



Imagination Makers Theater Company

TEACHER'S GUIDE

for

"One Life, Two Cultures"

**Imagination Makers Theater Company
2590 Walnut Street, Suite 3
Boulder, Colorado 80027
www.imaginationmakers.org**

TEACHER'S FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do you have any materials to help prepare my class for the play?

Yes, this Teacher's Guide contains suggestions for ways to prepare your students for the play, as well as follow-up activities and discussion questions. In a past season, a child was overheard talking to her mother after a performance. She said she was going to go home and become a writer! We hope you can use this play as a valuable inspiration to enhance *your* students' excitement about writing.

My students have never seen a play. What should I tell them?

We have included some basic guidelines on attending a theater performance under "Some Notes for Students" -- see p. 3.

I've gone to some really awful assemblies. How do I know this one will be good?

There is no guarantee you will like our play, but we do have a good track record of meeting the needs of students and teachers (We are still around after 29 years!). Last year on evaluation forms, 90% of teachers rated our plays "Outstanding".

We receive these high ratings because the company employs experienced, professional directors, actors and musicians who enjoy performing for young people. The actors you will see in *One Life, Two Culture* have college degrees in theater, and credentials that include not only theater for young audiences, but also critically acclaimed regional and local productions ranging from dinner theater to Shakespeare. We perform in schools because the mission of Imagination Makers is to give as many kids as possible a chance to see live theater--especially those who would not ordinarily have the opportunity to do so.

When should we arrive at the performance?

Please arrive at the gym 5-10 minutes before the performance start time. Your early arrival will ensure that we can get everyone seated and ready to go in a timely fashion. Sometimes there is a second show at your school or we must go directly to another school to do a show. If your performance gets started late, it causes problems for those attending performances after yours.

May I take pictures during the show?

So that our audience (and the performers) can stay focused, we ask that you not take flash photographs during the show. For picture taking purposes, we will re-enact any part of the play after the performance.

Why don't you create separate plays for primary and intermediate grades?

While it is not financially viable for Imagination Makers to tour separate plays for primary and intermediate grades (it costs approximately \$20,000 to create a new play!), we have designed this play so that the emotional aspects are meaningful to all ages. Although we realize that not all content will appeal to all grade levels--some may be over the heads of the youngest students or seem "babyish" to the oldest--we do our best to balance the needs of students K-6. Our goal is that all grade levels find much of the material relevant, and that all audience members (including you!) will be thoroughly entertained.

Will there be an opportunity for my class to meet the performers?

Yes. The performers always stand outside the exit door so that they can greet your class as they leave the show. This is a great time for students to ask a quick question, make a comment or just say hello.

How can I let the company know what I thought of the performance?

You will receive an evaluation form from us at the performance. Please take a few minutes after the play to fill this out, preferably with your students (if time permits). One of the reasons we are still in business after 29 years is that WE LISTEN TO YOUR FEEDBACK! We use the evaluations to help us make our plays the very best they can be. Your ratings and comments are also essential for reporting the results of our work to granting organizations. (Your school pays approximately one third of what it costs us to bring a performance to your school. The rest of the money comes from grants.)

I don't have time to go to an assembly – I'm swamped and need to correct papers during the show. What should I do?

We understand that sometimes you may need to do paperwork during the performance. If this is the case, we respectfully request that, after seating your students, you sit at the rear of the audience. We would like to express our appreciation, in advance, for your cooperation during the performance. We have noticed that when teachers come to the show with their class, stay for the entire time, and give their full attention to the performance, the students model this audience behavior. The students then benefit more from the play and its themes, and everybody, including the performers, has a more rewarding experience.

Can my students write letters to the performers?

YES! We love to receive letters and artwork from students. We include some of these in our grant evaluations. We also save the best ones for our scrapbook and we pick some of our favorite pictures to frame and put up in our office. Our address is:

<p><i>Imagination Makers Theater Company</i> <i>2590 Walnut Street, Suite 3</i> <i>Boulder, CO 80302</i></p>
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Are there any considerations for special education students?

