The Curious Picnic
Theater Craft
From our Season Sponsor

Regions

For 135 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our region has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to sponsor TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee (HOT). What an important program this is – reaching over 30,000 students, many of whom would never get to see a performing arts production without this local resource. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves, and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers,

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

2018-19 SEASON for Young People
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Theater Craft, Inc.

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All performance photographs in this guidebook by Rick Malkin.
DEAR EDUCATORS,

Thank you for bringing The Curious Picnic to your students! We are happy to be working together with you, through the show and its guidebook, to help our young students embrace STEM concepts, enjoy the delight of discovery, and engage with learning in a fun environment.

We know how important it is for children at a very young age to be encouraged to be curious and to explore creative solutions. This guidebook will extend the show’s connections to those concepts and will be part of an even richer learning experience for the students. The first lesson invites the students to explore the fact that the character of Sunny does not use spoken words during the performance, and how actors can communicate using their face and body. Lesson Two draws on Sunny’s ability to address problems with a “How can I make it work?” perspective. Using “Sunny’s Engineering Station,” students have hands-on opportunities to look for solutions to a problem. A third lesson incorporates sound cues, similar to the ones used in the play, to reinforce the steps that engineers take when solving problems.

We are thrilled to know that you realize the value of theatre and its ability to create meaningful and long-lasting impressions on our young audiences. Thank you and enjoy the performance.

Carolyn Geman and Alice Large, Theater Craft, Inc.

I am so excited to perform The Curious Picnic for your students! This show is a perfect blend of my educator background and performer background, both of which are careers that have their unique demands. When facing challenges in either scenario, I have learned to adopt helpful phrases to stay focused on big-picture goals. While working on this project, I learned a new favorite slogan from the director, Carolyn Geman. She says, “Our problems are our solutions.” This is the motto that drives The Curious Picnic.

During the performance, you will see Sunny (that’s me) wondering about the ordinary things around her, experimenting with them, and using them in unique ways to solve problems. In the same way, when Carolyn and I worked on the play, we had many creative decisions to make, and we found endless possibilities. But when we were forced to consider our options within a set of limitations, we made the best discoveries. Those set boundaries provided focus and allowed us to achieve a specific purpose. So, both Sunny (the character) and I (the actor) have gotten to experience first-hand the joy of working through challenges, and just how rewarding it can be.

I hope the young audience members will see Sunny’s story as an invitation to unleash their own curiosity and explore problem-solving. And I encourage you to find ways to continue to foster that curiosity in your classrooms throughout the year. This guidebook will be a great resource, and a jumping-off point for the great learning this year will hold. I hope your students have fun with the engaging elements of The Curious Picnic! Thank you for watching, listening, and playing along. Enjoy the show.

Melissa Silengo Husebo, Teaching Artist and Performer “Sunny”
KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**Audience Participation:**

The Curious Picnic is designed for young children, who we know can be a vibrant audience! Before the show begins, our Teaching Artist (or TA) will help remind the students how and when to participate. The TA will review hand signals that will give the children information, such as signals for them to stand up, sit down, and know when it is time to be quiet.

During the show, there are times when Sunny may ask the children to help her with a problem, and they should be free to respond out loud. They may "offer advice" to Sunny or help her with ideas. She even lets them try a little dancing (from their seats) with her. Please know that we want the children to respond, and we will help them know when movement is allowed and when it is time to stop.

**Post-Show Engagement Activity:**

After the performance, a Teaching Artist and the Actress who plays Sunny will come back to continue the fun! We will satisfy some of the curiosity the children will have about how the set and props work, sharing how they have been engineered to meet the needs of the show. Then we will jump into an activity that will get all the children involved in helping to solve a problem. This STEM-based opportunity for continued learning takes place right on the stage space where the show was performed.
ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

Carolyn Geman - writer, director, producer

Carolyn Geman has been a professional theater-maker for over 35 years, with award-winning credits as a performer, director, lyricist, producer, playwright, composer, acting coach, and teaching artist. Her stage experience spans from Off-Broadway to touring shows. Carolyn’s written work for the stage include comedies, dramas, short plays, and full-length musicals. She has twice been commissioned by the Tennessee Arts Commission to craft new plays, such as “Burden of Justice: 1863.” She has produced and directed professional theater since 1999, including numerous projects for TPAC Education, such as the award-winning “The Story Builders” (which she also wrote) honored as “Best Production of 2003” by The Tennessean. Carolyn is a founding member of Nashville longest-running Improv group, the Spontaneous Comedy Company. Carolyn served as Supervisor of Theater and Music for Metro Nashville Parks Cultural Arts, where she cultivated arts programming, managed the Z. Alexander Looby Theater, and created the Centennial Black Box Theater.

