Yellow Bird Chase Study Guide
Appropriate for students K-6

Welcome!

Yellow Bird Chase will shortly be coming to your school. Here are some activities we suggest to help you prepare both yourselves and your students for the show.

Description of Show

First, what is *Yellow Bird Chase*? *Yellow Bird Chase* is a 50-minute comic play using clowning, found object puppetry, and Gibberish. It tells the story of three maintenance workers, CapCap, Bübles and Poodge, as they try to catch a magical yellow bird. With everyday objects and their imaginations, they bring to life all kinds of environments and things.

Our crew speaks a nonsense language, Gibberish, but everyone will be able to understand it - even Deaf audiences. *Yellow Bird Chase* was created using Universal Design principles, so each word ("Flataza", "Sleesa", "Shweeshwash") has a corresponding hand gesture.

Throughout their journey, our characters learn about cooperation, kindness, listening, and empathy. We hope to share these lessons with you and your students through *Yellow Bird Chase*!

Things to Watch

Social/Emotional Content
Right away you'll notice status. CapCap is the boss, Poodge is the low man, and Bübles is the silly troublemaker in the middle. But not everything is as it appears. Here are some things to watch - look for examples in the play:
- Who suggests solutions for problems?
- Who is brave?
- Who shares?
- How do they solve problems?
- Who is nice and who is mean?
- Who forgives?
- Are the characters different at the end than they were at the beginning? How?

Imagination
We use everyday objects to take long journeys and create live creatures. Here are some things to look for - and what details help you see these things:
- How many means of transportation do you see?
- How many live things?
- How many locations do you see? And how do you know where we are?
- How can you tell that something is alive?

Background Information

Commedia Dell'Arte
Each character in the show has a specific rank in this maintenance unit. Our characters are based on the Italian form of clowning known as Commedia Dell'Arte, in which characters represent different rungs on the social ladder, and they lampoon them.

- **CapCap**, the so-called "leader" of the crew, is based on the pompous yet cowardly **Capitano**. He is selfish, bossy, and is a scaredy cat.
- **Bübles**, our middle status character, is based on **Arlechino**, a character who loves having a good time, is clever, and is just trying to enjoy life.
- **Poodge**, the lowest status character, is based on **Zanni**. Seemingly the dullest of the crew, he is the most ingenious, effective, and generous.

Puppetry
Though our crew journeys far and wide, they never actually leave the maintenance closet. All creatures, environments, and scenes are created using basic items you might find in a hardware store. This kind of puppetry is called "Found Object Puppetry". In this case, a puppet is anything we manipulate to transform or bring to life.

In found object puppetry, any object can come to life, it doesn't need to be a manufactured "puppet". We keep an open mind, use our imagination, and we collaborate to bring things to life. Sometimes we operate a puppet individually, and sometimes together.

There are three basic principles we use to bring a puppet to life:
- Give it breath - so we can see it is alive.
- Make sure it can "see" - or orient in the world.
- Make sure it can locomote - move itself.

Activities

Whether before the show or after, these activities will increase your students' appreciation of *Yellow Bird Chase* and help teach collaboration, imagination, empathy, and active listening. We encourage you to adapt the activities to suite the age and abilities of your students.

Make Your Own Found Object Puppet

Using everyday household objects, students breathe life into newly created puppets.

Points of Focus: Creative Problem-Solving, Individual Expression

Time: As long or short as you want

Materials: egg crates, plastic bottles, bottle caps, twist-ties, boxes, strings, markers, colored paper, colored tape, glue (hot-glue if it's safe for your students), foam insulation tubes, yarn, paper clips, feathers, popsicle sticks, ping-pong balls… anything. You can use googly eyes, but that's cheating a little.

Implementation

Give your students materials and time to make their puppets.

When puppets are complete, students practice following:

1. **Breathe**- Make the character breath, matching your breath to it. What happens to the creature when it inhales? When it exhales? Faster? Slower? How does it feel each time? How does that change?
2. **Sense**- How does your puppet orient to the world? Where are its eyes? Or does it use its nose? Or feelers? How does it take in the world? How does it react to the things it senses?
3. **Movement**- How does your creature move through the world? Does it hop? Skip? Slither? Shimmy?

Combine all these elements and you've got a character. Next up take your puppet on an adventure. Go for a walk and explore the world. What does the puppet think or feel? How does it react? Is it excited? Scared? Hungry?

Next, find a voice? How does your character express itself? Is its voice high? Low? Squeaky? Grumbly? Does it use language? Just sound?

Next, put characters in a situation together. How do they react to each other?

Make a Machine

Working collaboratively, students use their bodies and voices to create a machine (washing machine, car, vacuum, etc.)