If you would like to discuss how Imagination Makers can make the performance more accessible to your students, please call us at 720-565-1055 or e-mail info@imaginationmakers.org. We will be happy to provide a copy of the script ahead of time for sign language interpreters. We will try to meet any special disability needs as best we can. We can also arrange for special education students to come to the performance early and meet the performers.

What if I still have more questions?

We are dedicated to serving students and teachers. Feel free to call 720-565-1055 or e-mail us at info@imaginationmakers.org with any questions or comments you have.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO PERFORMING AT YOUR SCHOOL!

SOME NOTES FOR STUDENTS:

Theater is an incredible experience, and we are pleased that you get to see our play, *One Life, Two Cultures!* Here are some things about seeing a play that are different from watching TV and movies:

Theater is live!

At a play, the audience is an important part of the performance. This is because the performers can hear everything that goes on in the audience. When you laugh at the funny parts, are quiet at the serious parts, and give your total attention to what's going on in the play, you actually *help* the actors. If you do a great job as an audience, then the actors do a great job performing and you will see a fantastic show!

Listening is very important

Once the show starts, be respectful of the people in the audience. If you talk to others around you, they will miss part of the play and so will you. You can't rewind a play! Save your thoughts and comments for the conversations you will have with friends and with your class after the play is over.

Imagine

The name of our company is Imagination Makers because you will need to use your imagination when you are watching the play. For example, we have 3 actors playing many different characters. You will also need to imagine the things used in the play and the places where the action is taking place.

Applause

The performers work very hard to give you a great show. The way to show them that you like what they are doing is to clap. Applause can be short and polite if you think the play is just "Okay," or it can be loud and long if you have really enjoyed the play.

Feedback

After the play, the performers will greet you as you leave. This is a good time to shake their hands, ask a question, or tell them what you liked about the play. If you have more to say to the performers, they would be happy to receive a letter from you. Your teacher has our address. (*Teachers: This can be found on p. 2.*)

HAVE FUN!

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

"One Life, Two Cultures"

"When I was waiting for our plane to the United States, I felt like a star exploding from excitement. All my life I had waited for this moment."

Amazing stories and songs make up this musical play created by Imagination Makers in 2004. Dramatized are inspiring tales of kids preparing to leave their native countries, traveling to this country, and adapting to life in a new place. These true-life experiences of children, who have immigrated to the United States, have been written in English and in the authors' native languages.

"My dad and my mom did not have any money when we lived in Mexico. My father built a house with fabric and put a blanket on top as a roof. It was a very sad life for me."

Audiences will cry for the hardships these young people have endured and laugh at their hilarious escapades. Whether by air or on foot, coming to the United States can be exciting, heart wrenching, and life changing. But one thing is for sure, these modern day immigrants will always have one life, but two cultures.

"But then I decided not to be sad anymore and began a new life here, with new friends new country with almost everything new. Now, I will just wait for what life has prepared for me."

List of Stories and Songs

Song--One Life, Two Cultures

A Happy Birthday/Ghana

What It Was Like Not to Know English/Mexico

Song--Extraño mi país

Fishing With Artome/Russia

Why I Came to the U.S./Bosnia

Song--Coming to America

I Am/China

I'm Not Debbie/Korea

Me and My Grandpa/Mexico

Song--Quesadilla

The Food from Here and Nepal/Nepal

Crossing the Border/Mexico

Song--Yo estoy triste

A New Life/Mexico

Song--One Life, Two Cultures

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

PLEASE NOTE: The following suggestions are only a guide. You will need to judge what is appropriate for your grade level and individual class.

BEFORE THE PLAY

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Approach the play enthusiastically and intelligently with an understanding of what to expect.
- Begin thinking about the issues that will be addressed in the play.
- Review audience skills.

DISCUSSION

Choose from among the following topics to discuss with your students.

