FLYNN CENTER PRESENTS

THE CAT IN

THE HAT

STUDY GUIDE
Welcome to the 2015-2016 Student Matinee Season!

Today’s scholars and researchers say creativity is the top skill our kids will need when they enter the work force of the future, so we salute YOU for valuing the educational and inspirational power of live performance. By using this study guide you are taking an even greater step toward implementing the arts as a vital and inspiring educational tool.

We hope you find this guide useful. If you have any suggestions for content or format of this guide, please contact sms@flynncenter.org.

Enjoy the show! -Education Staff

The arts are an essential element of education, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic...music, dance, painting, and theater are all keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment.

-William Bennett

It is the supreme art of the teacher to AWAKEN JOY in creative expression and knowledge.

- Albert Einstein

We appreciate and value your feedback.

- Click here to evaluate our study guides.
- Click here for Teacher Feedback Forms for the performance.
- Click here for Student Feedback Forms for the performance.
- Click here for Parent Forms to help parents engage with their children around the show.

This guide was written & compiled by the Education Department at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts with inspiration from materials from Childsplay AZ. Permission is granted for teachers, parents, and students who are coming to Flynn shows to copy & distribute this guide for educational purposes only.
The Flynn Center recognizes that field trip resources for schools are extremely limited, thus matinee prices for schools are significantly lower than prices for public performances. As a non-profit organization, the Flynn is deeply grateful to the foundations, corporations, and individuals whose generous financial support keeps matinees affordable for schools.

A special thank you to the Jan and Harris Abbott for sponsoring this matinee performance.


Additional support from the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation, Green Mountain Fund, Walter Cerf Community Fund, the Vermont Arts Council, the Susan Quinn Memorial Fund, and the Ronald McDonald House Charities.
Before you see the show:

- How do you think the play will be like the book? How will it be different than the book?
- The Cat is an imagination champion! What do you do when you’re bored? How strong is your imagination? How can you exercise your imagination to make it stronger? How does the story balance imagination and responsibility?
- When the weather isn’t nice outside and you can’t go swimming or ride a bike, what can you do inside for fun?
- If you didn’t have TV, computers, or other electronic devices to watch or play with, what would you do to play?
- What are the rules in your house? What are the rules in your classroom? What happens when rules are broken?

As you watch the show:

- Why does the fish tell the children not to listen to the cat?
- What do Thing 1 and Thing 2 do in the play? How are they helpful to the Cat in the Hat?
- What is an example of a character (or characters) showing responsibility in the play?

After you see the show:

- At the end of the play, we hear “What would you do if your mother asked you?” If you had gone through a crazy day like that, would you tell your mom (or dad) all of the details? Why or why not?
- What would you do if The Cat in the Hat showed up at your house when your parents weren’t home?
- What similarities and differences are there between the Dr. Seuss storybooks we read and the performance we saw?
- What moment stands out in the show as having been particularly memorable? Why? What is one part of the story you wish had been represented in the performance but was not? How might you have chosen to perform that part on the stage?
- What is one connection you can make between the performance you saw and yourself, another storybook, another show, or the world around you?
The Author: Dr. Seuss

Brilliant, playful, imaginative and always respectful of children, Dr. Seuss has charmed his way into the minds and hearts of parents and children since the 1930s – and in the process, he helped millions of kids learn to read. Born Theodor Seuss Geisel in Massachusetts in 1904, Ted was an only child whose love of drawing and zany artistic style was apparent early on. His parents, though poor, encouraged his growing imagination and creativity.

As a young man, Ted attended Dartmouth College where he was an editor for the Jack-O-Lantern (the school’s humor magazine). During his senior year, some rule-breaking antics stripped him of his position as editor of the magazine yet he didn’t let that stop him from publishing his cartoons. He used several aliases among which were “T. Seuss” and “Seuss” these cartoons were the first time he would publish work under this name. A few years later he began using the scholarly-sounding “Dr. Theophrastus Seuss”, and in 1928 he shortened this simply to “Dr. Seuss”.

