



The Suitcase Circus

Teacher Guide



This teacher guide is designed to provide both teachers and students with a more comprehensive understanding of theater and live performance.

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Performance Specifics

Show Length: 45 minute show, includes behind the scenes demonstration

Audience: Pre-K thru 5th grade and families for audiences of up to 300

Technical Support: Lighting and sound support provided by the puppeteer

Staging Requirements: Requires indoor space at least 15ft square and close proximity to an electrical outlet.

Show Synopsis

Animals and tightropes and cannons, oh my! From within a clown's worn suitcase emerge silly circus acts that will amaze, astound, and awe!

Featured acts include a tightrope walking elephant, a giraffe on stilts, a lion taming act, and a daredevil leopard who shoots himself out of a cannon to the other side of the room! "Kids, don't try this at home, these are trained professionals."

The puppets for The Suitcase Circus are made from repurposed stuffed animals. First, the animals were cleaned, then cut open and all the stuffing removed. Wire armatures and wooden head controls were installed and then the puppets were re-stuffed. New eyes were fashioned from white plastic spoons and black tape attached with hot glue. A quick trip to the costumer and these second hand stars were ready to perform!

This production is made possible in part by a generous grant from the Jim Henson Foundation



Curriculum Connections

The Suitcase Circus show includes content from these Common Core and Georgia Performance Learning Standards. (click to view):

* [Language Arts](#)

* [Theatre](#)

* [Music](#)

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- * Students will gain an understanding of live performance and puppetry arts.
- * Students will observe doll style rod puppets, encouraging them to explore more possibilities with their own toys.
- * Students will learn about different puppet types, including rod and hand puppets.

vocabulary

- orchestra** - a group of musicians, especially a fairly large group, playing different instruments
- tightrope** - a rope or wire stretched taut and suspended above the ground, on which somebody walks or performs a balancing act
- trapeze** - a horizontal bar attached to the ends of two ropes hanging parallel to each other, used for gymnastics or for acrobatics, especially
- daredevil** - a daring risk-taker, especially somebody who performs dangerous stunts
- contortionist** - somebody who bends his or her own body into unusual shapes, especially as entertainment



Internet Resources

<http://www.puppetguy.com>

Visit this site for more information about “That Puppet Guy” Lee Bryan and his many performances. Also, be sure to check out the “Glue & You” Puppet kits!

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

Visit the Ringling Brothers Circus online.

<http://www.bigapplecircus.org/>

Check out the Big Apple Circus of New York, NY, online here.

<http://www.universoulcircus.com>

Celebrate Black culture through the circus arts at the Universoul Circus Web Site!

<http://www.ringling.com/activity/education/>

Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey’s Circus Education Center

<http://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca/scizone/e3/circus/cannon/howto.asp>

What makes a successful human cannonball?

<http://www.teachingheart.net/circustheme.html>

Ideas for a Circus unit/theme in your classroom



Reading Recommendations

Harold's Circus (Purple Crayon Books)

By Crockett Johnson

The Circus Book

By Dominique Jando & Noel Daniel

Sidewalk Circus

By Paul Fleischman and Kevin Hawkes

Circus Caps for Sale

By Esphyr Slobodkina

If I Ran the Circus

By Theodor Geisel - Dr. Seuss

Tree-Ring Circus

By Adam Rex

The Circus Ship

By Chris Van Dusen

See the Circus

By H. A. Rey

Peter Spier's Circus

By Peter Spier

The Secret Circus

By Johanna Wright

Circus Shapes

By S. Murphy & E. Miller

Olivia Saves the Circus

By Ian Falconer

The Circus Age: Culture and Society

Under the American Big Top

By Janet M. Davis

You See a Circus, I See...