1. Discuss the “Some Notes for Students” (p. 3).
2. Plays in general
 - Have you been to a play by Imagination Makers before? If so, what do you remember about it?
 - Have you been to other plays? What do you remember about them?
 - Has anyone in the class ever been in a play?
3. Concepts of the play
 - Have you ever moved to a new place? What was the experience like?
 - Do you know your cultural heritage? How did you or your parents and grandparents or other ancestors get to this country?
 - Do you know anyone from another country? What country?
 - Have you ever been in a place where you had no friends? How did you make new friends?
 - Have you ever seen anyone made fun of for how they looked, dressed, spoke, or where they came from? How do you think they felt? How did you feel when you saw it happen?

ACTIVITIES

Art

This activity is a great way to generate enthusiasm for the performance within your class and also throughout the school.

1. Make posters advertising the play. Use the following text: Imagination Makers presents *One Life, Two Cultures* at (name of school) in the (gym or cafeteria) on (date of performance). Include pictures of one of the following:
 - Kids saying good bye to their grandparents, family, and friends
 - Kids making new friends
 - Kids and parent/s traveling in buses, cars, and airplanes
 - Kids thinking/remembering fun times in the country where they used to live

Social Studies

Especially for students unfamiliar with the countries talked about in the play, this activity can help them make a better connection to the material.

1. Use a map or globe to locate the following countries represented in the play:
 - Ghana
 - Bosnia
 - Mexico
 - Russia
 - Ukraine
 - Nepal
 - Korea
 - China
 - Kosovo
2. Have you ever been to one of these countries? Which one?
3. Do you know anything about these countries?

AFTER THE PLAY

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the play.
- Deepen the understanding of the theme areas and apply this understanding in their own lives.
- Analyze problems and evaluate possible solutions.
- Relate appropriate curriculum areas to the play.

DISCUSSION

Choose from among the following topics to discuss with your students.

1. The play in general
 - Which story was your favorite? Were there any you didn't like?
 - Which characters were your favorite? Least favorite?
 - How did the costumes and set help you to enjoy the play? Give examples.
 - Would you have chosen different costumes or set? Explain your ideas.
 - Did you like the music? Why? What song did you like the best?
2. Concepts of the play
 - What do you think are some of the ideas/concepts that the play was trying to communicate?
 - Have you ever had experiences similar to the ones shown in the play?
 - Have you ever lost a friend, family member, or pet? How did you feel?
 - *(Teachers: This is for students born in the U.S.):*
 - What have you learned about what it is like to come to the U.S. from another country?
 - Imagine moving with your family to a new country where the culture is totally different. What are the things about living in America that you would miss?
 - What could you do in the future when a new student comes to your school, to make it easier for them?
 - *(Teachers: This is for students that immigrated to the U.S from another country):*
 - If you remember coming to the United States, share a story about:
 - The trip to the U.S.
 - Anything that happened as you adjusted to life in this country
 - Memories of the country you lived in before

ACTIVITIES

Writing

This play is based on writing by real kids in the Denver metro area. We hope that your students will be inspired to write stories of their own after seeing the play. Here are some ideas to get them started.

1. Write a letter to:

- A character in the play.
 - The actors--telling them what you liked about the play.
 - The parent group, principal, or whoever sponsored the show in your school.
- Tell them what you liked about the play and thank them for sponsoring it.

(Teacher hint: Here are some “starters” for letters: “The part of the play that really stuck in my mind was...” “I had a connection to the play because...”)

2. If you came from another country, write your immigration story.

3. If you were born in the United States, find out about your own cultural identity. You may need to talk to your parents, grandparents or other family members to learn more about this. If your parents or grandparents came from another country you can ask them about their early experiences in this country or other family stories. Write these down in a story to share with your classmates.

4. With your whole class, make a list of words and phrases that you thought of when you saw the play: things you remember, things it made you think of, feelings, images, etc. As a class or in small groups, use these words and phrases to create a poem about the play.

5. Write a newspaper review of the play. Include such things as:

- How you felt about the play in general.
- Did you think the costumes and set were good and did they fit the play?
- What did you think of the acting? Was it believable and realistic?
- You can also give it a star rating (1 is lowest, 5 is highest) and say whether you would recommend it to other people.

