

KNUFFLE BUNNY A Cautionary Musical

Teacher Guide

Kupferberg Center Performances @ Queens College

The Teacher Guide is a convenient source of background information, mini-lessons, and pre- and post-concert activities that coordinate with the performance and Student Guide to encourage learning across the curriculum. Most activities can be easily adapted to suit different age groups. This Guide supports the "Blueprint for Teaching & Learning in the Arts," and includes City and State Learning Standards. Click on the URL's to link directly to suggested websites. Feel free to reproduce these materials, as well as Student Activity Pages that may be posted on this website.
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Please send documentation (photographs, compositions, etc.) of class activities based on this guide so we can share your successes with other schools attending Revelations performances. Thanks!

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical, was commissioned by Kennedy Center, where it had its world premiere, and now comes back to Kupferberg Center for a second season. Based on the Caldecott Honor-winning picture book, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems, the script and lyrics for the musical are also by Mo Willems. The music is by Grammy Award-winning composer Michael Silversher. The show is directed by Rosemary Newcott and choreographed by Paige Hernandez.

Based on last season's enthusiastic audiences, we know that students will relate to the active Trixie and her Knuffle Bunny, and be entertained by the dancing laundry. Teachers will also enjoy the relationship between Mom and Dad, where the slightly disorganized Dad tries to convince Mom he has everything under control as he tries to take a very active toddler and a load of laundry to the Laundromat.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: LANGUAGE ARTS

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Language Standards: Strand: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, 6

VOCABULARY

Discuss the following words and what they mean with your students:

Errand – a short trip taken to perform a task.

Laundromat - a self-service laundry where coin-operated washing machines and dryers are available for a small fee.

Bawl – loud cries made while weeping

Activity: The K in Knuffle

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Language Standards: Strand: Conventions of Standard English 2b.

COORDINATE WITH STUDENT GUIDE: "The K in Knuffle Bunny."

Answers: All words are circled except kite, key, kick and kitten.

ACTIVITY: READING AND RESPONDING TO THE STORY WITH THINKING MAPS AND COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 1b, 3b

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Reading: Strands: Key Ideas and Details, 1;

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 7;

Speaking and Listening: Strand:

Comprehension and Collaboration, 1, 2, 3;

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, 4.

Whole Group: Read *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems to your students.

1. Turn and Talk
 - a. Predict what will happen to Knuffle Bunny.
 - b. Predict how Trixie will respond.
2. Make a circle “thinking” map (see page 8 for sample map)
 - a. Write: “Trixie” in the center circle.
 - b. Around her name, brainstorm with students to write words that describe her.
 - c. Around the outside of the circle, list the descriptors that indicate how you know these facts.
3. Individual Work: In their Reading Journals, have students answer the following questions:
 - a. Literal:
 - i. Name 3 ways Trixie tries to tell her Dad that Knuffle Bunny is lost. (*gibberish, goes “boneless,” bawls*).
 - b. Inferential:
 - i. Why was her Dad unhappy by the time they got home? (*Trixie had been crying loudly and fighting him all the way home, and her Dad didn’t know why*).
 - ii. Why do you think Mom and Dad tried so hard to find Knuffle Bunny? (*Because they wanted Trixie to be happy, they loved Trixie, they knew how important Knuffle Bunny was to her.*)
5. Ask students to share their responses with their reading partner or guided reading group. Return to whole group and ask several selected students to share their responses.

Mini-Lesson: Story Structure: Beginning, Middle And End

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 5a

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Reading: Strands: Key Ideas and Details 2, 3;

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 7;

Speaking and Listening: Strand: Comprehension and Collaboration, 1;

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, 4.

1. Whole Group: sit in a circle. Retell the story with each student saying one sentence before moving to the next person in the circle. Go around as many times as you need until the story is retold.
2. Create a flow “thinking” map with the class showing beginning, middle and end. Using the sample provided, have students fill in the responses. (See Sample Flow Map on page 9.)