By Mike Downs & Anik McGrory

Emeline at the Circus

By Marjorie Priceman

Circus

By Lois Ehlert

The Circus is Coming

By Hilary Knight

All Aboard the Circus McGurkus

(Dr. Seuss Nursery Collection)

By Dr. Seuss

Miss Bindergarten Plans a Circus

With Kindergarten

By Joseph Slate and Ashley Wolff





Grade Level Ideas & Activities

Preschool

- ◆ Click [here](#) to be directed to That Puppet Guy's website with learning extensions for this age group.

Kindergarten & First Grade

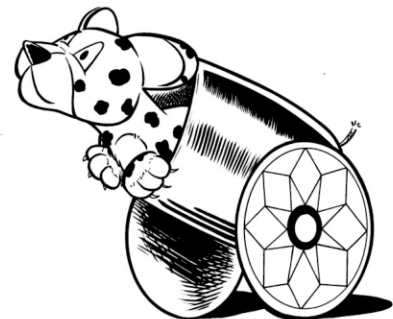
- ◆ Your students can become a troupe of performing elephants. Have them line up and march in a circle. The leader can call out actions which the others must perform until another action is called out. Ideas for actions—looking for peanuts, trunks holding tails, flapping ears, tusks, and pounding feet.
- ◆ Explore the secrets of circus performers. Place a long line of masking tape on the floor and pretend it is a high wire. Students can develop their own acts using pool noodles, umbrellas and small plastic chairs as balancing props. Discuss why high-wire walkers need these props to alter their center of gravity.
- ◆ Draw a picture of which performer you would choose to be in the circus. Write one or two sentences about your picture.

Second & Third Grade

- ◆ Draw a picture illustrating your favorite part of the puppet show. Write a paragraph describing your picture.
- ◆ Choose two acts from the Suitcase Circus to compare and contrast.
- ◆ **Alphabetical Circus Words**-ABC Order Worksheet ([page 8](#))

Fourth & Fifth Grade

- ◆ Divide your class into groups of four or five. Assign each group a different circus act to research. Instruct each group to prepare a 5 minute presentation to present to the class. Suggest that they include a thorough explanation, famous performers and unique trivia about the act.
- ◆ Pretend you are a reporter at the circus. Write questions that you would ask a performer in the show. After you have written the questions, write answers to accompany them.
- ◆ **Circus Subtraction** - 3 digit subtraction with borrowing ([page 9](#))



LIVE PERFORMANCE ETIQUETTE

Going to see a live performance is not like watching television or seeing a movie. The artists on stage can see and hear everything that the audience is doing. These performers have worked very hard to provide an enjoyable, entertaining show. Let them know through your actions that you appreciate this. Also, your behavior affects the experience of everyone around you. So respect the other audience members by following the few simple guidelines listed below.

Did you Know?

Stage performers tell each other to "break a leg" before a performance because superstition says that it is bad luck to wish a performer "good luck" before a show!

Thumbs Up !



- Arrive early
- Turn off phones, watch alarms & anything else that would disrupt the show
- Use the restroom before the show
- Applaud where appropriate, after a well-performed song or dance, and at the end of an Act or scene, Also at a curtain call when the performers are taking a bow
- Laugh or giggle politely where appropriate
- Watch closely and listen carefully

Thumbs Down!

- No photos or video
- Do not whisper, talk, sing or hum during the performance
- Do not eat or drink during the performance
- Do not put your feet on the seat in front of you
- Do not boo, heckle or shout during the performance
- Do not leave the theater until the actors have left the stage



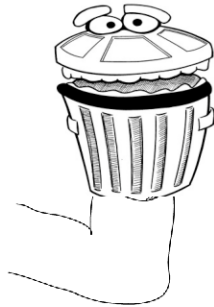
STYLES OF PUPPETRY

Body Puppets Body puppets are exactly what they sound like. They are larger-than-life and the puppeteer, or sometimes two, are actually inside the puppet. Body puppets can be very simple, like a large costume, or very sophisticated, employing video cameras and robotics. Sesame Street's Big Bird is probably the most recognized body puppet!