Melissa Silengo - "Sunny"

Melissa’s performance credits include work with the region’s best-loved companies, such as Street Theater, Chaffin’s Barn, Roxy Regional, Theater Craft, Tennessee Women’s Theater Project, and more. With a degree in Music Education from Belmont University, she taught at Andrew Jackson Elementary for several years. While there she also directed their after-school theater program, working with TPAC’s Disney Musicals in Schools. In 2014, she was honored as teacher-of-the-year at Andrew Jackson Elementary, and was chosen as runner-up for the same accolade for Metro Nashville Public Schools. In 2016 she was recognized as a CMA Music Teacher of Excellence. Melissa incorporates her music education expertise into multiple projects for Quaver Music, an online general music curriculum. Since 2013, Melissa has taught musical theatre camps at one of her favorite places, Nashville Children’s Theater. She also continues to work in school settings whenever possible as a substitute teacher for MNPS. Melissa lives in a little yellow house in East Nashville with her husband Tyler and their two small dogs, Penny Lane and Lucy.
A CONVERSATION WITH THE CURIOUS PICNIC PLAYWRIGHT, CAROLYN GERMAN

What inspired to write this play?

I love writing for young audiences...they are very discerning! I am also very passionate about science. I wanted to encourage even the youngest of school children to explore their world, and to excite them about the discoveries they can make. I want them to know that the world they experience every day is full of opportunities to ask, “what does this do?” or “how can I make this work?” By creating the character Sunny, who is full of curiosity, I knew the audience could connect to her passion for exploring solutions and mirror her glee about discoveries.

We notice that there isn't any modern technology on stage. Is that on purpose?

Yes! I think we, as a society, are giving young people too little time to explore simple things, and too little time to make discoveries. Children spend a great deal of time with screens, watching things happen for them. As a playwright, I was excited about creating a world for The Curious Picnic that would inspire exploration of everyday things. It was sheer joy for me to remove from Sunny's world anything that worked digitally. She is a take-it-apart-and-put-it-together kind of person. All the items in the play require the user to actively do something for it to work or be functional.

Why no words?

I have always loved exploring how much "story" I can infuse into a character's movements, posture, and physical reactions to other characters and objects. My performance background is rich with Musical Theater and Improv Comedy, both of which require performance techniques that draw from what we could call "physical comedy." As I started creating The Curious Picnic, I was immediately aware of how perfect the story was for a character who did not use language. The plot of the story is a "try-and-fail" extravaganza, the same type of content that makes us love watching Lucille Ball or any number of other comedic greats, as they work with uncooperative props or oddly-demanding physicality.

Then, the icing on the cake becomes the fact that "no words" also means there is no language barrier. There is no vocabulary to clarify. No one will lose the story line because they missed a word. Movement and facial expressions are more universal than language can ever be, so a play with no words is instantly accessible regardless of the language skills of the child.
Lesson One...
WITHOUT WORDS

Pre-Show Lesson Introduction:
- Ask children to name their favorite story. (Prompt: titles of books, fairy tales, or movies.) Where did they hear these stories? (Prompt: sources like books, movies, etc.)
- Share that these all have one thing in common: WORDS (words we read / words movie characters speak/ etc.)
- Discuss: What if we couldn't use words? What are other ways we let people know the feelings we feel?

Alternate Post-Show Lesson Introduction:  Think back to the play you saw - the character didn't use words. When she was happy, how did you know she was happy? Discuss: What if we couldn't use words? What are other ways we let people know the feelings we feel?

WARM-UP
- Ask: If you are happy, how might that show on your face? Encourage students to show, with their faces, what it might look like to be happy.
- Next ask students to show you how it would look if they were sad.
- WATCH for students who are extending the sad face by used their body, such as letting their shoulders slump. Respond positively: "Mica made his shoulders droop when he showed sad. That looks really sad." If no child adds body motion, teacher should show slumped shoulders with "sad." As a next step, encourage the students to add the drooping shoulders to their "sad face."
- Repeat this process with more emotions, showing angry and scared.
- Finally ask students to show happy again. Did they show it differently than the first time (adding body movements, etc.)?
- Share: We can use our faces and our bodies to show people how we are feeling. Actors in plays do the same thing, to show us what the characters are feeling. Actors use their faces and their bodies to tell us the story of the play, without using words.
PART 1: CHARACTERS WITHOUT WORDS

Tell students they will now work like actors do, using their face and body to communicate ideas.

Remind students that we are still working without words, so we must "show" action and emotion using our bodies and facial expressions, not tell with words.