Mini-Lesson: Themes

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 3b, 5a

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Reading: Strands: Key Ideas and Details 2, 3;
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 7.

Whole Group: Brainstorm some of the themes present in the story. The main themes are:

1. **COMMUNICATION.** Trixie, a very young child, tries to make herself understood. Ask your students: How do children make themselves understood in an adult world? Brainstorm and come up with a list of ways in which young children communicate. (*pointing, crying, looking, etc.*)
2. **LOSS.** Trixie had to cope with the loss of Knuffle Bunny, who was very important to her. Ask your students: Have you every lost something important to you? How did you deal with the loss? Did anyone help you?
3. **SAFETY.** Being kept safe by the adults in one’s world is very important to children. Ask students: What do you expect from your parents, caregiver, teachers and other adults in your world? What responsibilities do they have toward you, like keeping you safe? Were Trixie’s parents adults Trixie could rely on to meet her needs and keep her safe? Why or why not?

Activity: Reading On (Reading Several Books By Mo Willems)

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 1b

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Reading: Strands: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9;
Speaking and Listening: Strand: Comprehension and Collaboration, 1, 2, 3;
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, 4.

Read *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity* and *Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion*. Compare and contrast Trixie’s character in each story as she grows bigger. In the former, she makes friends with a classmate who has the same bunny as Knuffle Bunny. The end of *Knuffle Bunny Free* is imaginary, and Trixie’s Father, author Mo Willems, says it is like a “love letter,” to Trixie, filled with things he hopes for her, because right now she is still a young girl. Ask your students why the ending is things her father hopes for her? (be happy, have nice friends, get a good education, have her own family).

Activity: Writing a Memory Book

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARD: 2b

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Writing: Strands: Text Type and Purposes 3.
COORDINATE WITH STUDENT GUIDE: “Take It Home: Parent and Kid Corner”

1. Following the directions in the Student Guide, students write a book about their own first words or other fun family memory.
2. Illustrate it with drawings or photographs.
3. Make a cover for the book and share it in class and with their own families.

Activity: Sharing A Class Knuffle Bunny

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 2c, 3c

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS: Writing:

1. Bring in a stuffed animal to be the “class pet.”
 - a. Vote on a name.
2. Create a little bed or home for it in the classroom.
3. Have a different child take it home each night with a class journal, and write in the journal what adventures they had with the “class pet” at home.
4. Read the adventure written the night before each morning as part of your morning routine.

Activity: Writing a Class Adventure

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 2b, 2c, 3b, 5b

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Writing: Strands: Text Type and Purposes 3;
Production and Distribution, 5;
Speaking and Listening: Strand:
Comprehension and Collaboration, 1;
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, 4.

1. Create a group story about the class pet getting lost somewhere in the neighborhood. Encourage the use of locations near the school that you will be able to easily photograph later.
2. You can use the method of one-sentence storytelling in a group so everyone is engaged.
3. If a story seems to be getting away from the plot, the next person in the circle can throw up their hands and say “that again!” and return to the beginning of the story, or to where the story began to veer off into silliness, and get it back on track.
4. See Visual Art for an extension of this activity.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: VISUAL ART**Activity: Create Your Own Book In The Style of Knuffle Bunny**

NYC ARTS STANDARDS: 1, 2

BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS: Visual Art: Art Making, Making Connections, Cultural Connections

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Writing: Strands: Text Type and Purposes, 3;
Production and Distribution, 5, 6;
Research To Build and Present Knowledge, 7,8;
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, 5.

COORDINATE WITH STUDENT GUIDE: “A Picture’s Worth a Thousand Words”

Discuss with students: The *Knuffle Bunny* trilogy uses a combination of black and white digital photography and colorful cartooning collaged together. The photographs are of real places. *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* and *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity* take place in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where Mo Willems lived with his wife Cheryl and his toddler Trixie. The photographs show the brownstones, the park, the school, and the Laundromat (Mo Willems used Photoshop to get rid of unsightly garbage and air conditioners). The people in the pictures are cartooned (Pigeon, a character in other books by Mo Willems, makes a guest appearance on the tee shirt of one of the supporting characters. Can you find it?).

