

TREEHOUSE  
SHAKERS

THE BOY WHO GREW FLOWERS  
STUDY GUIDE



## THE PERFORMANCE

### **The Boy Who Grew Flowers**

**Written & Directed by Mara McEwin**

**Choreography by Emily Bunning**

**Music by Martyn Axe**

**Costumes & Puppets by Patti Gilstrap**

**Lighting & Set by Cody Grey**

**The Boy Who Grew Flowers**, based on the picture book by Jennifer Wojtowicz, written and adapted by Mara McEwin and choreographed by Emily Bunning, is the story of a young boy, Rink Bowagon, who lives on top of Lonesome Mountain with his unusual family of rattlesnake tamers and shape-shifters. The townspeople agree that Rink's family are quite strange, but they are unaware of Rink's spectacular gifts. Whenever the moon is full, Rink sprouts beautiful flowers from his head. When a new girl, Angelina, moves to town, Rink's life truly begins to grow. Their friendship quickly transpires, and for the first time, Rink is no longer an outcast.

**The Boy Who Grew Flowers** is a delightful and thoughtful story that lends itself to exposing young people to diversity, navigating adversity, creating empathy and celebrating individualism. At times, the characters are portrayed through shadow puppetry: The Bowagons, townspeople, school students, as well as parts of the set: the winding roads of Lonesome Mountain, the stunning full moon, and the growing flowers from Rink's body. **The Boy Who Grew Flowers**, thematically celebrates the differences among us, while artistically and visually exploring varying theatrical styles

## **BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE**

### **Ages 4-5**

- Read Barefoot Book's **The Boy Who Grew Flowers**
- Discuss Themes and Questions of the Book
- What are illustrations?
- Discuss colors, textures and images in the illustrations from the book
- One of the sub-category themes of this book is the reference to flowers & nature. Go on a nature hike around the school, or bring in flowers for your students to use in an art project
  - Some Ideas:
    - Make a Pressed Flower Bookmark
    - Make a Self-Portrait Using Found Leaves & Flowers
- Discuss Dance
  - What is Modern Dance? Dance without shoes. Expressive movement with freedom to do movement as you choose.
  - How can we use our body to create a story?
    - Make a flower dance with circles. Circle your head, arms, feet, legs. Make small and big circles with your different body parts
    - Start with planting your body like a seed and grow slowly into a flower. Some students could be the farmers/sun/rain while others could be the flowers, then switch rolls.
- Discuss Puppetry
  - What are shadow puppets?
  - Make a Shadow Puppet in Class using a cut out of black construction paper, a flat stick, and tape
  - What are Rod Puppets?
  - Make a Rod Puppet (Directions on Page 8)

### **Some Additional Great Resource Books:**

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf

The Snail and The Whale by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae

The Sneetches By Dr. Seuss

Who We Are!: All About Being the Same and Being Different (Let's Talk about You and Me) By Robie H. Harris

### **AGES 5-6**

- Read Barefoot Book's **The Boy Who Grew Flowers**
- Discuss Themes and Questions of the Book
  - This story is about a boy who is different from others. Do you have a friend who is different from you? What are those differences?
  - How can you get to know someone who may seem different?
    - Say "hello," stand in line with them, invite them to play, offer to be their partner, sit with them at lunch.
  - Angelina asks, "Why won't anyone talk to him?" and the question "rattled in the minds" of the classmates. What does this mean?

- Pretend you are the classmate to whom Angelina has asked the question, “Why won’t anyone talk to him?” What would you say to Angelina?
- How would you talk with your friends if you saw someone like Rink in your class who needed help making friends?
- Discuss Differences Amongst People
  - Everyone has Strengths & Weaknesses
  - Have Students Make a List of Their Strengths
- Have Students draw an empowering self-portrait
  - First Have Them Look Into The Mirror and then Draw What They Saw
  - Give Them Textures to Add; String, Tissue Paper
- Discuss Dance: What Is Modern Dance?
  - **Modern Dance** is a form of dance that is very open in style and can express or communicate an idea, action, emotion or experience through movement.
- Create a flower dance, by using big circle shapes with different parts of your body. What are different ways you can make your arms into circles, body, legs, head, etc.

### Some Additional Great Resource Books:

The Sneeches by Dr. Seuss

The Name Jar By Yangsook Choi

The Invisible Boy By Trudy Ludwig

### **AGES 6-7**

- This story is about a boy who is different from others.
  - Do you have a friend who is different from you?
  - What are those differences?
  - How can you get to know someone who may seem different?
- Discuss Differences Amongst People
  - Everyone has Strengths & Weaknesses
  - Have Students Make a List of Their Strengths
- Have Students draw an empowering self-portrait
  - First Have Them Look Into The Mirror and then Draw What They See
  - Give Them Textures to Add; String, Tissue Paper, Collage Images from magazines
- What is Modern Dance? **Modern Dance** is a form of dance that is very open in style and can express or communicate an idea, action, emotion or experience through movement.
- Stories can be told through words, theater, music, dance and art. The ideas are endless. **The Boy Who Grows Flowers** is told through a multitude of art forms. Can you name these?
- Have the students work together as choreographers to make a short piece (it can have a storyline or not.) Then have your students share their choreography with the other groups.

