

Pushcart Players

Study Guide to Production & Activities



PETER AND THE WOLF

AN ENCHANTING PRESENTATION OF A CLASSIC TALE

“Peter and The Wolf” is an adaptation of a tradition Russian folk tale set to music by composer, Sergei Prokofiev. The appeal of this particular story resides in the many levels of interest that may be explored.

First, there is the music. A different instrument and melody or “leitmotif” represents each character. These sounds and themes, introduced in the prologue to the play, become an excellent link to understanding and appreciating classical and other music. Then, there is the story – a true adventure. A spirited young boy, confronted by danger meets the challenge with courage, creativity and leadership. Finally, there is all that the story represents. Love, friendship and caring. Greed, arrogance and prejudice. There is innocence and wisdom, youth and maturity, conflict resolution, moral development and the beauty of the natural order of life. All worthy of celebration!

This study guide is designed to facilitate discussion and projects at each of the levels of interest described. Certainly, there are many areas beyond those included in this study guide that you as teachers or parents might explore. It is our hope that you will use this guide as a springboard to discovering the connections between music, story telling and the great (ageless) adventure of growing up.

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Summary

A Prologue introduces the characters along with the instruments and melodies by which they are represented.

The story begins on the last day of Peter's visit with his grandfather – a rather cranky, but loving old man who lives in a cozy cottage in the Russian countryside. Peter loves to visit grandfather each summer as the cottage is surrounded by a lazy meadow, filled with wondrous animals that become his friends.

But a dark and somewhat dangerous forest borders the meadow. Peter is warned by his grandfather time and again to “stay inside the garden gate and not play in the meadow as it is near the forest, and what if a wolf should come? Then what would you do?” But Peter is not afraid and cannot resist the temptation of romping with the birds and ducks, the cat, the raccoons the butterflies and the frogs. So whenever he can slip away unnoticed, off he goes, into the meadow.

Of course, the wolf does come, and after he swallows Peter's friend, Clara, the duck (whole), Peter is determined to capture the wolf. He gathers all his resources, quickly develops a strategy and saves the day (and the duck)! The hunters, who appear on the scene after the capture, are amazed at Peter's bravery and cleverness.

His grandfather, still cranky and cautious, is nonetheless proud of Peter's accomplishment. There is a great celebration and then a grand procession as the wolf (who has undergone significant moral development) is taken to a free-range zoo, led by Peter himself!

About The Story

Peter lives in the city and looks forward to visiting his grandfather in the country each summer. He loves to run and explore in the open meadow.

Nature

- Discuss the appeal of being in the countryside as opposed to the city. Discuss the advantages (and disadvantages) of city life.
- Listen to the sounds of birds outside of your classroom or home. Imagine what they are saying to each other. Make up stories about their conversations.
- Listen for melodic patterns in the birds' chirping.
- Take a nature walk in a park, reservation or wooded area near your school or home. Make a list of all the animals, birds and insects you see along the way. Create stories using the list to form a cast of characters.
- Draw pictures or simply use colors or designs to describe what you saw on your nature walk and how it made you feel.
- Do creative drama exercise, having students become the “characters” (animals or insects) they observed on the walk.

Friendship

There are several “characters” that have become Peter’s good friends in the country. Clara, the duck, always accompanies him when he slips through the garden gate. Yofi, the cat, also follows Peter and does his own exploring in the tall grass. And Sasha, a bluebird, chirps happily whenever Peter appears.

- Discuss the joys of friendship. How do you feel when you see a good friend waiting for you and happy to see you?
- What are some of the things that are fun to do with a friend or a group of friends and why?
- Write a short story that begins with an action sentence about friendship, i.e. “One day my friend and I went . . .” [Note: This is an excellent exercise to do as a group by having students sit in a circle, start the story with a sentence and have each student add a sentence or phrase. Record or write the story and create a book of short stories “co-authored” by your class.]
- Discuss the responsibilities of friendship (i.e. trust, caring, loyalty, support, companionship, being there when needed, etc.)
- Discuss the need to respect differences of opinion, taste, styles, etc.
- Share a story about something nice a friend once did for you; something you once did for a friend; something not so nice, or perhaps hurtful? How did each incident make you feel? Why? Write a short story or poem about one of the above.

