

Fort Wayne
youtheatre
 EDUCATION GUIDE



**MODERN FAIRY TALE
EPIC FAILS**

USING THIS GUIDE

This study guide is intended to be used before and after watching the show to help students explore and deepen their understanding of the play. Here's how you can use it in your classroom:

Meet the Characters - Teachers can show their students this page before the show to become familiar with the actors and their roles in the play. They can also refer to this page after the play to remind them who the characters were.

Class Discussion Questions - A list of questions created to encourage class discussions and/or reflections about themes and topics in the play. These questions are divided into pre-and post-show.

Pre/Post Show Activities - Activities teachers can do with their classes before and after seeing the show. Each activity has a description, rationale, list of objectives, and supplies list.

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ABOUT: US



Did you know Fort Wayne Youththeatre is the fifth oldest children’s theatre in the country? Since 1934, we’ve been on a mission to educate, engage, and entertain through the power of live theatre.

It all started when the Old Fort Players (now Civic Theatre) imagined a place where children participated in theatre to develop poise, self-confidence, and an ability to express themselves creatively. Thus, the “Children’s Theatre” was born! The very first class had 40 students – paying just \$1 for 8 weeks of lessons! Their first show, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, featured 75 young actors performing for audiences at the Majestic Theatre. Tickets were only 10¢ for kids and 25¢ for adults!

In 1978, Broadway actor Harvey Cocks took the lead as Executive Director, inspiring young performers for more than 40 years. In 1984, the Youththeatre began its independent journey. Over the decades, Youththeatre moved to different homes across the city before finding its place at Park Lake Professional Center in 2025. Today, Youththeatre is guided by Executive Director Heather Closson, Artistic Director Christopher J. Murphy, and supported by Education Coordinator Yaro Carpenter, Creative Programming Intern Em Humbarger, and a team of amazing local artists.

Youththeatre isn’t just about what happens on stage—we take theatre into the community, too! Our touring troupe, Youththeatre-On-The-Go, brings stories to schools, libraries, hospitals, and community centers. In 2018, our Young Heroes of Conscience series, which has celebrated inspiring figures like Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Harriet Tubman, won the Mayor’s Arts Award.

For over 90 years, countless youth have discovered their voices, made lifelong friends, and experienced the joy of storytelling. And the story is still being written – by the young artists of today.



ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTION

Read below to learn about the key elements that make up a theatre production!

SETS

The scenery pieces that form the area in which the performers act out the play. Sometimes scenery is very realistic, making the audience think they are inside a real house, for example. Other times the scenery is quite fanciful or limited. What different sets can you name in the show? What time and place does it look like?

LIGHTS

The lighting instruments that help to create the right atmosphere on the stage. Lights direct the attention of the audience to specific areas of the stage or to a specific performer. The lights may be different colors to add special effects such as nighttime or a storm. How do the lights in this production show changes in the time and place?

PROPS

The objects performers carry to help them act out the story. Look for important props that help define character or place. Can you name a few?

MAKEUP

The cosmetic bases, blushes, lipsticks, mascara and eye liners which helps the performer physically become the character he/she is playing. Make-up is also used so that the performer's facial features can be seen clearly under the bright stage lights from a distance. Do you notice any special make-up in the show?

COSTUMES

The clothing the performers wear. Depending on the story being acted out, this clothing may be what a character of the time would have actually worn. It may also be very exaggerated or fantastic in the case of a dream or a fairy-tale. Costumes help the audience know what a character is like or where and when he/she lived. Are the costumes drab or colorful? Do they look realistic? What do they tell you about the time and place?

BEHIND THE SCENES

Learn more about the director of *Modern Fairytale Epic Fails*, Kayley Alissa!