Begin by asking students to stand up. Ask them to show a character who is "a little bit sad," reminding them of the warm-up and how certain movements made the emotion more pronounced. (i.e. let sad show on their faces, but not in their bodies.) Then, ask them to show someone "sadder" than that, prompting them as needed to use sad faces or add drooping shoulders. Finally, ask them to show a character who is "the saddest of all," prompting them to make more extreme, whole body droops.

Try the same pattern with Happy, Happier, Happiest.

Share: We can also tell about things other than emotions without using words.

- Who can show us what it looks like to hold a very small puppy (two hands, gently, close to body, light)?
- How does it look if we are holding a medium-sized dog (arms leave room for bigger dog, heavier)?
- How does it look if we are holding a huge dog (struggling, arms much wider for biggest dog, heaviest)?

Have 3 children come to the front, (or split class in groups of three) to portray degrees of emotions (or conditions). Coach them as needed to keep actions in the right "intensity" and reinforce need for difference between each degree.

- Can you/the group show us a character who is carrying a box with a few books in it? (heavy)
- Can you/the group show us a character who is carrying a heavier box?
- Can you/the group show us a character who is carrying the heaviest box of all?

Repeat for: Cold, Sticky, Spicy, Windy
PART 2: PLAYS WITHOUT WORDS – USING BEGINNING/MIDDLE/END

- Share: Now students have the acting skills to perform a play without words! Remind them that plays, like stories, have a beginning, middle, and end.
- The teacher will "narrate" the play, (5 script choices are listed below) and the students will act it out the actions and emotions. Choose one of the scripts below and read aloud first, so the students can hear the story before acting it out.
- Next, ask the class (or individuals) to now act the play, while the teacher narrates. Allow time between lines for making face/body adjustments. Encourage clear/simple choices. For older students, allow individuals to try one of the plays on their own, with no narration.

**Script Choices for Younger Students**
1. I was very sad. Then someone gave me a little puppy. I was happy!
2. It was very cold. Then it got even colder. Then it got warmer and I was happy!
3. I was very happy. Then my friend gave me a big heavy book to carry. I was mad!
4. I was very sleepy. Then I saw a crocodile! I was scared!
5. I got to eat pizza for lunch. It tasted horrible. I was sad.

**Script Choices for Older Students**
1. I was sitting all by myself. Then someone gave me a balloon. I was happy!
2. I was at the bus stop in the freezing cold. Then the sun came out. I was happy!
3. I was carrying my homework. Then the wind blew my papers away. I was very angry.
4. My dog got wet in the rain. She smelled horrible! I love her anyway!
5. I brought my mom her birthday cake. I almost dropped it. I was surprised!

- Ask if students noticed that the stories had a pattern. (3 sentences, Beg/Mid/End) Each part also answers a question: What were you doing? / What happened? / How did you feel?
- Have the students create their own Three Line story. (Older students should write down their story. Younger students can simply create three lines they can remember.)
- Have students perform their play, with NO narration first, just using movements. After each play, allow one or two students to share what they saw in the story. Then, have the performer share their story to confirm what was shown.

CONCLUSION
Discuss: Were students surprised that we can use faces and bodies to show emotions, and other information? Which was more fun: watching a wordless play or performing it? Why?
Lesson Two...

SUNNY’S ENGINEERING STATION

TEACHER NOTE - This lesson is prepared to be a post-performance activity, but could be adjusted to be a pre-performance activity if needed for your planning by removing references to the performance. Students could connect to problem-solving and engineering concepts and the teacher can easily connect these concepts to the performance afterwards.

Materials: “Sunny’s Engineering Station” sign (found on page 16 - 1 for each station), “Will It Work?” Check-list (on page 17 - print 1 for each student), “Tool + Tool” Check-list (on page 18 - print one for each group), Crayons for each student (one red, one black, or other available colors), “Sunny’s Engineering Station” Box of Supplies (Box should include: Sieve or plastic mesh screen, slotted spoon, Funnel, Square of cloth (like a dishcloth), Cardboard tube (paper towel roll), about 2 cups Dried beans in plastic zip-able bag, about 2 cups rice in plastic zip-able bag(optional), about 1 cup salt in plastic zip-able bag(optional), 2 shoe boxes).

Room set-up – You will need a table or space that children can access where you will place “Sunny’s Engineering Station.”

INTRODUCTION

Share with students that engineers are scientists that solve problems and help us. They try out different ways to solve a problem and get help from other engineers (research and collaboration) to find the best solution. Engineers work in different ways in different jobs to solve problems. A few examples you might share are:

- Civil Engineers build roads and build bridges so we can drive over water.
- Mechanical Engineers build factory machines and repair robots in assembly lines like at Nissan in TN.
- Aerospace Engineers build spacecraft, help people travel in space, and fix machines already in space.