Activity 1: Practicing Collage

Following the directions in the Student Guide, create cartoon characters and bubble dialogues to cut out and glue on the photograph provided. Share your creations. This will be their first step in creating personal collage books.

Activity 2: Creating the Book*Preparing to create the book:*

1. After writing the story, take a neighborhood walk.
2. Take photographs with digital cameras of places of importance to your students; the school, the playground, the library, the local deli, etc. Use places that appeared in the class pet story.
3. Back in class, have each student draw themselves in cartoon style, outlining themselves in black ink and filling in the spaces with colorful crayons.
4. The teacher can draw the “class pet” or select students to draw it.

5. Download your photos onto the computer and print them out in black and white.
6. Ask students to help put them in the order of the story the class wrote together about the class pet getting lost.
7. Students paste the cartooned figures on the pages, drawing more figures doing different things as needed.
8. Put the pages together into a book with a cover and display it in the class library.

Alternative:

Take the photographs with your students and the class pet in them, following the narrative you created. Back in class, ask each student to color in their hair and clothing with oil pastels, and outline their features with black ink.

Activity: Drawing Your “Knuffle Bunny”

NYC ARTS STANDARDS: 1, 2

BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS: Visual Art: Art Making, Making Connections

NYC Language Arts Standard: 2c

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Writing: Strands: Text Type and Purposes, 3;

Production and Distribution, 5.

COORDINATE WITH STUDENT GUIDE: “Your Knuffle Bunny”

Using the Student Guide, ask students to:

1. Draw a picture of a stuffed animal that was important to you and tell what its’ name is.
2. Write a story about your stuffed animal --when you received it, if it was ever lost, etc. in your reading journals.
3. Cut and paste drawing into your reading journals.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: MUSIC

Activity: Create A Song of Loss

NYC ARTS STANDARDS: 1, 2.

BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS: Music: Making Music, Making Connections.

How Do You Write A Song In Gibberish?

Pre-Concert: Read or share this information with students:

Michael Silversher, the composer of *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical*, faced a real challenge. How could he write a song for a character that only speaks baby talk or gibberish? To solve the problem, Michael first wrote a sad song with real words:

*“Oh Knuffle Bunny
How I love you so
Oh Knuffle Bunny
Where now did you go?
You were right beside me earlier today
I didn’t mean to let you slip away....”*

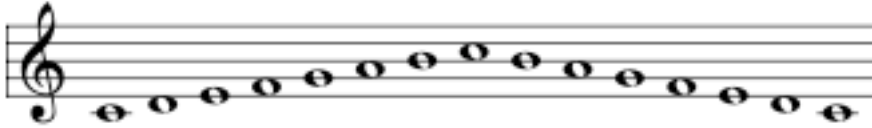
Then he replaced the words with Trixie’s gibberish: “Aggle flaggle klabble....wumby flappy snurp.”

Direct students: When you listen to the song in the show, ask yourself if you understand Trixie’s sadness even if you don’t understand her words. How do you think the composer was able to make Trixie’s emotions clear?

Post Concert: Writing your own song.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into small groups.
2. Each group creates a couplet based on the loss of the class pet in the story you created (see above).
3. Each group creates a melody for their couplet, using xylophones (if you have xylophones with removable notes like Orff instruments, choose a key and remove the notes not in that key on all the instruments so the song is in the same key when you put it together. C is an easy key to choose, because its key signature has no sharps or flats. The pitches are C, D, E, F, G, A and B.



4. Have each group write their couplet on sentence strips. Ask students to arrange the couplets on your sentence strip holder in a way that makes sense to them.
5. Ask each group to perform their couplet by singing and playing it in the order they constructed.