Kayley Alissa

Kayley Alissa is a Fort Wayne native and is so excited to be directing with Fort Wayne Youtheatre! Her on-stage credits include *Falsettos* (Trina), *Head Over Heels* (Pamela), *The Rocky Horror Show* (Eddie/Phantom), *Big Fish* (Witch), *The Prom* (Mrs. Greene), *The Little Mermaid* (Ursula), *Urinetown* (Pennywise), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Superintendent), *Les Miserables* (Mme. Thénardier), *Legally Blonde* (Enid), *Christmas My Way* (Kayley), *Rent* (Maureen/Joanne), *Kinky Boots* (Pat, Lauren/Nicola u/s), *The Wild Party* (Nadine), *Songs For A New World* (Woman 2 u/s), and *Hair* (Ensemble). In addition to her performing experience, Kayley has worked extensively behind the scenes, contributing her talents as a director, stage manager, intimacy coordinator, sound designer, and more. Kayley is thankful for her parents, her village, and her boys Miggy, Lil Sebastian, and Hopper. Kayley is a huge advocate for representation on stage and strives for her work to be inclusive. Every body is a theatre body!



Kayley's first acting experience!
A Christmas show at church where she only had one line.



Mr. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* at Fort Wayne Summer Music Theatre



Witch in *Big Fish*
at Arena Dinner Theatre

BEHIND THE SCENES

How old were you when you got started in directing, and what inspired you to start?

My first directing experience was in 2023! I had been behind the table in several different positions prior to directing, and was always so fascinated with the level of creativity and organization that is needed from the director. As of this time, I've only directed cabarets, and I am so thankful to Youtheatre for giving me this incredible opportunity!

What is your favorite show you have ever directed?

My favorite show I've ever directed is the *Glee Cabaret* with IMTF. I co-directed with my good friend Darby LeClear and it was so fun to celebrate a show that I was absolutely obsessed with in high school!

Did you have a favorite mentor or teacher that taught you?

I am so incredibly lucky to say that my mentor/teacher/friend/bonus mom is the Queen of Fort Wayne, Leslie Beauchamp. I've known Leslie since I was performing with Fort Wayne Summer Music Theatre and I have always looked up to her. Leslie always leads with kindness in and out of the rehearsal room and is the most supportive cheerleader. I love being in shows directed by her because it gives me a chance to learn how to lead with compassion and care.

What does your process look like?

My approach is very collaborative and playful. Yes, I have a clear vision of the show. I like to build the world and set the boundaries for the characters, but I also like to play. I like to ask the actors a lot of questions and I'll ask them to try different choices just to see what happens. I love finding new moments and fine-tuning bold choices. And there will be so many color-coded spreadsheets.

If someone wanted to be a director, how should they start?

I definitely recommend getting behind the table any way you can. Assistant direct, stage manage, run the lights! There are so many possibilities off stage and each of them is a fantastic opportunity. Start learning from as many humans as you can, take notes, and ask questions. Additionally, see as much theatre as you can. Educational, high school & college, community, regional, Broadway... see every show you can and absorb as much as your brain will hold. Ask yourself questions afterwards and take time to figure out what you liked, what you didn't like, and what it made you feel. The more tuned in you are with what you like to see on a stage will help guide you in the shows you lead.

ABOUT: THE PLAY

Take a look below to learn more about the play.

OVERVIEW

A series of fairy tale characters try to navigate the modern world, with each scene highlighting a different character's struggle. Imagine Hansel and Gretel getting lost searching for Pokémon, Cinderella as an influencer whose followers encourage her to fight the patriarchy, and the Three Little Pigs having to deal with their insurance companies. Each fairy tale twist shows that sometimes, happily-ever-after isn't so easy.

AUTHOR MATT LYLE



Originally from East Texas, Matt Lyle is a writer, actor, and director living in Dallas, Texas. Matt's plays have been produced across the U.S. His plays, *The Boxer*, *Hello Human Female*, *Barbecue Apocalypse* and *Big Scary Animals* all garnered DFW Theater Critics Forum Awards for "Outstanding New Play" and *Barbecue Apocalypse* was nominated for an American Theatre Critics Association Steinberg New Play Award. Matt has been commissioned by Theatre Three, Dallas Theater Center and Audacity Theatre Lab. He is a member of the Dramatist Guild and the Playwright's Center and was honored as the 2018 Distinguished Alum of the Stephen F. Austin State University School of Theatre. His work is published by Broadway Play Publishing.

CHARACTERS

Read below to learn what roles some of the characters portray in the play.



