

Fort Wayne
youtheatre
 EDUCATION GUIDE



OR
SEVEN INCREASINGLY EVENTFUL YEARS
AT A CERTAIN SCHOOL OF MAGIC
(ONE ACT FOR YOUNG WIZARDS)

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.

IN THE GUIDE

- About Us
- Elements of a Production
- Behind the Scenes: Stage Manager
- About: The Playwright
- Characters
- About: Parody
- Discussion Q's
- Crafts & Activities
- Get Involved & Further Resources

ABOUT: US



Did you know Fort Wayne Youtheatre 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 Youtheatre began its independent journey. Over the decades, Youtheatre moved to different homes across the city before finding its place at Park Lake Professional Center in 2025. Today, Youtheatre 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.

Youtheatre isn't just about what happens on stage—we take theatre into the community, too! Our touring troupe, Youtheatre-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 Stage Manager of *Puffs*, Sammie Vance!



Sammie Vance



Sammie Vance is a senior at Snider Highschool and student intern at Fort Wayne Youtheatre. She has been involved with helping out and stage managing 20 shows (give or take) in the past 6 years around the Fort Wayne theatre community. Sammie hopes to continue her theater journey after highschool, though she is still figuring out what that might look like. She is immensely grateful for the opportunities she has had to learn, grow, and find her passion.



Stage Managed
Dracula
by Fort Wayne Youtheatre



Stage Managed
Anastasia
by Fort Wayne Youtheatre



Stage Managed
Charlie Brown Christmas by
Fort Wayne Youtheatre

BEHIND THE SCENES

How old were you when you got started in stage managing?

I was introduced to stage management by my middle school Drama Director (and current mentor), Mrs. Wichern. In seventh grade, I auditioned to be in our school's show, and before Mrs. Wich put out the cast list, I was called down to her room. She asked if I would want to Assistant Direct/Stage Manage the show instead of being in it. I didn't know much of what this would entail, but automatically agreed, although a little sad I wouldn't be cast as an actor. A couple years after that, I found myself climbing up the ladder of stage management at Youtheatre.

What's your favorite show you've Stage Managed?

My favorite show almost always happens to be the latest one I worked on. There is so much to know in the world of theatre, and it is impossible to be all knowing, but if you are willing, there is always something new to learn. *Anastasia* (2024) was the first musical I was the lead stage manager of. *Dracula* (2025) was the first time I worked on a show in the round. *Big Fish* (2025) at Arena Dinner Theatre was the first time I worked on a production with primarily adults. And so on. When I walk away from a show knowing I have learned and gained lots of knowledge and experience, I feel the most fulfilled. Fortunately, every show I have worked on so far has given me this feeling.

What does your process look like?

After auditions take place, and before rehearsals start up, I usually work on creating documents for me and the Stage Management team so we can run everything as efficiently as possible when it comes time. During rehearsals, I take attendance and contact anyone who might be running late. Oftentimes, you will find me keeping track of blocking (writing down where the director is having each actor move on stage) or filling out a runsheet (keeping track of where all props and set pieces are moving on stage and off.) I am in constant contact with the director, and over the years, –another important job of the stage manager– I have gotten good at anticipating people's needs. As we get closer to showtime, I help to make sure everything is organized backstage at the theatre, and that everyone on crew feels confident in what they are doing! Then I make my way up to the booth where I call the show and make sure all the elements (lighting, sound, scene changes, etc) of the show are happening at the right time!

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

If you are looking to stage manage, I advise you to reach out to someone at Fort Wayne Youtheatre. This organization is truly by youth, for youth; there is so much opportunity to learn and be a part of the backstage and onstage experience. Do tech. Help with props. Be a stagehand. Act. Write. But most importantly, don't forget to know and love theatre for more than just the final product you watch as an audience member. Stage management is about organizing the chaos and knowing what part everyone is playing so you can do your best to communicate and manage!

ABOUT: THE PLAYWRIGHT

Take a look below to learn more about the playwright of *PUFFS*.