Extension: How would they change the song to make it into gibberish? How would it change the meaning, tone, theme or story of the song?

Activity: Make A Productive Thinking Chart; Sing: “This Is The Way We Wash....”

NYC ARTS STANDARDS: 1
BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS:
Music: Making Music;
Theater: Acting:
Pantomime.

Knuffle Bunny isn’t the first item that has ever accidentally found its way into the wash!

1. Make a Productive Thinking chart listing all the *many, varied* and *unusual* things that find their way into the wash.
2. Form a circle with your students. Sing: “This is the way we wash our clothes, wash our clothes, wash our clothes. This is the way we wash out clothes so early Monday morning.” (It is sung to the tune “Here We Go 'Round The Mulberry Bush.”)
3. Take turns around the circle. Each student pantomimes washing something.
4. Students guess what it is.
5. Add that thing to the verse. “This is the way we wash... Knuffle Bunny....” Etc.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: THEATRE

Learn about Careers in Theater

BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS: Theater: Careers in Theater.
COORDINATE WITH STUDENT GUIDE: “Who’s Who in the Theater”

Read the information in the Student Guide about all the people it takes to make a show. Discuss whether they can think of any more people (producer, props person, stage manager, assistant director, marketing, box office, etc.). Ask students if there is a career in the theater in which they would be interested.

CURRICULUM FOCUS: SOCIAL STUDIES

Activity: Students make a timeline of their lives.

NYC SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 1: Families and Communities

CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, 5;

Writing: Strands: Text Type and Purposes, 3.

NYC LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS: 2d, 4a, 4b

COORDINATE WITH STUDENT GUIDE: “Now I Am Big,” “Take It Home: Parent and Kid Corner”

What you need:

1. A long piece of paper, or several pieces of writing paper taped together.
2. A felt-tipped pen
3. Tape

Steps:

1. Draw a horizontal line across the middle of the paper
2. Divide the line with a mark for each year, beginning with first birthday on the left and moving to the right until they reach this year.
3. Write in, above and below the line, all the events they can remember that are important to them, using the subject below as a guide:
 - a. birthdays,
 - b. first memories,
 - c. first toys,
 - d. first teachers,
 - e. first pet,
 - f. favorite book and the first time they read it,
 - g. first time riding a bike,
 - h. first time riding a horse,
 - i. first time skiing,
 - j. first time sledding,
 - k. learning to swim,
 - l. learning to snap fingers,
 - m. learning to whistle,
 - n. learning to play an instrument,
 - o. first airplane, train or car trip
 - p. when they met their best friend
 - q. when they lost their first tooth
 - r. when they were in their first playetc.
4. Add drawings or photographs.
5. Tape timelines to the wall or make a bulletin board showing all the time lines.

Follow-Up Activity: Write About It – A Memoir

Have students write a story about one of the things they remember on their timeline.

WEB SITES

www.mowillems.com - the official Mo Willems site

<http://www.gomo.net> is a Mo Willems website with interactive games for young children.

<http://mowillemsstuff.blogspot.com/> to get Mo Willems books and other stuff

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2943476/mo_willems_author_study.html?cat=25 ideas for an author study

<http://web.mac.com/michaelsilversher/iWeb/Michael%20Silversher/michael%20silversher.html> - Michael Silversher's website, with a listing of his many compositions and recordings, including his Grammy-winning "Elmo in Grouchland."

RESOURCES

Books by Mo Willems are published by HarperCollins Children and Disney Books. Visit these sites for full listings and accompanying activity sheets.

<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/>

<http://disney.go.com/books/index>

<http://www.pigeonpresents.com/video-knuffle.aspx> - View a sample of the Weston Woods version of Knuffle Bunny.