Cinderella:
An influencer fighting the patriarchy.

The Wicked Queen:
A farmer's market apple seller.



The Three Little Pigs:
Dealing with insurance company issues.

CHARACTERS



Little Red Riding Hood:
A catfished little girl.



The Huntsman:
Snow White's hipster, foodie boyfriend



Hansel and Gretel:
Lost looking for Pokémon.

HISTORY

Modern Problems

Modern children face distinct, technology-driven, and complex challenges, including intense cyberbullying, excessive screen time affecting health, and significant mental health struggles like anxiety and depression. Other major issues include social media pressure, body image concerns, navigating misinformation, environmental anxiety, and navigating a fast-paced digital world.

Key Modern Problems and Usage Examples: Cyberbullying and Digital Abuse: Online bullying has replaced traditional bullying, often involving mean comments, exclusion on social media, and the creation of "deep fakes" or manipulation of images to harass peers.

Excessive Screen Time and Physical Health: Prolonged device usage causes sedentary lifestyles, leading to childhood obesity, poor sleep, and eye problems.

Mental Health Stresses: Increased levels of anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and "burnout" are rising, often fueled by social media comparison and constant connectivity.

Information Overload and Misinformation: Children struggle to distinguish fact from opinion, dealing with 24/7 news cycles, clickbait, and false information.

Loss of Physical Play and Social Skills: Increased indoor time reduces face-to-face interaction, inhibiting the development of empathy and social intuition.

Academic and Future Pressure: Intense pressure to perform academically, coupled with worries about an uncertain job market, creates chronic stress.

What can we do?

Managing the Digital World

Technology-related stress can be mitigated through structured habits and collaborative rule-setting. The 3-6-9-12 Rule: A framework for age-appropriate tech introduction: no screens before age 3; supervised use at 6; internet with guidance at 9; and social media with limits at 12.

Unplugged Zones: Designate areas like bedrooms and mealtimes as device-free to prioritize sleep and face-to-face connection.

Active Monitoring: Use parental controls and check privacy settings regularly. Join children in their digital lives, such as playing video games together, to understand their online environments.

Cyberbullying Response: If bullying occurs, experts recommend blocking the bully immediately, collecting evidence via screenshots, and reporting it to the platform or school.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Why do we love villains?

Our fascination with villains—especially for children—is a normal part of growing up and understanding the world. Villains are often more exciting, colorful, and powerful than heroes, making them magnetic to young **minds**.



They Break the Rules: Children have many rules to follow. Villains don't follow rules, which can feel like a harmless escape for kids who feel they have little control over their own lives.

They Are Exciting: Villains often have the best songs, the coolest outfits, and the funniest lines. They make the story more interesting than a "perfect" hero might.

Safe Exploration: Villains allow kids to explore big feelings like anger, jealousy, or sadness without actually being bad themselves. It's a way to act out "what if" scenarios safely.

They Are Complex: Heroes are often portrayed as one-dimensional characters who never stray from their moral code. While that's admirable, it can sometimes feel boring to young audiences. On the other hand, villains tend to be more interesting because of their intriguing backstories or so-called 'evil origin stories' that explain their motivations.

Rooting for the villain: By rooting for flawed characters, children grapple with the concept of morality that is not always black and white. They can understand that even "bad guys" have feelings and motivations, fostering empathy and understanding.

Fuel for imaginations: Children are naturally imaginative and stories provide a playground for their creativity to run wild. Villains, with their fantastical schemes and larger-than-life personalities, ignite the imagination. By cheering for the villain, children are free to imagine themselves wielding incredible power and facing off against daunting challenges.

They Often Lose: Because villains almost always lose in the end, it helps kids understand that doing the wrong thing has consequences.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Best suited for 3-6 grade.

This page contains words from the script for *Modern Fairytale Epic Fails*
Read each word, followed by its definition, and lastly see it used in a sentence.

FORCE MAJEURE

an uncontrollable, unexpected event that prevents someone from doing their job or keeping a promise.

"The soccer game was postponed as a force majeure event because the field was completely flooded".

CATFISHED

is when someone uses a fake online profile—stolen photos or lies—to pretend to be someone else to trick you.