MATT COX: HUMAN PERSON



Matt Cox is a playwright, actor, improviser, sound designer, and former comic book retail associate based in New York City.

He is the writer of 2022 & 2023's second most produced play in US high schools, *Puffs Or: Seven Increasingly Eventful Years At A Certain School Of Magic & Magic*.

Other work includes: *Witches!? In Salem?!*, *The Magnificent Revengers*, and the geek epic *Kapow-i GoGo* (as well as its spinoffs *The Kapow-i GoGo Holiday Special*, *The Kapow-i GoGo Holiday Special II: The Carol of The Clones*, and *I am Mr. Snuggles*.)

Matt produced, wrote, directed, and ran the interactive live-streamed production: *Guy Choiceman Decides To Save America!* He authored the radio play *El Hombre Bovino* for WNYC's The Greene Space, and contributed to The Flea Theater's *The Mysteries*. His work has been produced at New World Stages, HERE, The Elektra Theater, The People's Improv Theater, The Tank, and The Flea Theater, among other places.

His sound design credits include: all the above mentioned plays.

Upcoming work includes: *The Ferret Show*, a new musical about life, death, and competitive ferret competitions. Music by Dan Mills & Ben Thornewill. Book by Matt Cox & Stephen Stout.

His acting credits include: *Kapow-i GoGo* (The PIT), *Blogologues*, *The Mysteries* (FLEA THEATER), *Sarah Flood in Salem Mass* (FLEA THEATER), & *Restoration Comedy* (FLEA THEATER).

Matt has studied at The Upright Citizen's Brigade, The Stella Adler Studio of Acting, and Tarleton State University.

He is a director/ actor for *The Story Pirates* and has appeared many times on their award winning podcast.

CHARACTERS

Read below to learn about a few of the characters you'll see on stage!

The Leading Trio

Wayne Hopkins (M): A nerdy American 90s kid obsessed with pop culture who discovers he is a wizard. He is a well-meaning, loyal, and uncool hero, determined to be great despite not being the "boy who lived".

Oliver Rivers (M): A smart, enthusiastic "Mug-born" boy from New Jersey who is a prodigy in math but struggles with magic. He becomes one of Wayne's best friends and later Megan's love interest

Megan Jones (F): A moody, sarcastic, and goth-leaning Puff who is embarrassed to be in her house. She looks up to her mother, a follower of a dark lord, but ultimately seeks love and acceptance.



(left to right): Langston Belton as Oliver Rivers,
Julie Ann Earls as Megan Jones and Zac Moon as Wayne Hopkins.
Off Broadway 2017.

LEARN

Want to give it a try? Read below for helpful tips on writing parodies!

Writing a parody for kids is a fantastic creative exercise, but it requires balancing humor with legal safety (fair use). A parody must mock or comment on the original work, not just use popular characters to tell a new, unrelated story.

Here is a breakdown of what you can and cannot do when creating a kid-friendly parody.

What You CAN Do (The "Safe" Zone)

Imitate a Specific Work: You can parody a specific movie, book, song, or character to make fun of its style or content.

Exaggerate Traits: Take a character's defining trait and make it ridiculous (e.g., a superhero who is afraid of the dark).

Change Names Slightly: Instead of Harry Potter, use "Hairy Porter"; instead of Batman, try "Ratman".

Use "Fair Use" as a Defense: Parody is protected speech under the First Amendment and fair use, allowing you to use portions of copyrighted material without permission for commentary.

Focus on Themes: Parody popular themes kids understand, like school, chores, or fairy tales.

Make it Transformative: The goal is to make a new work that comments on the old one, not a substitute for the original.

What You CANNOT Do (The "Risk" Zone)

Directly Copy/Paste: You cannot simply re-use long stretches of text, music, or exact character designs without adding new, funny commentary.

Call it Satire: Parody targets a specific work (e.g., Frozen); satire targets general society (e.g., modern technology). Parody has stronger legal protection.