Conflict/Resolution

- How do you feel when you and a friend disagree about something? Describe the issue(s).
- Have you ever been part of a group that is different from another group in your school, town, etc.? What is different between your group and the other(s)? Did the differences create any problems between the groups? Discuss.
- Discuss some possible ways to resolve differences. [Note: this is a good opportunity to use role-playing exercises. Divide the class into small groups. Present a conflict (i.e. two people want to use one computer). Solve the conflict within a tight time frame, then share the results with the class.]

Resources

Educators for Social Responsibility
23 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138
617-492-1764 www.esrnational.org
Toll free 1-800-370-2515

Peace Education Foundation
1900 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33132
305-576-5075 www.peace-ed.org
Toll free 1-800-749-8838

Creative Response to Conflict
521 Broadway, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960
845-353-1796 www.crc-global.org



Youth and Maturity

Peter's grandfather cautions him to stay away from the meadow because of the danger of a wolf that lives in the forest nearby. But each year that Peter visits, he becomes a bit more adventurous and pays less attention to grandfather's warnings.

- Discuss some possible reasons for Grandfather's warnings.
- Discuss reasons, in your opinion, for Peter's feeling that nothing dangerous could happen to him.
- Discuss the kinds of things that parents (and grandparents) warn young people about today. How do you feel about those warnings? Share stories in the classroom or at home.
- Draw a picture or write a short story about a dangerous incident that you experienced or read (or heard) about in the news. How was that event handled? Could it have been prevented? How?
- What advantages do adults have in making decisions and judgments about certain situations? What advantages do children and teenagers have?

Bullies and "Targets"

On the last day of his visit, Peter goes out to the meadow but is soon brought back by Grandfather. Peter is in his room when he hears a commotion and sees that a wolf has indeed come and is stalking his meadow friends.

- Discuss "bully" behavior on the playground or in the neighborhood. What are some of the similarities between the wolf and bully kids on the block or playground? Differences?
- What are some of the things we can and should do if we witness an individual or a group of kids bullying others? [i.e. Tell a teacher, principal, parents, law enforcement officer, friend, counselor etc. Support the person or people being harassed. Try to reason with both sides etc.

This very important topic is made accessible for discussion in an excellent book entitled: *Banishing Bullying Behavior* by SuEllen Fried and Blanche Sosland, published by Rowman & Littlefield Education (div. of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1-900-462-6420 www.rowmaneducation.com

Resources

Stop Violence Coalition
www.synergyservices.org
816-587-4100

Kidpower
www.kidpower.org
800-467-6997 Ext. 1

Danger and Decision Making

Peter slips back out, onto the garden wall, and quickly makes a plan to capture the wolf and save his friends.

- What do you think went through Peter's mind when he first saw the wolf?
- What are some of the options we have when faced with a dangerous situation. [This offers a good opportunity to talk about calling an adult for help, a neighbor, 911 etc. and can also be tied into the discussion of bullies and victims.]
- What are some of the risks that Peter took in taking charge of the moment? The advantages?

Teamwork

Peter sings a song about the situation. The lyrics of the chorus are:

There is nothing in this world that
Can not be overcome,
No battle that can not be won –
If we're smart and do our part together.

Then he gives each friend an assignment and they work together, as a team, to rescue Clara. This effort also saves the wolf from being shot.

- Discuss the importance of focus, concentration, goals and objectives.
- Discuss challenges, strategies and alternatives.
- Discuss the importance of clarity in our communication skills and focus in our listening skills.

Note: There are many creative drama and role playing exercises that can be implemented to make the above discussion points more meaningful. See addendum to this study guide and books on creative drama listed in the bibliography.

The Wolf

When the wolf first comes on the scene, she is cunning, seductive and menacing. But as we learn more about her, we find there are reasons for some of her "rude" behavior. She is not as "tough" as she presents herself and is capable and willing to change.

- Create a "safe" telling zone and then share stories about behavior that isn't always perfect. Examine the situations in these stories and explore possible reasons for the behavior [i.e. in the story, the wolf was hungry and needed food; the wolf was lonely because everyone ran from her – she had no friends so she acted tough in defense and to protect her feelings etc.]