"That new online friend is a catfish because they are using fake pictures".

INFLATION

when prices for things like toys, candy, and clothes rise over time, meaning your money buys less than it used to.

"Because of inflation, that \$5 ice cream now costs \$6."

NEPO BABY (SHORT FOR NEPOTISM BABY)

is a child of famous or successful parents who gets a head start in their own career, often in the same industry.

"Even though she is a nepo baby, she worked hard to prove her talent in movies".

GASLIGHTING

a form of lying that makes someone question their own memory or feelings.

"My brother was gaslighting me by saying I broke his toy when he did it himself, making me wonder if I really did it".

CONSPIRACY THEORIST

is someone who believes that major events or situations are caused by secret plots made by powerful, evil people working behind the scenes

"The conspiracy theorist thinks the school principal is actually a robot, even though no one believes them."

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

This activity is best suited for 1-6 grade.

Pre-Show Discussion:

1. What kind of lessons do fairytales usually teach?
2. If you could modernize one classic fairytale, which would you choose? Why?
3. What apps do you think fairytale characters would use the most?
4. What is an "epic fail"?
5. Think of a fairytale where something goes wrong; what modern day technology could solve it?

Post show discussion:

1. Did the characters use social media safely? Why or why not?
2. How were the fairytales different from the original versions?
3. Which characters made a bad decisions? If you were in their shoes, would you have done something different?
4. Why do you think we still enjoy fairytales today?
5. What does "happily ever after" mean to you?

REVIEW

Using the template below, write a review after the play!

Title: _____

Director: _____

Genre (check all that apply)

- ☐ Abstract
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Autobiographical
- ☐ Comedy
- ☐ Drama

- ☐ Fairytale
- ☐ Historical
- ☐ Musical
- ☐ Puppetry
- ☐ Tragedy
- ☐ Other

Plot

Setting

REVIEW

Characters - What character/s stood out to you? Why?

My Review

My Rating



SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

This activity is best suited for 1-5 grade.

Dancing Magic Beans

Can you think of a fairy tale with magic beans? Make you own magic with these dancing beans!

What you need:

- Hand full of dried beans
- Clear glass
- Clear carbonated beverage such as 7UP

Fill the glass most of the way with our clear, carbonated beverage. Then I dumped a small handful of beans into the glass.

The carbonation in the liquid makes the beans float to the surface of the glass and then come back down, over and over again. Just like magic!



How, and why does this work?

Carbonated beverages are filled with a dissolved gas called carbon dioxide. At the bottling factory, the dissolved gas is sealed into the drink when the lid is put on. When you open the bottle, the gas starts to come out of the spaces between the molecules of liquid. When it does this, it forms little bubbles.

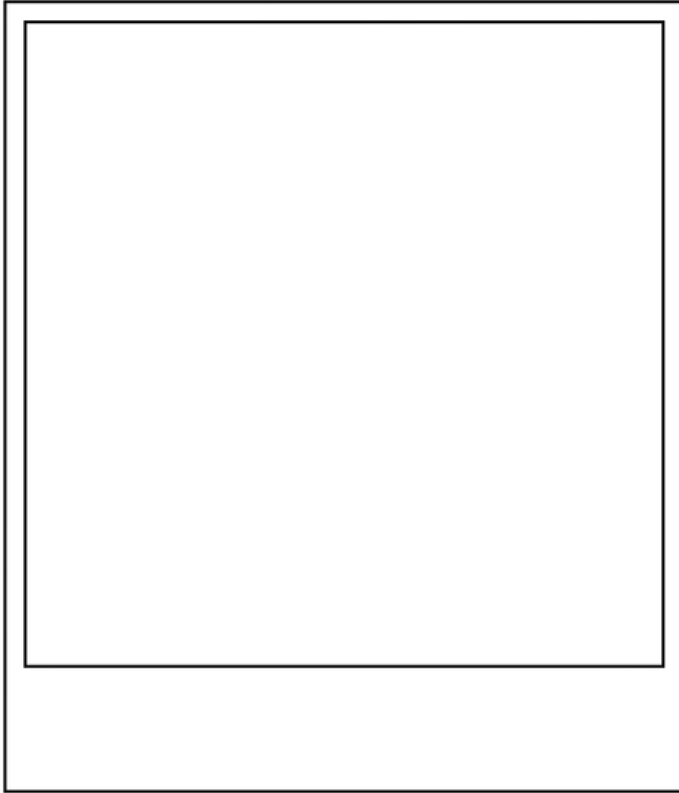
These bubbles accumulate on the beans until the combined density of the beans and gas is less than the density of the soda. This makes the beans float to the surface as any object does when it is less dense than the liquid it has been submerged in.