Ted’s first idea for a children’s book came in 1936 while on a vacation cruise. The rhythm of the ship’s engine made him think of the rhythm of poetry, and it became the cadence to And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street. Twelve children’s books and some two decades later, it was a mischievous, rhyming cat that eventually brought “Dr. Seuss” widespread fame.

The Cat in the Hat was born out of a 1954 article published by Life which reported on illiteracy among schoolchildren. The article suggested that children were having trouble reading because their books were boring, and based on word memorization rather than phonics. Ted’s publisher was inspired and he sent Ted a list of words he felt were important for children to learn. The publisher asked Ted to use the list to write an entertaining children’s book. Ted decided he would name the book after the first two words on the list that rhymed: “cat” and “hat” and the world was never the same! Nine months later, using 220 of the words , Ted published The Cat in the Hat.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1984 and three Academy Awards, Ted authored and illustrated over 45 children’s books. Never preachy, his enchanting stories cover a wide array of topics from loyalty and friendship, to environmentalism and sustainability. All of his books are rich in color and imagination with fun and zany characters and rhymes that have helped children to get excited about reading for decades. Dr. Seuss’ books continue to excite and entertain families today.

Did you know...

Seuss was the maiden name of Ted’s mother (as well as Ted’s middle name). The name is actually a German name and is correctly pronounced “ZOICE.” In fact, Ted himself was quoted as saying “Seuss rhymes with voice,” and a pal in college wrote the following little poem about the mispronunciation:

You're wrong as the deuce,
And you shouldn't rejoice...
If you're calling him Seuss,
He pronounces it Soice!

Eventually Dr. Seuss accepted the fact that most Americans read his name as if it rhymed with “juice” instead of “voice.” But isn’t it interesting that the author known for his rhymes was always mis-rhymed himself?

DISCUSS:

- What do you think Dr. Seuss cares about in his literature?
- What values does he try to communicate through his main characters?
- Why might he have chosen to use rhyme?
- In what ways has Dr. Seuss been important to children’s literature?
- What are some of the characteristics of his work that make his books unique?

Check out the official website for Dr. Seuss, which includes detailed biographical information on Ted Geisel plus information on his books and interactive pages for students.
**Build your Seussian Vocabulary**

Using Dr. Seuss books, instruct your students to find 5 new words each. With help from their classmates and context clues in the book, ask students to create their own definitions. Then, hand out 5 pieces of cardstock or thick paper to each student. Instruct them to write each word on the back of a separate sheet. Then, on the backside of the page, have them draw or represent their definition. **Challenge your students:** Can they spell the words? Play charades, Around the World, or host a spelling bee with the cards your class creates.

**Take it to the next level:** Have your students group into teams. Pull three student-created word cards out of a hat and ask the groups to come up with a one minute skit using those three words in the dialogue. Share the skits with the class and challenge the audience to repeat when the three words were used.

**Imagine Seuss Characters/Adventure**

Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) created stories involving people like you and me but he also created stories for characters and worlds that came out of his imagination. **Ask students:** If you could create a unique kind of character or world, what would it be? Try one or all of the following activities to explore your own “Seussian” imaginations.

- **Look at and make observations about the way Seuss illustrates his characters.** Talk about line, color, gesture, facial expression. What do they share in common with animals/humans and how are his creatures unique? (claws, fingers, tails, fur, feathers, numbers of legs, etc)

- **Draw a picture of a new character and write a few sentences about what he/she is like**—where does this character come from, what does this character like to do, who are this character’s friends, etc. Name this character. Create a short story or a fun rhyme or poem to describe the character.

- **Brainstorm a list of materials that would match Seuss’s drawing style and could be used to create new Seuss-like characters.** E.g. feathers, pom-poms, ribbons, stars, etc. Along with fabric, cardboard and random raw materials, create new Seuss-like characters. If interest grows, make a town for the characters (using blocks, shoe boxes, cardboard boxes, etc). This construction may serve as a dramatic play area for the characters to live and interact in.

