

Wild
Goose
Chase
Theater

Study Guide

WILD GOOSE CHASE THEATER

A Wild Goose Chase!: Teaching Poetry Through Shadow Puppetry



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Artist Biography

Wild Goose Chase Theater is dedicated to creating and performing puppet shows that promote literacy and excite young people about the power of words and the imagination. Each of our programs features unique, handcrafted puppetry and ties in to Language Arts curricular standards---as well as providing a rollicking good time for all!

Founder Matt Sandbank began building puppets as a middle school teacher. With just an overhead projector and some scraps of cardboard, he put on puppet performances for his students to help them master difficult lessons. Today, he hangs his hat in Nashville, Tennessee and tours nationally, delighting audiences of all shapes and sizes, backgrounds and beliefs.

The Performance: *A Wild Goose Chase!*

A Wild Goose Chase! is a series of puppetry vignettes, designed to teach young people the key elements of poetry in a fun, engaging, and interactive way. Each individual shadow-puppet skit focuses on a different element or literary device, often involving audience input or participation. The use of puppetry has the twofold effect of making abstract literary concepts more concrete as well as making poetry a fresh and exciting subject, inspiring students to read and write it themselves. The performance lasts 45 minutes, and it is appropriate for all elementary grade levels.

Vocabulary

The following vocabulary words and terms are often used in *A Wild Goose Chase!*:

- Rhythm
- Rhyme
- Image/Imagery
- Onomatopoeia
- Narrative Poem
- Conflict
- Alliteration
- Character
- Moral

Pre-Performance Activities

The following is a list of suggested activities to do with your students prior to *A Wild Goose Chase!*, in order to increase their familiarity with poetry and poetic terms, as well as their enjoyment of the performance.

Mad-Lib Poem:

This activity works well with William Carlos Williams poems from the list of recommended poems on pages 8-9 of this study guide. Take a poem, and remove several nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Have students write down nouns, verbs, and adjectives from their own imagination, in list format on a sheet of paper. Then have them put away the list. Present the poem to the class and briefly discuss it. Then show the class the poem with the removed words, and see how the poem sounds with various students' lists filling in the blanks. This should create some funny, wild, and interesting word combinations. Also, by asking students how their words changed the poem and what we know about the narrator, they will become more aware of the power of imagery. An example:

Original Poem:	Mad-Lib Poem	Student Example
I have eaten The plums That were in The icebox And which You were probably Saving For breakfast	I have eaten The <u>(noun)</u> That were in <u>(noun-place)</u> And which You were probably saving For breakfast.	I have eaten The <u>Pokemon</u> That were in <u>Hawaii</u> And which You were probably Saving For breakfast.
Forgive me They were delicious So sweet And so cold	<u>(verb)</u> me They were delicious So <u>(adjective)</u> And so <u>(adjective)</u>	<u>Bounce on</u> me They were delicious So <u>hairy</u> And so <u>smelly</u>

Ruin A Poem:

Put students in small groups. Present a poem to the entire class, and check for basic understanding of the poem. Then, instruct the different groups to “ruin” the poem. Have groups present their “ruined” poem and then guide the students through a reflection of how their changes to the poem “ruined” it. Focus them specifically on elements such as imagery and rhythm. Students will love this activity because it allows them to do something that would usually be seen as “bad,” especially if the teacher plays up this aspect. However, the activity also increases their awareness of how many literary devices are working together to make a poem artful. If your students need help getting started, you might do one stanza of a poem as a whole class. Here is an example:

“Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening” (Original)

Whose woods these are I think I know,
His house is in the village, though.
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

“Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening” (Ruined)

I think these woods belong to Bob,
But his house is in the city,
So if I stop here, he won't see me
Watching the snow snowing all over his trees.

The ruined version takes away not just the rhythm and the rhyme which are so important in this poem, but it also takes away all mystery, by naming whose woods these are.

Found Poem:

You may have students do this activity individually or in groups. Have students search through newspapers, magazines, or any other available source of words that would not usually be considered “poetic.” Instruct them to search for short phrases (no full sentences) that sound interesting to them. Encourage students to read out loud to determine if something has an interesting sound. After they have searched for several

minutes, have them arrange their phrases into a short poem. This activity reinforces the ideas that 1) poetry and poetic inspiration come from all around us, and 2) there is an emphasis, in poetry, in musical arrangements of words over logical sense.