Confuse the Audience: Your work should not look like an official product made by the original owner. If people think Disney actually made your video, it's not a safe parody.

Steal the "Heart" of the Work: You can use enough to bring the original to mind, but not the best, most iconic parts that make the original valuable.

Ignore Trademarks: While copyright fair use covers parody, using famous brand names or character names in a way that hurts their reputation (trademark dilution) can still lead to legal trouble

WRITING A PARODY

Tips & Tricks

Pick your topic carefully: Make sure it is something to which most people can relate. Writing about something your little brother did can be fun to you, but others may not get it. Instead, write about little brothers in general. At the same time, you might also want to avoid anything too controversial, like politics and hot-button topics unless you are confident you can explain and defend your work.

Look closely at your source material: Search for anything weird, funny, or something you can make fun of.

Always use a main character or characters: Navigating through this new silly world makes it easier with characters we can identify with. You should have at least one main character, or there could be multiple characters. You can also create a parodied character from your source material. For example, You could make a Batman-like character called Ratman, who is dressed more like a rat. Or perhaps Indiana Bones, an archaeologist who never finds anything exciting, just bones.

Write everything: Write everything down you can think of. You can start with a list of gags, and then work them into the story. Or you can start writing the story and add jokes to it. Regardless of your personal style, write it all down. You can fix it later. Screenwriter Art Arthur once said, "Don't get it right, get it written."

First drafts are never golden: Don't be afraid to edit your work. Give it to a friend or colleague you trust to give their honest opinion. Do this with several people. Take their notes seriously. It's okay to disagree. But if you get the same notes from three different people, there is something that might need to be fixed.

Top Tips for Kid-Friendly Parody

Be Obviously Funny: The comedy should be clear so children understand it is a joke.

Keep it Gentle: Target the style, not the essence, to keep it lighthearted for children.

Use Familiar Targets: Parody things most kids know (e.g., fairy tales, famous cartoons) so the jokes land.

Create Original Characters: Instead of using Elsa, create a princess who controls bubblegum

DISCUSSION AND STUDY QUESTIONS

This activity is best suited for grades 1-6

Pre-Show Discussion:

- 1.If you could choose one magic power, what would it be?
- 2.If your school was magical, what would be your favorite class?
- 3.If you could have a magical pet, what would it be?
- 4.What does it mean to be a good friend?
- 5.Have you read any books about magical schools?

Post show discussion:

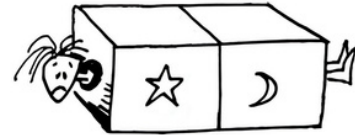
- 1.Did the play seem familiar to something else you've seen, or read?
- 2.Do you think you would be a Puff, or another house?
- 3.Did you see any friendships that reminded you of ones in your life?
- 4.What do you think it means to be loyal to your friends?
- 5.Do you think it would take a lot of imagination to act in a play on stage?

WRITING

Name _____ Date _____



Magic school



What would you expect to encounter as a student at a magic school?

Fill in some of your ideas for each of the categories below.

LESSONS	
TEACHERS	
STUDENTS	
UNIFORM	
SPORT	

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

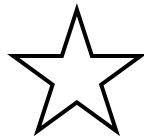
Setting

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.

Live you best wizarding school life by participating in this potion class inspired experiment.

Supplies

- One red cabbage
- Baking soda
- Vinegar
- Clean, empty jam jars
- Water
- Spoons



Instructions:

Pour boiling water over a whole, small red cabbage in a bowl and leave it to steep for about half an hour. Then pour it through a sieve and collect the water into a large jug. The water will be blue!

Pour the cabbage water into 4 empty jars, and then add varying amounts of water to dilute it, so that it ranged in color intensity.

Add a small amount of vinegar to the blue cabbage water and it instantly turns pink!

Next add some baking soda to the (now pink) water and watch as it bubbled up and turned purple!

After the vinegar and baking soda tip out a little of the liquid and then add more vinegar again. It will turn from bright pink to a gorgeous range of purples!