Art

Many fun art projects can result from students’ impressions of the play. Following are a few suggestions.

1. Draw a picture of your favorite part of the play or your favorite character.

2. Find out about the traditional dress of one of the cultures described in the play. Draw your own picture of the costumes. *(Teachers: See p. 6 for list of countries)*

3. Find out what the national flag looks like for one of the countries from the play. Draw a picture of it, or use construction paper to cut out the design and paste it together.

Drama

Now that your students have had a chance to see live theater, they might enjoy doing some acting of their own.

1. Get into groups and act out your favorite part of the play. *(Teachers: This is a very easy drama activity and it helps students to process the play. It takes no theater expertise on your part, and their interpretations of the play can be a lot of fun!)*
2. Do the above activity but, instead of acting them out, do a comic strip. This is done by telling the story in frozen pictures or photographs (like in the game "Statues"). In groups, decide on tableaux that would tell part of the story, use your bodies to pose the photos, and then show them to the rest of the class.
3. Choose characters from the play that you would like to interview. Have a few members of the class sit on chairs in front of the class and act as if they are those people. The whole class pretends to be news reporters and interviews the characters. Then everybody writes news stories. Don't forget the headline!
4. Turn the stories written in #2 and #3 under "Writing" into short plays.

Music

Many students really connect to the music in the play. If that was the case with your class, you may want to encourage some further exploration.

1. Find and listen to music from one of the countries talked about in the play. *(Teachers: See p. 6 for list of countries)*
2. The songs in the play were all written by students. Write your own song. Make your own percussion instruments to play along with your song.
3. Find out about an instrument from one of the countries mentioned in the play. See if you can create a similar instrument using items found around your house (plastic containers, string, rubber bands, dowels, etc.)

Social Studies

If studying different countries/cultures is part of your curriculum, here are some things to do that can help tie the play into your classroom activities.

1. List all the countries you can remember that were mentioned in the play. *(Teachers: See p. 6 for the complete list.)*
2. Using one of the countries in the play, or the country of one of your classmates, find out more about the culture and customs of that country:
 - Find the country on a map.
 - What language do they speak?
 - What holidays do they observe?
 - What foods do they enjoy? If you are familiar with any of the foods, prepare some and bring it to class.
3. Investigate what countries people came from to settle in early Colorado.

ABOUT IMAGINATION MAKERS THEATER COMPANY

Imagination Makers is a professional company presenting innovative theater that is both entertaining and emotionally powerful. Internationally acclaimed, the company has given over 3,500 performances and reached close to 850,000 kids with performances of 26 original musical plays since 1980. Reaching over 55,000 audience members on average per year, Imagination Makers ranks second in the state among theater companies for the number of kids served yearly. In all, the company reaches one out of every four public elementary school students in the metro area with its productions.

Some examples include a play about a family of Irish immigrants who move to America at the turn of the century, a play based on true stories of children who lived in early Colorado, and two student rewritten versions of Shakespeare's, *The Merchant of Venice*--one for elementary schools and one for middle and high schools.

For 29 years, Imagination Makers has toured successfully in Colorado. Out of state, we have done shows in New York, Connecticut, and England. Highlights include invitations to perform in London at the Newham International Festival of Theater in Education, and Take Off '89, an international theater festival. We were selected to perform at the national conference of the American Alliance for Theater and Education. A play created by Imagination Makers, in collaboration with students from Brighton High School, was performed by those students at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The company has completed 32 Drama Residency programs at schools across Colorado. In the last few years, we have designed and conducted residencies that are intensive writing and theater experiences for students.

Imagination Makers is supported by grants from the following organizations: The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) through the Cultural Councils of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Douglas, and Jefferson counties, The Denver Foundation, Colorado Council on the Arts, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Boulder Arts Commission (an agency of the Boulder City Council), The Community Foundation serving Boulder County, Fine Arts Foundation, Target, Broomfield Community Foundation, Xcel Energy Foundation, The Community Foundation of Greeley and Weld County, Kinder Morgan, Duncan Trust, Webroot Inc., as well as donations from numerous individuals.



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