- Discuss some alternatives to negative behavior.
- Discuss generosity in reaching out and helping someone have a better day or be included in a group of activity.
- Discuss stereotyping and judging others without really “knowing” that person or group of people.
- Have students complete the following sentences and then form small discussion groups to compare their answers and discuss any prejudice or stereotyping evident in their responses. Further explore what factors (i.e. TV, newspapers, parents’ attitudes, friends’ opinions) contributed to those responses.
 - All athletes are...
 - All people on welfare are...
 - All homosexuals are...
 - All vegetarians are...
 - All men who wear earrings are...
 - All Asians are...
 - All politicians are...
 - All women are...
 - All skateboarders are...
 - All women with blonde hair are...
- Have students keep a log of their television watching for a week, recording all instances in which they feel a character is being portrayed as a stereotype.

Self-Esteem, Moral Growth and Development

The wolf sings several verses of a song that always ends with “I think I’d better think this through – “

Positive self-esteem is rooted in taking responsibility for our behavior and willingness to modify or change some behavior patterns.

- Discuss this concept and then create some role-playing or creative drama exercises utilizing the theme. [See addendum for exercise suggestions and references.]

It is believed that moral and ethical behavior is linked to self-esteem.

- Discuss the concept of “right” and “wrong.”
- Can some things be more right than wrong?
- More wrong than right?
- How do we know this?
- What can we do about this?
- Do we have choices in our decision making?

- Can each of us make a difference in making choices that we believe are more right than wrong?

[For older students, this can lead to meaningful, philosophic discussion, further reading and essay writing. We encourage discussion with younger students as well. The insightful observations and openness of spirit that comes forth from very young minds may surprise you.]

In the end, the wolf thinks about her current circumstance, apologizes for any pain and suffering she may have caused and modifies her life style to better serve herself and others.

- What are some of life's lessons that can be gained from this sequence of events?
- Write a song, poem or story beginning with "If I could do this over I would..."
- Draw a picture or write a short play about how a person can change something in his/her life.
- Discuss the difference between wishing for something and doing something to make it happen.

About the Music

Many years ago, in the 1930's the Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev adapted the Russian folk tale, "Peter & The Wolf" to be told through music so that his children Oleg and Svyatoslav would have a better understanding and appreciation of the instruments in an orchestra and the music that they make.

Prokofiev thought carefully about the characters and their personalities and then chose an instrument or family of instruments with similar styles and temperaments. Here are the instruments and leitmotifs he chose:

For Peter: The string section including the violin, viola, cello and double bass. Peter's tune is light and melodious, helping us imagine him, joyful and carefree, skipping through the meadow.

For Grandfather: The bassoon, a deep wind instrument with a double reed. Grandfather's melody has a slow, blustering sound helping us picture the lumbering movement of the cranky old man. But the tone of the bassoon is deep, rich and mellow, helping us understand the warmth and softness in Grandfather's heart.

For Sasha, the bird: A flute, also a wind instrument, capable of very high, sweet, tones. Sasha's song is filled with melodious chirping, providing a strong image of the little bird fluttering and chattering away.

For Clara, the duck: An Oboe, another double reed wind instrument with a slightly "nasal" or "reedy" sound, similar to the sound of a duck's quack. The melody has a waddling feel to it and helps us imagine Clara's movements.

For Yofi, the cat: A clarinet. This wind instrument has a single reed and can create a quiet, sneaky quality and suggests the swift, velvety movement of her paws as he stalks through the meadow.

For the Wolf: Three French horns which have a rich and haunting quality. The music is bold and a bit foreboding, portraying the role of the wolf in the story.

For the Hunters: Kettle drums and a bass drum. Percussion instruments which can make explosive sounds like the “bang” of a gun. The melody of the hunters is joined by others instruments and suggests their humor and bungling as they march through the forest and into the meadow.

For various sound effects: A snare drum, cymbals, triangle, castanets, tambourine. All are part of the percussion section of the orchestra and each helps illustrate a particular moment in the story. For example, the snare drum plays as the cat runs up the tree or the cymbals crash suddenly (along with the trumpet and horn) as Peter warns the bird to beware of the “ready to pounce” cat.

For Discussion and Projects

Music helps us know how to “feel” – sometimes without our even knowing it.