However, when the beans reach the surface, the bubbles pop. Once a bean is no longer covered in gas bubbles, it is more dense than the soda and it sinks back down to the bottom. Once at the bottom, the bean accumulates gas bubbles again until it rises to the surface once more.

WRITING

Write a silly fairy tale story by changing how a classic story usually goes.

Draw a new character



YOUR TURN!

Best suited for 1-5 grade.

Roll A Story Game!

Roll a Die 3 times to find the character, setting, and problem for a story.
Write, or act it out!

	Character	Setting	Problem
	A zoo keeper 	In a dark forest 	Finds a magic wand 
	A beautiful princess 	On a ship 	Gets stuck in a fire 
	A big bear 	In a desert 	Meets a big monster 
	An old man 	In a hidden cave 	Gets lost 
	A friendly alien 	At a farm 	Is chased by a wolf 
	A brave policeman 	On a spaceship 	Sees a ghost 

YOUR TURN!

Best suited for ages 6-12 grade

Mixed-Up Fairytales

A **mixed-up fairytale acting game** involves combining characters, settings, and plots from different stories to create new, humorous scenes. Participants can, for example, have Cinderella attend Rapunzel's tower party or the Three Little Pigs meet Little Red Riding Hood. This promotes improvisation and creative thinking by scrambling traditional narratives.

How to Play Mixed-Up Fairytales

Mix & Match Improvisation: Divide players into small groups. Have them pull two different fairytales out of a hat (e.g., Jack and the Beanstalk + Snow White) and improvise a 1-minute scene blending the characters and plots.

"What If" Scenarios: Groups choose a familiar story and introduce a "What if?" prompt to change the plot entirely. For example, "What if the Wicked Stepmother was actually trying to help Cinderella?"

Character Swap: Assign actors roles from a story, but force them to act with the personality of a character from a different story (e.g., The Big Bad Wolf acts like Sleeping Beauty).

Common Mixed-Up Combinations

Characters: Cinderella meets the Seven Dwarves.

Plots: The Big Bad Wolf tries to blow down Rapunzel's tower.

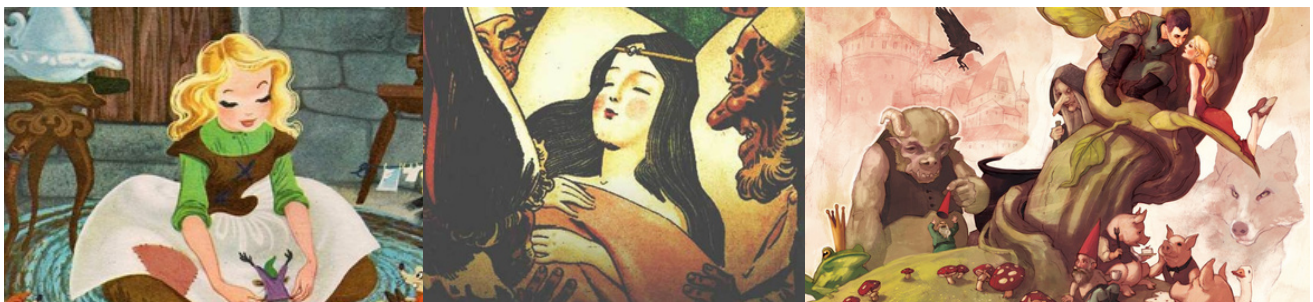
Settings: Hansel and Gretel get lost in the setting of Aladdin.

Tips for Success

Use familiar stories so the "mixed-up" elements are immediately obvious and funny.