GETTING STARTED

- Tell the class, “Every day I see each of you solve problems, so you are already engineers! Let’s put some of your natural abilities to work.”
- Discuss the play and that Sunny had to solve some problems, using a box with different objects she used as tools. Some tools worked, and some did not.
  - When she used the watering can to try to put water in the vase, did that work?
  - Did the slotted spoon work?
  - Did the big horn she used as a funnel work?
- Remind the students we often have to try many different solutions in order to solve a problem.
- Show the class “Sunny’s Engineering Station” Box of Supplies, and look at the different tools: Do students know the names of these tools? How they are used?
• We have an Engineering Station set up in our classroom right now that will give you the opportunity to solve problems just like Sunny did!

• Here’s an example - Share aloud story set-up with a problem to solve:
  o Sunny is helping in the kitchen. She is asked to move some food items from one place to another without wasting or spilling them. She can only use these tools for the job. Can we figure out a solution? How can we get the beans from box 1 to box 2 without spilling them?

• Remind the students that there is not just one right answer and note that spilling the beans is not a failure. Show students the “Will It Work? Check-list” and explain that we will try several ways to move the beans and record our answers. What are their predictions before we try?

• Ask for a volunteer. Guide the student to try to move the beans with the funnel. Encourage students to respond to what happens. Record the results on the chart. A black checkmark for those that work well. A red “X” for less effective ones. Guide a quick discussion of why the funnel did or did not work so well.

• Encourage new volunteers to try each tool with the beans, recording answers.

• For the remainder of the activity, you may choose to continue the lesson as a class experiment, or you may choose to set up the station in the classroom and leave for a week for students to interact individually with the items. Regardless of which way you choose to proceed, here are a few ideas for continuing the experiment and problem-solving:
  o Remove the beans and replace with the rice.
  o Exchange rice for salt.
  o Mix salt and beans together.
  o Depending on the age of your students, allow the class to experiment with other things such as tools from the classroom or use the Tool + Tool Check-list printable and go deeper by asking if anyone tried using 2 tools together (cloth on top of sieve, or to plug the funnel). Encourage all options!

CONCLUSION

• Remind students that Engineers learn from each other (research) and work together on projects getting information that helps them with what they try next.

• Discuss: Ask them to look at the results they recorded from working in the center, and guide a group discussion of “which tool worked the best and why that may be?”

• After a full time of discovery, display and discuss some of the charts recording the results of the tools on the different materials. Ask the class to tell what tools worked well to move the beans without spilling? And which tools worked for the salt? Did the same tools work well for the mixture? (No - Since the salt and beans differ in size and shape the successful tools will be different.)

• Ask if students can use other tools in the classroom to help with original tools (place a ball in the bottom of the funnel to block the hole, etc.). What new tools worked?
Lesson Three...

SOUND EFFECTS SEARCH & SOLVE*

INTRODUCTION

- Discuss with the class that in The Curious Picnic Sunny had problems she wanted to solve, and she had to use many different ways to solve them. How did you know what the problems were?
- Example 1 - Sunny could not find her telephone. How did you know that she needed to find her telephone? How did you know someone was calling her? (the phone rang)
  - Remind the class that the phone onstage was not really connected so you couldn't really talk on it. That phone was not really working. Someone played the sound of the phone at the right times to help tell the story.
- Example 2 - Sunny needed to find water for her flowers. We helped her realize she could gather water from outside in the rain. How did you know it started to rain in the play? (sounds of rain and thunder) Did it really thunder outside at just the right moment? Was there really rain coming down?
  - Remind the class that someone played those sounds too.
- Tell the class that the sounds used in a play are called sound effects. Sound Effects are the sounds played at the right time in the play to help the audience (the people watching) understand the story better, and to give the characters things to react to.

WARM-UP

- Explain to students that the teacher will tell a problem-solving story, and the students will be creating the sound effects! Each sound effect will come at a specific place in the story. The teacher will teach the sounds and help students know when to make that sound. We will use some motions to help us remember, and to make it fun!
- Introduce the sounds and motions (listed below), and what they mean, and let students practice them before starting the story. This is a truncated version, for ease of teaching, with the 5 sounds (and motions) to be taught. The goal is to eventually have the children anticipate where they are in the process so they can use the sound without prompting. Initial work with the sound effects will require prompts and guidance.