### **Terminology for Dance:**

**Choreographer** is the person who makes dances.

**Choreography** is use of shape, space, locomotion, rhythm and dynamics to create dance.

Divide into groups with 4 students each. Each student then chooses a shape with their body, a path in space, and a way to travel on that path. Then the students share their material and discuss how to put it all together. They may decide to learn each of the dances and dance it together in a sequence, or do one at a time, or do a combination of both. Another possibility; everyone travels center from the sides with their own movement and then combine their individual movements.

### **Some Great Resource Books:**

The Boy in The Dress By David Walliams

Each Kindness By Jacqueline Woodson

### **AGES 7-9**

- Discuss Puppets
  - Make a Shadow Puppet (Directions Page 7)
  - Make A Science Connector “What’s happening with Shadow Puppets”  
Light travels as a wave. When you put your shadow puppet in between the lamp and the wall, the puppet blocks some of the light waves. The closer you put your shadow puppet to the lamp, the more light waves are blocked. This makes a bigger shadow. Moving the shadow puppet away from the lamp makes a smaller shadow as fewer light waves are blocked.
- What is Modern Dance?
- In modern dance the body is an instrument one uses to express or communicate an idea, action, emotion or experience through movement. All parts of the body are included and work together for the greater expression and range of movement.
  1. Locomotion is moving through space from one point to another
  2. Non-locomotion is when you are anchored to one spot using only the space in any direction but can still be moving
  3. Time – Duration and speed of movement, rhythms
  4. Shapes—Design of body in space: symmetrical, asymmetrical, curved, wide, narrow, twisted
  5. Space – place the movement occupies in space: level, direction, path
  6. Energy – the amount of force and quality with which movement it performed: percussive, sustained, swinging, vibratory, rebounding, exploding, suspending.
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1. Have the students draw an intricate pattern. Then have them walk it in the room. Next have students create a character that walks the pattern, at the end has a transformation and then use that affect on the character to walk back through the pattern.

### **Some Great Resource Books:**

Izzy Kline Has Butterflies by Beth Ain

Desmond and the Very Mean Word by Desmond Tutu

### **AFTER SEEING THE PERFORMANCE**

1. Who were the characters in **The Boy Who Grew Flowers**?
2. Talk about what happened in the play.
3. After seeing **The Boy Who Grew Flowers**, discuss it with your class.  
Who was their favorite character and why?  
Did they notice which actors and dancers played more than one part?  
How did the actors' and or dancers' movements help make the puppets seem real?
4. There were two different styles of puppetry. What were they?
5. How were the Bowagons portrayed? What made them such "strange folk"?
6. How did Angelina deal with being "different?"

### **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

1. (Age 4-5) Have students create their own tales based on having a special talent. Rink was able to grow flowers. You can also have students sit in a circle and each make up a part to the story. It's okay if the story doesn't make sense; just encourage students to use their creativity.
2. (Ages 5-6) Have children create their own story about a child or animal who has differences. They could create this together as a group or as individuals. They could write their stories down, tell the stories out loud, draw their stories or put on a play based on their stories.
3. (7-9) Act out a picture book about the differences. You could choose a story like "Ferdinand the Bull" or the "The Sneeches." As a teacher you can narrate and choose students to be different characters. You can have many students play the same part if more than one wants to act out a role. This could be a long project

or even a ten-minute project. Tell the story to the students and then have them act it out around the classroom.

4. (All Ages) Make a Shadow Puppet with your class. You will need: Popsicle sticks, Black Paper and glue or strong tape. Students should cut out their shape and then attach the stick. Get a flashlight, blank white wall, or white cloth and create shadows.
5. (All Ages) The Boy in the story does a lot of locomotor movement in the show, have the students create a series of movements that takes them from one place to another. It could include going down a narrow path, through a forest, up a hill, and over a river.

### **Making Rod Puppets**

Rod puppets are held above your head on a rod, or stick. A rod puppet can be a very simple cutout on a stick or have several moving parts controlled by additional smaller sticks. With a little experimenting, you'll come up with a puppet that looks just right!

#### **Materials**

- Pencil
- Tagboard
- Thin rods made of straightened coat hangers or wood dowels
- Scissors
- Strong tape
- Hole punch
- Paper fasteners
- Markers, paints, and fabrics

#### **Procedure**

1. Draw the character on a piece of tagboard.
2. Decide what parts of the puppet must move. Cut out the figure and the movable parts.
3. Use paper fasteners to connect the movable parts of the puppet.
4. Use strong tape to attach a rod to the back of the puppet. Add a rod to the back of each movable part so that you can control it. A very long puppet, such as a snake, can be controlled with one rod for the head and another for the tail. Add yarn for hair, paint facial features, and add any other decorations needed to complete your puppet.