**Balance Play**

What are some of the things that the cat balances? In teams of 3 or 4, work together to find ways to balance a number of (safe) objects in your classroom all at once. Share your balancing act with the rest of the class. When the cat is balancing the objects and starts to fall, the action goes into slow motion. In your groups, talk about different actions that could happen that would be interesting in slow motion and then work together to create a slow motion scene. Make sure your scene has a beginning, middle and end and tells a story through movement. Share with the class.

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**The Story of The Cat in the Hat:**

It’s a dreary old rainy day and Sally and her brother are stuck inside their house, staring out the window with nothing to do. But everything quickly changes when they hear a “bump” and in walks a cat wearing a red and white striped hat! Sally and her brother quickly discover that the Cat in the Hat is the most playful and mischievous cat they will ever meet. Suddenly the day is transformed by the Cat and his games. Playing indoors has never been so much fun. The pet fish, however, does not approve. He thinks the Cat should leave at once. The Cat declares that he does not wish to leave and then decides to show the children a new game. He promptly bring in a big red box and introduces Thing One and Thing Two to Sally and her brother. Playtime gets crazy with their antics and the children realize the Things must be stopped. They are finally able to catch the Things but the house is in complete disarray! Will the children ever be the same? Can the kids clean up before mom comes home? With some tricks (and a fish) and Thing Two and Thing One, with the Cat in The Hat, the fun’s never done!
Seussian Costumes

The costumes in Childsplay’s production of *The Cat in the Hat* are based on the illustrations in the Dr. Seuss book. D. Daniel Hollingshead designed the costumes and a team of people (including Daniel) helped to build them.

The Cat and the Things all have body suits with a tummy pad attached that they wear under their costumes. See the cross hatching on the arms and legs of the Cat’s costume? It took approximately ten hours to complete just the cross hatching! And it had to be done on all three cat costumes. It takes many people and many hours to produce a theatrical production.

The costume of the puppeteer who manipulates the fish was designed to suggest “fish.” Notice the lapels and how they resemble fins. The fish puppet as well as the tea pot and all of the other props were inspired by the illustrations and designed and built by Jim Luther (with assistance from his props building team).

Explore Costume Design

Production Design refers to all of the elements in a play which provide the atmosphere or create the “world of the play.” This can be the kind of costumes that are used, the music or sound effects that are played, the set pieces and props that are used. The production team is made up of designers who work together to agree upon what each element should look like and how it should be created. After you see the show you can discuss some of the design choices that you observed in the play.

- What did the costumes tell you about the different characters? Why do you think the costume designer chose those specific colors and fabrics?
- Divide the class into small group (3-5 kids per group). Have each group choose a Dr. Seuss book besides *The Cat in the Hat* to work with. (*The Lorax, Fox in Sox, Horton Hears a Who, Yertle the Turtle, Sneetches* would all be strong choices)
- Have them identify who the main characters are (or, as in certain Seuss books, types of characters), and list some defining traits and characteristics.
- Then, have them talk about the world of the book. What does it look like there? What do characters do in that world?
- For each of the main characters in their book, have them imagine a costume and figure out a strategy to create that costume, like the design team did for *The Cat in the Hat*. Explain how a brainstorm is a tool that helps get all ideas on the table; even ones that seem really hard or wild. Encourage them to welcome and listen to all ideas without putting anything down. You can offer some prompting questions, such as, how could you make a costume that made it look like the sneetches had stars on their bellies? What are some possible strategies you could use to make that happen? (Sweaters with construction paper stars, painted bare bellies, project stars onto t-shirts with lights, etc.)
- Once they’ve come up with a broad list of ideas, have them talk about which idea would best show the character’s personality and traits, and which would they think would be simplest to make happen in real life? Have them draw or create a collage that shows their costume choices and present them to the class. Depending on resources and the complexity of their designs, students could create wearable mock ups of their designs!
The Art Form: Theater

What is theater? Webster’s dictionary says, “a dramatic performance.” Drama is any kind of performance that presents a story through character, action, and dialogue. Some say that theater portrays life—either as it is or as it might be. But one of the things that makes theater different from real life is that things can happen in theater that cannot happen in real life—in other words, things that appear to be magical. Mythical creatures of all kinds appear in the dramatic performances of cultures around the world.