- Encourage students to notice the “underscore” music and sounds in TV programs, movies and videos.
- What are some of the instruments used in comedies as opposed to dramas?
- How would you describe the melodies, tempos?
- Notice the sounds or tones just before something dangerous is about to happen. Something funny. Romantic. Etc.

Music is often a source of inspiration for artists in creating a painting or drawing.

- Play the score of “Peter and The Wolf” and encourage students to let their imaginations go in illustrating a moment or scene through colors, shapes or images.
- Select a specific moment or event in the story and have students illustrate it with colors and designs that capture that particular mood.

Music and Movement

The personality and movement of each character in “Peter and The Wolf” is suggested by his or her music. Once again, play the score for students and invite them to move about as they hear the changes in the music. For example:

- Skip or run in patterns for Peter’s music.
- Twirl, flutter and hop for the bird.
- Waddle, swim and flutter for the duck.
- Creep slowly, smoothly and low to the ground for the cat.



- Stalk, creep and pounce for the wolf.
- Walk like a tired old man for grandfather.
- March for the hunters.

Music in our Lives

Discuss the different kinds of music in our lives everyday.

- How is rap different from jazz? Classical? Pop? Etc.
- What kind of music is used in commercials and how does it make us feel or think?
- Keep a notebook for a day, jotting down each time there is music to start, finish or underscore something in your day (i.e. Star Spangled Banner after flag salute, piped in music in an elevator or dentist's office, etc.).

Making Music

Experiment with the nature of instruments by making simple ones in the classroom or at home using everyday items that are readily available.

- **Rubber Band Banjo:** Stretch different size rubber bands around an empty shoe box. Pluck the bands and discover the different sounds based on thickness and tightness.
- **Xylophone:** Take an empty glass or jar, tap it with a pencil and observe the sound it makes. Now fill the jar halfway with water and observe the difference in sound. Continue changing the amount of water (less for high notes, more for low notes). Play a tune with several jars with different water levels.
- **Shaking Drums:** Put rice, beans or pasta shells in a paper cup. Tape a second cup over the top (lip to lip). Shake in rhythm. Do this with different amounts of each item in different sets. Compare the sounds.
- **Small Band:** Have students combine the various instruments they've made (you can innovate others as well) and create their own songs or symphonies.

Vocabulary

Brass	Percussion
Classical	Pop
Composer	Reed
Horn	Rhythm
Instrument	String
Jazz	Swing
Leitmotif	Symphony
Orchestra	Wind

Further Reading

Drew, Helen. *My First Music Book: Making and Playing Musical Instruments*. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1993.

Fried, Suellen and Fried, Paula. *Bullies and Victims*. New York: M. Evans & Co. Inc., 1996.

McLeish, Kenneth and McLeish, Valerie. *The Oxford First Companion to Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Rosenberg, Jane. *Play Me A Story: A Child's Introduction to Classical Music Through Stories and Poems*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

Rubin, Mark. *The Orchestra*. Buffalo, NY: Firefly books, 1992.

Spence, Keith. *The Young People's Book of Music*. Brookfield, CN: The Millbrook Press, 1993.

Tatchell, Judy. *Understanding Music*. Tulsa, OK: EDC Publishing, 1992.

Beethoven Lives Upstairs (from *The Classical Children's Collection*) Toronto: The Children's Group, Inc., 1993.

Mr. Bach Comes to Call (from *The Classical Children's Collection*) Toronto: The Children's Group, Inc., 1993.

Mozart's Magical Fantasy (from *The Classical Children's Collection*) Toronto: The Children's Group, Inc., 1993.





Teacher's Guide To Creative Drama

Introduction

One of the most exciting ways to prepare students of all ages to view live theatre or bring an academic concept of lesson to life is to give them the experience of what it feels like to be an actor or in a given situation or circumstance. Creative Drama provides an excellent vehicle toward fulfilling this objective. There are many exercises that are easy to implement and encourage using the students' whole instrument, including imagination, voice, movement, senses and emotions. The entire class participates at the same time so there is little opportunity for self-consciousness to inhibit creativity.