Hand Puppets Hand Puppets are puppets that cover the puppeteer's hand. They can either have a moving mouth or not. Hand puppets, or glove puppets as they are sometimes called, cover the puppeteer's hand so that the head is moved by the index finger and the arms moved by the thumb and middle finger. Hand puppets are part of Chinese puppet tradition.

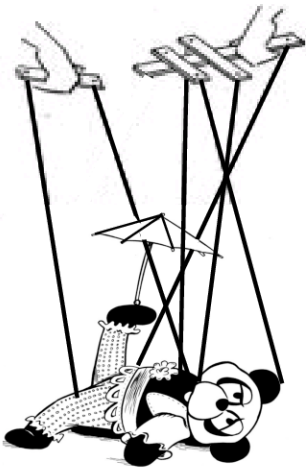


Rod Puppets are puppets that are controlled entirely by control rods, or sticks. These rods are often attached to both hands with a third rod that is attached inside the head to allow the puppeteer to turn the head or move it up and down. While the puppeteer provides the voice, without a moving mouth much of the puppet's character is expressed through exaggerated movements and actions.



Marionettes (string puppets)

Marionettes are considered the most difficult of all puppets to master. They consist of a full bodied character whose head, arms and legs are jointed to allow full movement. These are each connected by heavy thread to a cross shaped controller (called an airplane) that is held in one hand by the puppeteer. By moving the airplane controller and using the free hand to manipulate individual threads, the puppet can be made to walk, jump, dance, or run. The puppet is always controlled from above.



Some stages even have bridges built across them to allow the puppeteer to move back and forth across the scene without ever being seen. A very famous marionette scene was in the movie *The Sound of Music*, in which Julie Andrews sang a song while marionette goats danced across the stage.

Shadow Puppets When most people think of shadow puppets they picture making a simple bird or dog shadow on a wall with their hands. Actually, shadow puppets can be quite complex. Originating in Indonesia, shadow puppets are often made from dried animal skins which are cut out in very ornate patterns and shapes. Because shadow puppet shows are usually performed at night, they are often considered to be "adult" themed and not suitable for children to attend. Audience members may sit in front of the shadow screen to watch the show, or they may sit behind the screen and see the puppets in the bright light and not as shadows at all!



The Suitcase Circus is a table-top show performed with a variety of stuffed animal dolls transformed into rod puppets. That Puppet Guy, Lee Bryan has packed the show full of fun and surprises for all ages!

Puppets Featured
in
The Suitcase
Circus

About The Puppeteer



Celebrating 20 years, Lee Bryan "That Puppet Guy", specializes in exceptional school assemblies and extraordinary library programs. He strives to entertain the imaginations of the young *and* the young-at-heart with innovative puppets, original scripts and zany adaptations of classic tales. Lee's solo performances are often featured at the internationally acclaimed The Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta.

He is a two-time grant recipient from the prestigious Jim Henson Foundation, Inc. In 2003 he received a Project Grant which helped produce his original, found-object production of PINOCCHIO.

<http://www.hensonfoundation.org/index.php/grantawards/2000s/2003>

Then, in 2006 Lee received a Seed Grant to further his production of THE SUITCASE CIRCUS a/k/a "Le Cirque du Suitcase."

<http://www.hensonfoundation.org/index.php/grant-awards/2000s/2006>

Professional film credits include work with the Muppets® on the feature film, "[The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland](#)." Recently, The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honored Lee with a Southeastern Regional Daytime Emmy® nomination for his work with Public Broadcasting on the award winning Spanish language series, ¡[SALSA!](#) Current video projects include the role of Hardy Heart for [The OrganWise Guys](#) and most recently the role of Captain Cruller to help celebrate Krispy Kreme's [TALK LIKE A PIRATE](#) promotion.