It is believed that people have been acting out stories forever. In all cultures around the world people performed for each other by acting out stories they knew by heart because they’d heard them or seen them acted out by others, or because the event happened to them. It wasn’t until about 2,500 years ago (500 B.C.E.) that some Greek playwrights wrote down the conversations they wanted others to say. These are believed to be the first written plays and mark the beginning of the western theater as we think of it today.

READ & EXPLORE: Click here for a more in-depth description of theater history and language and terminology.

WORDS COME ALIVE: Arts Integration Activities

Providing the opportunity to actively explore the world of the show helps students become more engaged and connected audience members, thinking about artists’ choices and approaching the performance with enhanced curiosity. For more information about our arts integration activities, click here, call 652-4548, or email schoolprograms@flynncenter.org.

ECHO: CHARACTERS IN ACTION

Actors make many physical choices to show specific actions that are unique to their characters. This exercise will give your students the chance to “step into the shoes” of some of the main characters in the show so that they can compare their own physical choices with ones they will see on the stage. Invite students to stand in a circle. State the name of a character in The Cat in the Hat and then pantomime an activity this character does.

Examples:
- The fish worries about the Cat’s antics
- Sally looks out the window, bored
- Thing 1 and Thing 2 fly kites recklessly

Invite everyone to repeat the character’s name and copy (echo) the motion. Next invite volunteers to offer different ways to show the same character and corresponding action. Explore several variations on that first character and action before moving on to others in the list.

Ask: Who made a choice with their body that felt the most realistic? Why? Having pantomimed some of their actions, which character do you think you might like to be in the show? Why?”

MACHINE: CLEAN UP LIKE THE CAT

Form a circle and ask for demonstrations of repetitive, mechanical movements. Examples: moving an arm from side to side, bending the knees and straightening. Then tell the students that together they are going to make a machine with a variety of parts. Ask for a volunteer to go into the center of the circle and become the first machine part; then ask for another to either make the first machine part bigger by joining the first student in making the exact same movements, or to create a new machine part with her/his own movements. Continue at a fast pace until everyone is part of the machine. Then run the machine by saying “Stop!”, then “Start!” Vary the speed as concentration allows.

Repeat this exercise, but this time, tell students that they will be creating a cleaning machine that cleans up the house creatively like the Cat did. As you did before, have students enter one at a time and add to what’s already happening. Place some objects around the room and work together to clean them up. See if you can start the machine up and then slow it down and stop.
The Flynn Center

The Flynn has been at the center of Vermont's cultural landscape for over 80 years—from its earliest days as a vaudeville house through five decades as a movie theater to its present life as the region's leading performance center and arts education organization. Today, the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts is recognized internationally for its significant artistic, educational, and community outreach activities; superb technical capacity; beautiful historic setting; and world-class presentations. At the Flynn, we celebrate a rich legacy of connecting our community with the arts. The Flynn is recognized for its stellar artistic programming in theater, dance, and music; and for educational programs that reach far into the community to advance teaching and learning. For more about the Flynn, click here.

Etiquette for Live Performances

The Essentials

- Listen, experience, imagine, discover, learn!
- Give your energy and attention to the performers.
- At the end of the show, clap for the performers’ time and energy.
- Eating, drinking, and chewing gum are not okay.
- Talk only before and after the performance.
- Turn off wireless devices. No photos, videos, texting, or listening to music.