Focus on fast-paced, 60-second improv scenes to keep the energy high.

Use simple props to indicate which character is being played.



GET INVOLVED



ACTING | DANCE | VOICE
TECH THEATRE | PRIVATE LESSONS

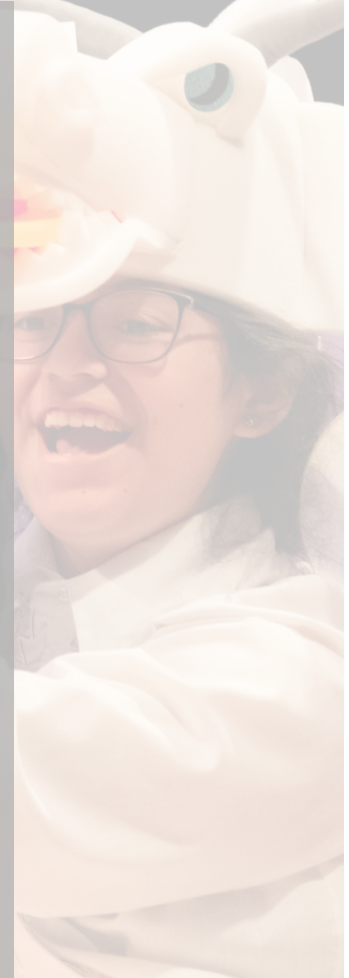
**Learn More by visiting fwyt.org
or by scanning the QR code below!**



Write us a letter!

We'd love to know what you thought of the show, what other shows you'd love to see us perform, or any questions you have for our staff, cast, or crew about Youtheatre!

**Send correspondence to:
Fort Wayne Youtheatre
2426 Lake Ave.
Fort Wayne, IN 46805**



FURTHER RESOURCES

Want to dive even deeper? Here are some additional resources that connect to the themes of this production!

[Spin a Story](#)

[Fairy Tale I-Spy](#)

[What is: Catfishing](#)

[20 Ideas for Fairy Tales With a Twist](#)

Suggested Reading

Elementary:

- The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka
- Interstellar Cinderella by Deborah Underwood
- Little Red Writing by Joan Holub

Middle:

- Ella Enchanted by Gail Carson-Levine
- The Land of Stories Series by Chris Colfer
- The Isle of the Lost Series by Melissa de la Cruz

High:

- The Lunar Chronicles Series by Marissa Meyer
- Egg and Spoon by Gregory Maguire
- Disney Villain Series by Serena Valentino



Language Arts

STANDARDS

Most Youtheatre productions are literature-based and on the recommended reading list of the Library of Congress.

Language Arts Standard: Perceive, identify, describe and analyze the distinguishing characteristics of form, structure and style of story.

- Retell story identifying plot, theme, characters, and setting.
- Recall story plot utilizing chronological order.

Language Arts Standard: Evaluate Theatre/Literary work based on critical perception and analysis.

- Share perception of theatre experience in the area of voice, movement, mood and motivation.
- Make suggestions for alternative endings.
- Analyze and critique story and performance through creative writing.
- Create a similar story through creative writing.

Language Arts Standard: Use Theatre /Literary work to develop affective areas of self-concept, problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- React to feelings of self and others within a production.
- Identify conflict within story as it relates to self and others.
- Compare and contrast problems and resolutions found in different stories and real life situations.
- Express personal attitudes, values, and belief systems as it relates to theatre piece.
- Interact freely in conversations, class discussions and dramatic activities.
- Contribute to the solving of problems through dramatization/improvisation.

Language Arts Standard: Examine Theatre /Literary work in a historical and multicultural context.

- Identify similarities and differences between characters from diverse cultures depicted.
- Identify historical differences/figures in different time frames depicted in story.
- Identify significance of historical aspects in story.

Exploring Aesthetics: A Philosophical Basis for Life!

- Attending live theatre helps children value its importance to the community and helps develop a lifelong commitment and love of Theatre and Literature. Students experience aesthetic growth through appreciation of Theatre.
- Students discover through experience that making art is an essential human activity. It requires collaboration, and enhances creative thinking.