Professional puppetry affiliations include memberships with [UNIMA-USA](#), [The Puppeteers of America, Inc.](#), and [The Atlanta Puppetry Guild](#).



Curriculum Standards

For

The Suitcase Circus

Language Arts – Common Core Standards

Literacy.RL.K.2 - With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

Literacy.RL.1.2 - Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message.

Literacy.RL.2.2 - Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

Literacy.RL.3.2 - Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Literacy.RL.4.3 - Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Literacy.RL.5.3 - Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific detail in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Theatre - Georgia Performance Learning Standards

TAES.1 - Analyzing and constructing meaning from theatrical experiences, dramatic literature, and electronic media

TAES.11 - Engaging actively and appropriately as an audience member in theatre or other media experiences

Music—Georgia Performance Learning Standards

MGM.7 - Evaluating music and music performances

- a. Evaluate musical performances of themselves and others.
- b. Explain personal preferences for specific musical works using appropriate vocabulary.



Alphabetical Circus Words

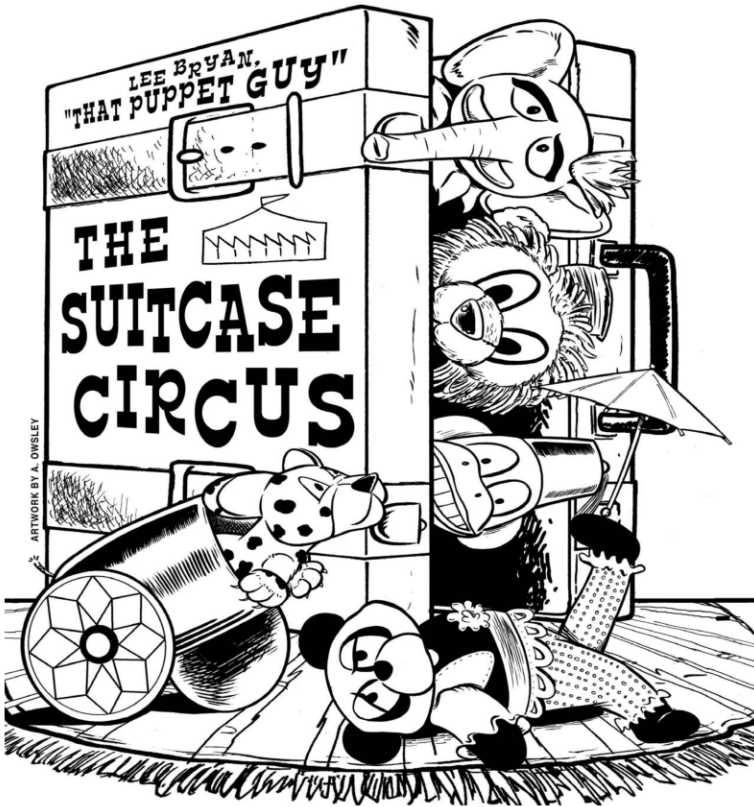
NAME: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Look at the words on the left side of the page. Put all twelve circus words in alphabetical order in the space provided below.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| Elephant | Bear |
| Panda | Leopard |
| Monkey | Tightrope |
| Lion | Cannon |
| Trapeze | Giraffe |
| Suitcase | Circus |

ABC Order





Circus

Subtraction

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Directions: Practice your subtraction skills by subtracting the numbers in each group.
Show your work and circle your answer.

$$\begin{array}{r} 17 \\ - 11 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 87 \\ - 23 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 44 \\ - 20 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 71 \\ - 24 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 43 \\ - 20 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 29 \\ - 13 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 80 \\ - 10 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 41 \\ - 28 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 66 \\ - 16 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 19 \\ - 11 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 39 \\ - 39 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 33 \\ - 13 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 56 \\ - 11 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 19 \\ - 15 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 41 \\ - 39 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 40 \\ - 11 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 79 \\ - 59 \\ \hline \end{array}$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 40 \\ - 16 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