Following are some simple exercises, suitable for all age groups. No prior drama experience is required of students (or teachers!). Exercises can be done in the classroom if desks can be moved to the side. This can be accomplished quietly and efficiently by making a game of it. A sample scenario might be to encourage students to imagine an earthquake fault line under the room. It is the students' responsibility to move the desks to the side of the room to reinforce the walls. This must be done silently s[Type a quote from the document or the summary of an interesting point. You can position the text box anywhere in the document. Use the Drawing Tools tab to change the formatting of the pull quote text box.] o the fault line will not be disturbed. [Note: If it is not possible to move the desks, most exercises can be done with students standing behind or near their desks.]

Warm-up Exercises

Freeze and Move

Using a percussion instrument (small drum or tambourine) or a piece of lively music, ask students to move while the music plays and freeze when it stops. Ask students to move isolated parts of their body (i.e. "now just move your leg, now your head, etc.") If you are using a drum, it can be exciting to vary the speed of the movement by changing the tempo of the beat.

Simple Stretches

Lead students in stretching their bodies. The use of visual images or characters helps make stretching fun. For example, tell students to reach for a silver thread hanging from an imaginary cloud above their head. Tell them to hold on tight and imagine they are swinging high above the neighborhood. Sometimes the strings might disappear. Students should then drop, loosely. Repeat this several times. Students can then stretch out wide like a big tree, swivel like a snake, stretch their necks long like a giraffe's, make their bodies small, like a tiny mouse, etc.

Grooming The Senses

In place, encourage students to isolate each sense and focus on it. For example, tell them to close their eyes and listen attentively, first to sounds in the room, then sounds in the hallway. Finally have them send their hearing out as far as it will go. Ask them to share what they have heard. A similar exercise can be done with sight. Ask them to look around the room, noticing the colors and shapes. Ask them to see each object and the have each object see them. Turn to a partner and see the partner and have each partner see them. Ask students if they can tell the difference between being the seer and the seen and what each feels like. To practice heightening the sense of touch you can pass around a paper bag with an object in it. Have each student feel and describe it without the sense of sight. Students can be encouraged to experiment with smell and taste in the lunchroom and at home.

Movement: A Mirror Exercise

To help students focus, lead the class in a simple "follow the movement" exercise to slow, pleasant music. Make simple movements with your arms, head, face and legs. Encourage students to mirror these movements at the same time you are making them. Then, if you can arrange students in a circle, choose one student to leave the room and one student to lead the class in simple slow movements. The student chosen to leave in now invited back to try to guess who is the leader. A more advanced version of this exercise involves grouping students in pairs and having them mirror each other in turn. Music is helpful here. Remind students that the face moves too and that laughter and giggling can mirrored also.

Sound

Sound Effects Story: Pick a simple story that has many opportunities for added sound effects (i.e. stories in cities, bad weather, haunted houses, etc.). This story can be made up in advance, improvised on –the-spot or read from a book. Practice with the group, encouraging students to make the sound of the wind using their voices, doors slamming using their feet, etc. Then control the volume of the sound using a wand, a pencil or any conductor like object. When your hand is high, the sound is loud, when your hand is lowered the sound diminishes and then stops. Use this volume control tool throughout the story. For added excitement, tape the story and play it back for students.

Creative Drama Resource List

Development through Drama

By: Brian Way. Humanities Press 1967

Games for Actors & Non-Actors

By: Augusto Boal.

Routledge, 1992

Collins, 1993

Impro

By: Keith Johnstone. Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1981

Improvisation for the Theater – a Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques

By: Viola Spolin, Northwestern University Press, 1963

Playmaking-Children Writing and Performing their own Plays

By: Daniel Juda Sklar. Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1991

Structuring Drama Works: A Handbook of Available Forms in Theater and Drama

By: Jonathan Neelands. Cambridge University Press, 1990

Creative Dramatics in the Library

By: Nancy Pereira. New Plays for Children, 1976

Multiple Intelligences

By: Howard Gardner. Harper

Creative Drama Resource Book (Grades K-3 & 4-6)

By: Ruth Beall Heinig. Prentice-Hall, 1987

200 + Ideas for Drama

By: Anna Scher/Charles Verall. Heinemann, 1992

Drama Anytime

By: Jill Charters and Anne Gately. Primary English Teaching Association, 1986

Teaching Drama to Young Children

By: Mem Fox. Heinemann, 1987

For Information on other Pushcart productions contact:

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