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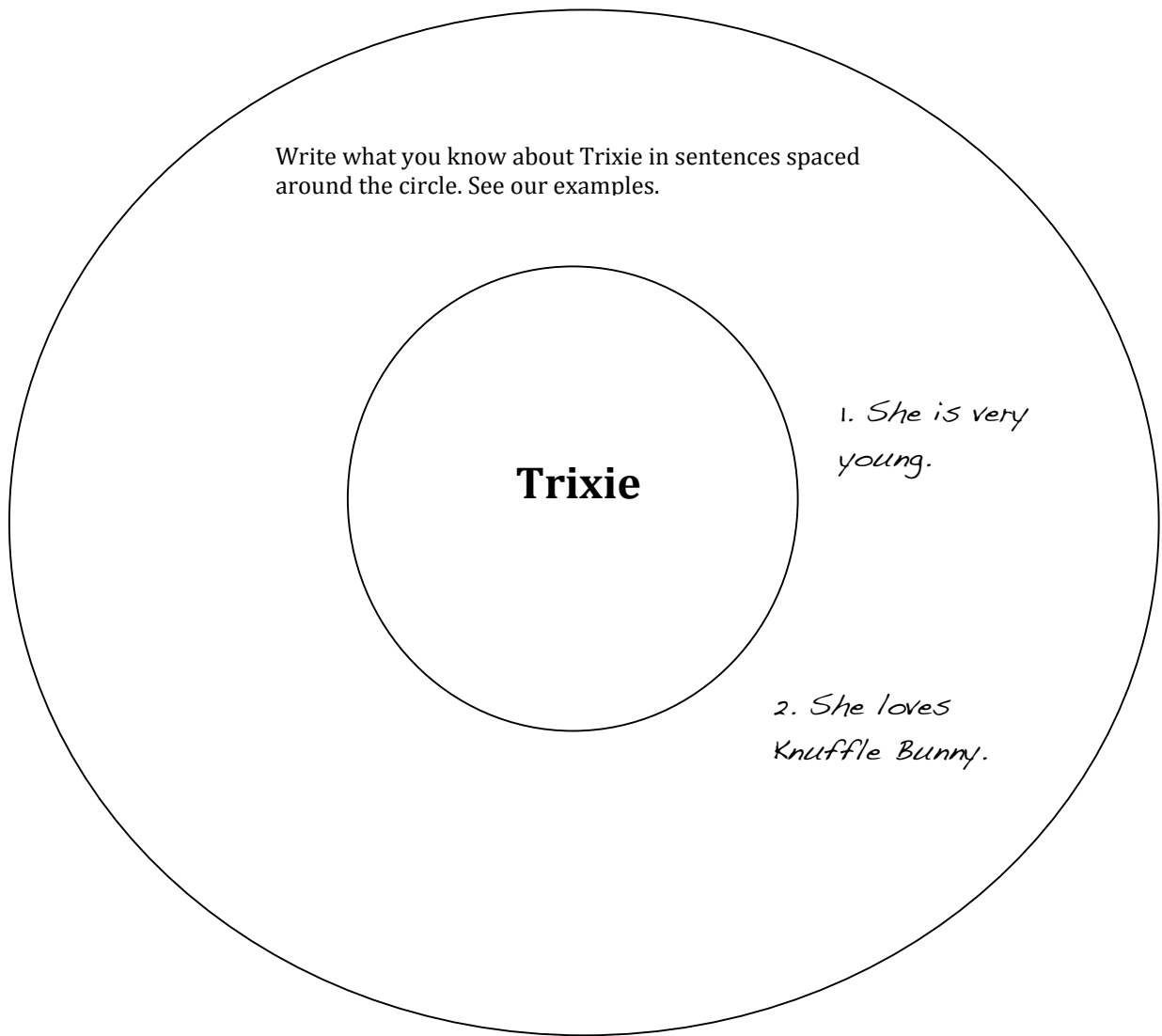


Sample Thinking Map

List the descriptors here.

Examples:

1. *Trixie still talks in baby talk.*
2. *Trixie carries Knuffle Bunny with her everywhere.*



Sample Flow Map