  Sounds to be taught:
  "Uh oh" = There's a problem (both hands out like "stop")
  "Hmmm" = Thinking about possible solutions (index finger to the forehead)
  "Ding" = I have an idea! (index finger out in front of body/beside face)
  "Aww" = I didn't work (snap of fingers, or bringing hand down swiftly in front of body)
  "Whee-oop" = Announcing your research: It works! (making a check mark in the air)

TEACHER NOTE: In the Search & Solve* Scenarios provided here, the sound effects are noted in all caps, and in the place in the story where they should be said. The pattern of sounds correlates with the steps in Engineering Design Process.

*Search & Solve © 2018 Carolyn Geman & Alice Large.
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• Next, start the story slowly, prompting students to know what to do and remember the sounds/motions they should be making. (What should we do now? Do we think that will work? Do we need to think of something else? Will it work the best?)

• Remember that each story has three solutions: (one that does not work well, one solution that works okay, the solution that works the best). The 3 solution options are provided.

• Continue the lesson with additional stories or create your own! The Search and Solve* Scenario method can be used to create your own scenarios using the following outline.
  • Set up the story in a few sentences. Give the circumstances, but do not voice the problem.
  • Then use the sound effect pattern to help students think of answers and try them.
  • Encourage solutions by naming items on hand, or circumstances. (Don't say how to use them.)
  • Try two solutions that are impractical, or simply not the best.
  • Prompt students toward finding the third solution, which will be the best.

*Search & Solve © 2018 Carolyn Geman & Alice Large. The Sound Effects approach and Scenarios portions of this curriculum are used with permission. Permission for use extends to TPAC Education, and to Educators using The Curious Picnic Guidebook. Enjoy!
Sunny is helping her local farmer get his crops to the market. He has big baskets of green beans. The market is far away.

UH-OH!

You are right! We do have a problem. Who knows our problem? That is right! The problem is - How will we move the baskets of green beans? What should we do?

HMMMMMMM

Yes we better think..... You know, Sunny does have a tricycle with a cart behind it.

DING

Yes? Who has an idea? Put the green beans in the cart? Very good!

Let's try!

PEDDLE, PEDDLE (pump arms like pedaling bike). WHEW! (wipe face)

These baskets are heavy! It is so hard to peddle! That does not work very well!

AWW

That's okay. Maybe there is another way to move a lot of green beans.

HMMMMMM

Yes, we better do more thinking.... You know, there is a horse and wagon on the farm.

DING

Yes? Who has an idea?  Put the beans in the horse and wagon? Very good!

Let's try! Get the horse out of the barn.

CLIP CLOP, CLIP CLOP, ... (gallop in place) Whoa!

The horse doesn't like all that traffic on the road.

AWW

That's okay. Maybe there is another way to move a lot of green beans.

HMMMMM

You know, the farmer has a pick-up truck in the driveway.

DING

Yes? Who has an idea? Load the beans in the pick-up truck? Very good!

Let's try!

LOUD MOTO R SOUNDS... HONK!

We made it! Did the pick-up truck do the job? Yes, it works the best!

WHE-OO P!

We solved the problem! Good job!
Sunny is making a cake in the kitchen. She puts the sifted flour, eggs, salt and baking powder in the bowl but now needs to mix the dough.

UH-OH!

We do have a problem. Who can say what the problem is? That's right! How do we mix up the cake batter? What should we do?

HMMMMMMM

Yes, we better think..... You know, Sunny has already washed her hands.

DING

Yes? Who has an idea? Mix it up with our hands? Very good! Let's try!

SQUISH SQUASH SQUISH SQUASH ... (squishing dough through hands) ...Whoa!

This is too messy! This is not the best idea.

AWW

That's okay. Maybe there is another way to mix up the cake batter.

HMMMMMMM

Yes, we better do more thinking.... You know, Sunny does have spoon.

DING

Yes? Who has an idea? Try to stir the batter with the spoon? Very good! Let's try!

STIR, STIR,..... WHEW! (wipe face)

This batter is really stiff, and hard to stir! That does not work very well.

AWW

That's okay. Maybe there is another way to mix up the cake batter.

HMMMMMMM

Yes, we better do more thinking.... You know, there is an electric mixer in her kitchen.

DING

Yes? Who has an idea? Use the mixer to mix up the cake batter? Very good! Let's try!

MIXER MOTOR SOUNDS SOUNDS

Look at that! Did the mixer do the job? Yes, it works the best!

WHE-OOP!

We solved the problem! Good job!
Wordless Stories Extension - Basic Emotions Handout

happy

surprised

sad

scared

angry

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## Sunny's Engineering Station

### WILL IT WORK? CHECK-LIST

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Sunny's Engineering Station

**WILL IT WORK? CHECK-LIST**

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