So, what's the science behind the fun and magic of the colour changing "potions"?

Cabbage water = an indicator

Vinegar = an acid

Bicarbonate of Soda (baking soda) = an alkaline

The cabbage water is an indicator which can show how acid or alkaline a liquid is when it is added to it. A chemical reaction takes place which causes it to change colour. Scientists take this one step further and use PH test strips to dip into liquids and take a look at the color which shows up.

You could think up more liquids which are acids and alkalines and experiment with using them, seeing what effect they may or may not have. Try using water and other PH neutral liquids to see if anything happens when they are added too.

YOUR TURN!

Best suited for 1-5 grade.

Wizard Says Game!

(Play like Simon says)

- Wave your wand like casting a spell
- Hop on your broomstick like flying
- Twirl like a magical whirlwind
- March like enchanted soldiers
- Pretend to mix a potion
- Leap over a bubbling cauldron
- Pretend to cast a lightning spell
- Fly like a mystical creature
- Skip like you're collecting magical ingredients
- Dance like you're celebrating a magical victory
- Spin like a spellbinding vortex
- Hop over a magic rune circle
- Pretend to summon a familiar
- Stretch like you're reaching for a hidden spellbook
- Run like you're escaping a dragon's lair
- Hop like you're hopping over a wizard's staff
- Jump like you're jumping through a magical portal
- Pretend to enchant a forest with spells
- March like a procession of wizards
- Dance with magical creatures in an enchanted forest
- Spin like a spinning top
- Hop like you're hopping through a maze of illusions
- Pretend to brew a giant cauldron of magic
- Leap like you're leaping over a magical barrier
- Run like you're chasing a mischievous spell
- Jump over magical runes on the ground
- Dance like you're under a spell of joy
- Spin like a spinning spell disk
- Hop like you're crossing a bridge of magic stones
- Pretend to create fireworks with your magic

YOUR TURN!

Best suited for ages 6-8 grade

Wizards, Goblins, and Giants acting game

Wizards, Goblins, and Elves is a high-energy, team-based, live-action version of "Rock, Paper, Scissors". It involves strategy, teamwork, and quick physical movements to avoid being tagged.

The Core Rules

Wizards: Crouch slightly, wiggle fingers forward, and hiss/chant ("Shazaam!").

Goblins: Crouch very low, hands cupped around ears, and make a high-pitched sound ("Eeeee!").

Giants: Stand on tippy-toes, raise arms high, and roar ("Raaarr!").

The Hierarchy: Giants beat Goblins (Giants "squash" them).

Goblins beat Wizards (Goblins "chew their ankles" or outsmart them).

Wizards beat Giants (Wizards "zap" them with magic).

Gameplay: Two teams meet at a center line, show their poses, and the winners chase the losers to a safety zone. Any player caught becomes part of the opposing team.

How to Play

Set Up: Split the group into two teams and set up a playing field with a center line and safety zones (end zones).

Secret Choice: Teams go to their respective sides, huddle up, and unanimously decide on one character (Wizard, Goblin, or Giant).

The Reveal: Both teams line up at the center line, facing each other. On the count of three, all players act out their chosen character.

Chasing: The winning team chases the losing team back to their safety zone.

Tagging: Any tagged player joins the team that caught them. If both teams choose the same character, it's a draw, and they return to their sides to choose again.



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!

[Magic Potion Play](#)

[Magic School Inspired Printables](#)

[Magic School Inspired Writing Prompts](#)

[Mad Libs](#)

Suggested Reading

Elementary:

- The Story of Gumluck the Wizard by Adam Rex
- Miss Turie's Magic Creatures by Joy Keller

Middle:

- The Marvellers by Dhonielle Clayton
- The Nevermore Series by Jessica Townsend
- Amari and the Night Brothers by B.B. Alston

High:

- Carry On by Rainbow Rowell
- Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series by Rick Riordan
- The Legendborn Cycle by Tracy Deonn



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.