Why is Etiquette Important?

A good live performance is a powerful communication between audience and performer. The more the audience gives to the performer, the more the performer can give back to the audience. The performer hears the audience laughing, senses its sympathy, and delights in the enthusiasm of its applause. Furthermore, each audience member affects those sitting near him or her, in addition to the performers onstage. Technological devices (cameras, phones, etc.) have become so prevalent in our daily lives, but using these devices is distracting to the performers onstage and other audience members trying to watch the show. Even the light from checking the time, or the buzz of a phone on vibrate can pull the people around you out of the experience. Cell phone frequencies can even interfere with the microphones in the production, and taking photos can be unsafe for performers. Additionally, an artist has the right to decide what photos and videos go out into the world. Phones keep you from being present and fully engaged with the show. Thank you for turning devices completely off!

DISCUSS BEING A MINDFUL AUDIENCE MEMBER:

How is going to see a live theatre performance different from seeing a movie, going to a concert, or watching TV?

In small groups, come up with a list of positive audience behaviors, and behaviors that would be disruptive to performers and other audience members. Come together and create a master list.
We can’t wait to see you at the theater!

Teachers, a few reminders:

- Fill out the Seating and Travel Survey, so we can best accommodate your group’s needs in regards to dismissal, bussing, students with different needs, etc.
- Share your experience with us! Use the feedback links, or share your students’ artwork, writing, responses. We love to hear how experiences at the Flynn impact our audiences.
- Explore other student matinees at the Flynn this season. We’ve still got seats in some shows and we’d love to help you or other teachers at your school enliven learning with an engaging arts experience!

We have some new initiatives to deepen student connection and experience!

Pre or Post-Show Video Chats:
Help students build enthusiasm or process their experience with a free, 5-10 minute video chat before or after the show! We can set up Skype/Facetime/Google Hangouts with your class to answer questions about the content, art form, and experience. Contact Kat, kredniss@flynncenter.org to set up your chat!

Autism and Sensory-Friendly Accommodations:
The Flynn Center has been working diligently to break down barriers for audience members with disabilities, with a particular focus on those with sensory-sensitivities. Social stories, break spaces, sensory friendly materials, and more are available for all student matinees. Feel free to let us know ahead of time if any of these would be useful, or ask an usher at the show!

Make your field trip the most meaningful learning experience it can be with a preparatory Companion Workshop in your classroom!

An engaging Flynn Teaching Artist can come to your school to deepen students’ understanding of both content and form with an interactive workshop, enriching kids’ matinee experiences. Funding support is often available. To learn more, check out this link. To book a workshop, click here. Questions? Contact Sasha: schoolprograms@flynncenter.org or (802)652-4508

Some Suggested Books with Similar Themes
(from Childsplay AZ)

Responsibility
It Wasn’t My Fault by Helen Lester
Just a Mess by Mercer Meyer
A Sick Day for Amos McGee by Phillip Stead
Brave Irene by William Steig
Something Beautiful by Sharon Dennis Wyeth

Rainy days
Rain! by Linda Ashman
Rainstorm by Barbara Lehman
Cloudbette by Tom Lichtenheld
The Napping House by Don and Audrey Wood
Umbrella by Taro Yashima

Imagination
Roxaboxen by Barbara Cooney
The Adventures of Fish and Snail by Deborah Freedman
Martin on the Moon by Marine Audet
If All the Animals Came Inside by Eric Pinder
Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

Rhyming
Giraffe’s Can’t Dance by Giles Andreae
I Ain’t Gonna Paint No More by Karen Beaumont
Moo, Baa, LaLaLa by Sandra Boynton
The Truck is Stuck by Kevin Lewis
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr.
One Duck Stuck by Phyllis Root

Following Rules
Animals Don’t So I Won’t! by David Derrick
Back to School Rules by Laurie B. Freedman
No, David! by David Shannon
Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! by Mo Willems