How Bizarre!:

Do a google image search for “weird animals.” Be sure to do this while students are not in the room, as not all of the images which the search produces will be appropriate. Most will, however, and the teacher should choose one or more particularly interesting images for the students to see. Have students generate as many words and phrases as possible, both things they observe about the photograph as well as things they might extrapolate or imagine about the photograph. Then, like in the found poem, have them arrange these images/phrases into a short poem. This activity may be as group or as individual-oriented as the teacher likes. Besides being good practice for generating vivid images, this activity reinforces the idea that imaginative, strange imagery works very well in poetry.



Lesson Plan: Poetry Writing

The following lesson plan is the one which Matt uses to teach his poetry-writing workshops, as a follow-up to the show *A Wild Goose Chase!* The guiding principle behind the lesson is that the cornerstone to effective writing (poetic and otherwise) is the generation and use of striking, vivid imagery. The lesson plan is written to third grade learning standards, but each elementary grade level has a corresponding standard, so the plan may be easily adapted for a variety of age and ability ranges.

Poetry Writing Workshop: Guiding Images and Word Arrangement

Matt Sandbank

Grade Level: All Elementary Grades

Subject: Language Arts

Lesson Time: 55 minutes

Content Standards: 3 – Writing
8- Literature

Grade Level Expectations: 0301.3.7 – Write poems, stories, and essays based upon thoughts, feelings, and experiences
0301.8.3 – Learn basic characteristics of literary genres.

Lesson Introduction (5 minutes):

Presenter will: 1) Engage students' interest by reciting a poem and performing a shadow-puppet skit as an accompanying illustration. 2) Ask follow-up questions to check for comprehension and for student awareness of literary devices.

Students will: Demonstrate comprehension of poem and understanding of literary devices by answering the presenter's questions.

Guided Practice (15 minutes):

Presenter will: Demonstrate a method of drafting a poem by 1) soliciting student examples of imagery, 2) choosing one student example of an image and soliciting student examples of other words related to that image, 3) arranging the words on the word list into simple lines of verse, and 4) emphasizing for students the use of rhythm, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and other literary devices in these lines.

Students will: 1) Offer examples of imagery. 2) Contribute words to the extended list.

Independent Practice (30 minutes):

Presenter will: 1) Instruct students to imitate the earlier process by focusing on a single image, generating a word list around that image, and arranging those generated words into lines of poetry. 2) Circulate the room, offering encouragement and advice to students, and reading aloud student lines which exemplify good use of poetic devices.

Students will: 1) Choose an image. 2) Generate a word list. 3) Write lines of poetry.

Closure (5 minutes):

Presenter will: Ask for student volunteers to read poems, continuing to point out good use of literary devices.

Students will: Read poems to class on a volunteer basis.

Extension (30 to 60 minutes)

Presenter will: Demonstrate a method for creating shadow puppets using cardstock, flexistraws, scotch tape, and metal brads. Emphasize certain key concepts of shadow puppetry, such as simplicity of design, kinesthetic awareness, and incidental vs. controlled movement.

Students will: Create shadow puppets to illustrate their poem.

Recommended Poems

The following is a list of just a few poems that work well in the elementary classroom. These would typically be considered “adult” poems, but their themes and images are clear enough for young minds to appreciate them, with the guidance of a teacher.

William Blake, “Laughing Song”

Gwendolyn Brooks, “Speech to the Young”

Lewis Carol, “Jabberwocky”

Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

Langston Hughes, “I, Too,”

Edna St. Vincent Millay, “First Fig”

Dorothy Parker, “One Perfect Rose”

Theodore Roethke, "The Sloth"

Carl Sandburg, "Fog"

William Stafford, "Passing Remark"

William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow," and "This Is Just to Say"

Contact Information

Wild Goose Chase Theater welcomes any questions or comments regarding this study guide, poetry or puppetry in general, or anything else that might happen to cross an educator's mind. For more information, see our website:

www.wildgoosechasetheater.com. Feel free to contact us at:

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