sophisticated. Stories included are *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Rumpletiltskin* & a few surprises.

About theater simple

An award-winning, internationally acclaimed touring company, **theater simple** was founded in 1990 by idea-wielding actors, who aim to strip the theatrical experience down to its elemental parts:
the imagination of the actor and audience, the playwright's words and the director's vision.

theater simple has built a solid international reputation producing provocative, literate, subversive, jaw-dropping and original theatrical experiences. In this way, we aim to do plays that touch/challenge/inspire, and perhaps change artists and audiences that want theater simple. **We build from the imagination up.**

Performing and touring internationally since 1991, theater simple has participated in international arts festivals from **East** (Spoleto Festival USA, Piccolo Theatre series, Charleston, South Carolina) to **West** (Perth International Arts Festival Fringe, Western Australia).

They have accumulated more awards and accolades from media and arts councils alike than you can comfortably shake a stick at, in three countries on two continents.

In Australia, the **GRAND PRIZE for ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE** at the Adelaide Fringe Festival was awarded the company in 1996 - overall honors out of 350 groups by the Advertiser and the Independent Arts Council of South Australia. (Not bad for the Australian debut of a tiny theater from Seattle.)

Subsequently, in 1998 *THE MASTER & MARGARITA* was named one of three BEST PLAYS at the Adelaide Fringe, and *The FOREIGN LEGION*, curated by the artistic directors of the company, swept all THREE Best Play awards. We are returning in February 2006 for our 10 year anniversary at the with *Myth Understandings*, and our two adult plays, *52 Pick Up* and *The Fever*.

Methods of Discussion

Obviously, you fabulous teachers are going to know your students better than we do, and what their abilities and points of excitement are. Our hope is to give a few general ideas of activities for younger students, and a few more elaborate ideas for those older or ambitious.

If you come up with any cool ideas, we'd love to hear them!

Email us comments or questions at info@theatersimple.org

Best wishes, and we hope to see you in the theater! Er... theatRE...

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Adelaide Fringe 2006

definitions

fairytale, *n.*,

A fanciful tale of legendary deeds and creatures, usually intended for children

A fictitious, highly fanciful story or explanation

folktale, *n.*,

A story or legend forming part of an oral tradition. Often helps clarify or demonstrate cultural or ethnic ideas or codes of behavior.

story, *n.*,

An account or recital of an event or a series of events, either true or fictitious, as:

An account or report regarding the facts of an event or group of events: *The witness changed her story under questioning.*

An anecdote: *came back from the trip with some good stories.*

A lie: *told us a story about the dog eating the cookies.*

A usually fictional prose or verse narrative intended to interest or amuse the hearer or reader; a tale.

A short story.

The plot of a narrative or dramatic work

myth, *n.*

A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society: *the myth of Eros and Psyche; a creation myth.*

Such stories considered as a group: *the realm of myth.*

A popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence, especially one considered to illustrate a cultural ideal: *a star whose fame turned her into a myth; the pioneer myth of suburbia.*

A fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms part of an ideology

element, *n.*

A fundamental, essential, or irreducible constituent of a composite entity.

science, *n.*

The observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.

Such activities applied to an object of inquiry or study.

Methodological activity, discipline, or study: *I've got packing a suitcase down to a science.*

An activity that appears to require study and method: *the science of purchasing.*

Knowledge, especially that gained through experience.

ogre, *n.*

A giant or monster in legends and fairy tales that eats humans.

A person who is felt to be particularly cruel, brutish, or hideous.

adventure, *n.*

An undertaking or enterprise of a hazardous nature.

An undertaking of a questionable nature, especially one involving intervention in another state's affairs.

An unusual or exciting experience: *an adventure in dining.*

Participation in hazardous or exciting experiences: *the love of adventure.*

i·mag·i·na·tion, *n.*

The formation of a mental image of something that is neither perceived as real nor present to the senses.

The mental image so formed.

The ability or tendency to form such images.

The ability to confront and deal with reality by using the creative power of the mind; resourcefulness: *handled the problems with great imagination.*

greed, *n.*

An excessive desire to acquire or possess more than what one needs or deserves, especially with respect to material wealth.

secret

adj.

Kept hidden from knowledge or view; concealed.

Dependably discreet.

Operating in a hidden or confidential manner: *a secret agent.*

n.

Something kept hidden from others or known only to oneself or to a few.

Something that remains beyond understanding or explanation; a mystery.

A method or formula on which success is based: *The secret of this dish is in the sauce.*

Interesting Questions for Conversations

- What is your favorite fairytale and why?
- How can stories help us in everyday life?
- Do you know of any stories that are similar but have different endings?
What are they and how are they different?
Why do you think there are differences in these stories?
- What would the world be like if there were no fairytales to tell or listen to?
- How has technology hurt traditional storytelling? How has it helped?
- In this play the Scientists are using formulas and scientific means to try and understand how fairytales work.
Do you think science can understand everything in the world of words? Why or why not?
- The two scientists learn a lot during the course of the play; what do you think they learn? How does it affect them?
What is the ingredient or story element that first causes the Scientists to begin experiencing the stories?
- Why are there different versions of Little Red Riding Hood?
How do different endings change how you feel about the story?
- In the silly little song, the Scientists talk about several stories - Do you remember what any of them were? (For the record, *The Three Little Pigs*, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *Goldilocks and the 3 Bears*, and *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*).
Think about your favorite fairy tale – what three or four ingredients would the Scientists NEED to make the story appear?
Does your story share any elements with any other story you know of?
- Was it fair that Daedelas and Icarus were held prisoner on the island?
Why didn't Icarus listen to his father when he warned him not to get too close to the sun?
- Did you think Rumpelstiltskin was mean?
Did he do anything wrong?
Are the King and Miller's Daughter responsible for what happened to him?
- Was the King in *The King's Child* a good ruler at the beginning of the story?
Why did he want a child so much?
How did he change at the end?
What made him change?

Interdisciplinary Connections

Art

Most important performances have posters advertising the event. Ask each student to design an appropriate poster for *Myth Understandings* or one of the stories in Myth. Discuss what the important visual elements might be, whether it is color, or a symbol or a character.

Music

Ask students to identify the types of music in the play. Are there any other choices of music that they can think of to go with the 9 stories mentioned in the play?

Jack and the Beanstalk

Little Red Riding Hood

Hansel & Gretel

Three Little Pigs

Goldie Locks and the Three Bears

The Fisherman and His Wife

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

Rumpelstiltskin

The King's Child

Drama

Storytelling – *Myth Understandings* is a play about stories, and storytelling. And there are several types of storytelling in the play – commedia, puppetry, pantomime, dance or movement theater, and plain ol' acting.

What might the earliest memories of hearing stories be for some of the students? Do they tell stories to others? What about ghost stories? When are those fun to tell? How are they told? And where? Why might that be important to how the story is heard by the listeners?

Puppetry:

What do the students consider a puppet?

[Anything that can be manipulated, and given an emotional life.]

Ask them to make a puppet out of a pencil. What about a handkerchief? What about scissors?

What sort of personality might they have? Look around your desk or classroom, and see if you can create a scene or even a little play with 'characters' found around you.

Writing:

Each one of the tales in *Myth Understandings* was at first made up by someone.

Have the students create their own tales of high adventure, or a morality tale, or a simple fable like *The King's Child*.

Have students break into groups and read them aloud.

(or – have the students write down their puppet play!)

Music

Sing like the Scientists! Take a tune you know really, really well. Write a little poem that is actually your favorite fairy tale in 4 lines, and rhyme it to fit the tune. Sing them together! (You rock stars!)