Points of Focus: Cooperation, Creative Problem-Solving, Listening to each other

Time: 15-30 minutes

Materials: None

Implementation
Divide students into groups of 4-6. Assign each group a common machine (or let them choose for themselves)

Round 1: Give each group 5 minutes to create their machine using their bodies and voices. For example, one student could be the engine of the car, others the wheels, others the seats, another the windshield wipers. Assignments:
- The machine must begin off, turn on and operate, then turn off
- We must see how it turns on
- It must have sound
- It must move, or have action (car vs washing machine)

Take turns sharing with each other. Be sure to applaud each machine.

Round 2: Give each group 3 minutes to create the super modern (or futuristic) version of the same machine. Then share.

Round 3: Give each group 2 minutes to create the catastrophic failure of the machine. Then share.

Shared Obstacles

Students help each other navigate an obstacle on a journey, bringing everyone to safety. The whole group wins or the whole group loses.

Points of Focus: Attention to the needs of the other, Creative Problem Solving, Cooperation

Time: 15-60 min

Materials: Any furniture or architecture, strips of fabric for blindfolds or the like

Implementation

Create an obstacle course or journey the students must navigate together. Give a clear objective: either to reach a destination or get something. The important thing is that they have to work collaboratively to reach their objective.

You can create all kinds of scenarios and rules to make things more difficult, but the most important things are:
- Everyone wins or everyone loses
- Use your imagination
- Use real (but safe) obstacles to create real challenges
- If someone is the obvious leader or taking too much control, limit them: make them mute/blind/tie their legs together/tie their hands together/etc.
- If it's too easy, add more obstacles: they can't touch the floor/can't use hands/take away chairs/etc.

Scenario suggestions:
- The floor is lava and every student must get to the other side of the room using only a few boxes that no more than two people can stand on at one time.
- Distract the mighty beast so you can sneak into the lair and steal his treasure. This game can be played like Red Light Green Light. If they are caught, they return to the beginning.
- Climb a mountain: Students must summit a raised surface and find a way to get everyone to the top.

Make up Your Own Language

Students create their own language that they then teach and tell use to tell a story.

Points of Focus: Clear communication, Listening, Creative Expression, Cooperation

Time: 30-60 min

Materials: Paper, writing utensils, printed vocabulary if you like, blackboard and chalk/whiteboard and markers

Implementation

Step 1: Translate

Break students into groups of 3-5.

Each group is assigned a list of 5 English words (or the students create their own list).

The groups translate their words into Gibberish (nonsense words). Each word should have a corresponding hand gesture. Rather than focus on rules (like pig-Latin), ask students to think about the sounds that the word makes (e.g.: Ocean= Shweeshwash, because that's the sound an ocean makes, Helicopter= Chocho, because that's a sound a helicopter makes).

Step 2: Teach

Bring everyone together. Each group takes turns teaching their words to everyone else. Go one word at a time, asking the full class to repeat the sound and gesture of each word. Meanwhile, write the translations on the board so everyone can see them.

Step 3: Tell a Story

Ask everyone to sit in a circle. Tell a shared story in your Gibberish language. Go around the circle, and each person adds one sentence to the story.

Thank You

Thank you for joining Liars and Believers for *Yellow Bird Chase*. In addition to our performances, we provide in-school workshops. Feel free to ask us about them.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Contact information:
education@liarsandbelievers.com
617-615-9742

South Carolina CCR Curriculum Connections
Grades K-5

The following standards can guide instruction and help students achieve learning outcomes through completing this resource guide and/or attending a student matinee performance at the Peace Center as an audience member. This is not a comprehensive list, but rather a starting point in preparation for your field trip to see Yellow Bird Chase.

SC CCR Theatre Standards

Anchor Standard 1: I can create scenes and write scripts using story elements and structure.

> Benchmark T.CR NL.1: I can identify basic story elements in simple stories, plays and scripts (e.g. plot, character, setting, theme, etc.)

> Benchmark T.CR NM.1: I can work with others to recreate a story through nonverbal communication (ex: Pantomime/ mime)

> Benchmark T.CR NH.1: I can work with others to add dialogue to a story.

> Benchmark T.CR NM.1: I can work with others to re-create a story through non-verbal communication (ex: Pantomime/mime)

Anchor Standard 2: I can design and use technical elements for improvised scenes and written scripts.

> Benchmark T.CR NL.2: I can identify technical elements. Indicator T.CR NL.2.1: I can identify technical elements such as scenery, costumes/makeup, props, lighting and sound in a prompt.

> Benchmark T.CR NM.2: I can recognize the function of the designers in the creation of technical elements. Indicator T.CR NM.2.1: I can explain the function of technical elements such as scenery, costumes/makeup, props, lighting, and sound.

Anchor Standard 5: I can interpret and evaluate live or recorded dramatic performances as an active audience member.

> Benchmark T.R NL.5: I can model audience etiquette while watching a live or recorded performance.

> Benchmark T.R NH.5: I can recognize artistic choices in live or recorded performances.

Social Emotional Learning

Additional themes found in Yellow Bird Chase include perseverance, interpersonal skills, cooperation, listening, kindness, overcoming challenges, and empathy.