### **Make Your Own Shadow Puppets Fun with Light And Dark**

#### **What you need:**

- Lamp
- Cardboard
- Sellotape
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Skewers

- White wall

**How to:**

1. Choose what type of puppets you want. How about your favourite animal? Or your friends and family? Or a scary ghost?
2. Draw outlines for your puppets on the cardboard and cut them out.
3. Use sellotape to attach a skewer to the back of each of your puppets.
4. Put the lamp on the floor or on a table. Point it at the wall and turn it on. Turn off other lights and close the curtains.
5. Hold your puppets between the light and the wall. Can you see a shadow on the wall? Move the puppets between the light and the wall to make the shadow different sizes.

For More Puppet Making Ideas, contact us at [contactus@treehouseshakers.com](mailto:contactus@treehouseshakers.com)

**THE BOY WHO GREW FLOWERS RESIDENCIES AND WORKSHOPS**

**Ages 4-5**

Treehouse Shakers offers several residencies and workshops in conjunction with **The Boy Who Grew Flowers** connecting young students to the performance they are about to experience. Students are exposed to dance, storytelling, creative drama, and puppet making. Treehouse Shakers takes pride in tailoring our curriculum to your students' needs.

**OPTION 1**

**3-Day Workshops:** Students are given one-day introduction workshops (spread out over 3 days) that include; puppet making with household objects, storytelling and creative drama based on folktales exploring differences, and creative movement. Each workshop lasts 45 minutes for 4-9 and tailored specifically with each age in mind.

**OPTION 2**

**6, 9, 15, 20-Day Residencies:** Students spend 6-20 days (can be once or bi-weekly) with the teaching artist in creating their own puppets, creating a play of their own, or in creative movement.

**OPTION 4**

**15-Day Performance Residency:** Students create a dance-play of their own with creative movement, storytelling and puppets. Two teaching artists for each class are provided. 45 minutes.

**ABOUT TREEHOUSE SHAKERS**

Treehouse Shakers, Inc., a non-profit dance and theater company, was co-founded in 1997 by Emily Bunning, choreographer/dancer, and Mara McEwin, writer/actor. Treehouse Shakers has created and performed thirteen original dance-plays for young audiences and adults in many established performance venues, including theaters, festivals and schools across the nation. Most recently the company was awarded the CUNY Dance Initiative, Flushing Town Hall 2015-2016 Space Grant, selected artists for the New York State Presenters Network Roster, and as artists participating in the



prestigious BAM Professional Development Program in association with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management for the 2014-2015 cycle. Treehouse Shakers also created and performed the dance programming for the Television show, **Alex & The Kaleidoscope**, which won an Emmy.

Currently, Treehouse Shakers has six original performances for young audiences on a rotating tour across the nation including: **Animal Rhythms: Two African Folktales**, which introduces audiences to rhythm, modern dance and theater through the power and culture of West African folklore. **Let's Talk About IT!** for teens, incorporates the vocabulary of dance, world folklore, real-life stories, and video interviews of everyday teens. **Hatched**, for the youngest viewers ages 0-6, is about baby animals and their life on the farm. Our newest piece is the dance-mystery, **Under the Tangle**, about an orphaned young girl who becomes trapped in an enchanted labyrinth, for ages 8 and up. **Olive & Pearl** for ages 2-5 to premiered in 2017. **The Boy Who Grew Flowers** is Treehouse Shakers' newest work to premiere in 2019.

Treehouse Shakers' work has been praised by *The New York Times*, *FOX TV's Good Day Street Talk*, *New York Magazine*, *Time Out Kids*, *New York 1's Parenting Report*, *CBS-TV's Morning Show*, *Mommy Poppins*, *Village Voice*, *New York Post*, and *The Daily News*, among others. Some recent highlighted performance venues for our dance-plays include: *Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)*, *BMCC's Tribeca Performing Arts Center (NYC)*, *Queens Theatre in the Park (NYC)*, *United Nations (NYC)*, *The Peter Jay Sharp Theater (NYC)*, *The Ailey Citigroup Theater (NYC)*, *Manhattan Movement and Arts Center (NYC)*, *Symphony Space (NYC)*, *Flushing Town Hall (NYC)*, *The Palace Theatre Stamford (Stamford, CT)*, *Long Island Children's Museum (Garden City, NY)*, *Victoria Theater Associations (Dayton, OH)*, *Alden Theater (McLean, VA)*, *Aronoff Center (Cincinnati, OH)*, *Paramount Theater (Peekskill, NY)*, *Westhampton Beach Playhouse (L.I., NY)*, *Tribeca Film Festival (NYC)*, *Jacob's Pillow (Becket, MA)*, *Two Rivers Theater (Red Bank, NJ)*, *Black Rock Theater (Germantown, MD)*, *Bucks County Playhouse (New Hope, PA)* and *Elias Center for the Arts (Mifflinburg, PA)*.



**We would love to hear from you! Send us your drawings, writings or your activities from the study guide.  
We will post on our website and blog.  
Thank you!**

**The Boy Who Grew Flowers** is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York Legislature and Individual Contributions to Treehouse Shakers.

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