

# BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A CREATIVE & THEATRICAL STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



By Barry Kornhauser

**AGES 2 AND ABOVE**

**APRIL 14 - MAY 1** STUDENT MATINEE

**APRIL 10 - 19** PUBLIC SHOWS

As part of DCT's mission to integrate the arts into classroom academics, the ***Behind the Curtain Resource Guide*** is intended to provide helpful information for the teacher and student to use before and after attending a performance. The activities presented in this guide are suggested to stimulate lively responses and multi-sensory explorations of concepts in order to use the theatrical event as a vehicle for cross-cultural and language arts learning.

**Please use our suggestions as springboards to lead your students into meaningful, dynamic learning; extending the dramatic experience of the play.**

Your Family Arts Center

**DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER**

Astonishing kids & families with the fun of Broadway-like plays & much more!

Dallas Children's Theater

# BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A Creative & Theatrical Resource Guide for Teachers

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DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 250,000 young people from 196 zip codes, 146 cities and 78 counties and 32 states each year through its main stage productions, touring, educational programming and outreach activities. Since its opening in 1984, this award-winning theater has existed to create challenging, inspiring and entertaining theater, which communicates vital messages to our youth and promotes an early appreciation for literature and the performing arts. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing on theater for youth and families, DCT produces literary classics, original scripts, folk tales, myths, fantasies and contemporary dramas that foster multicultural understanding, confront topical issues and celebrate the human spirit.

DCT is committed to the integration of creative arts into the teaching strategies of academic core curriculum and educating through the arts. Techniques utilized by DCT artists/teachers are based upon the approach developed in *The Integration of Abilities and Making Sense with Five Senses*, by Paul Baker, Ph.D.

DCT founder and Executive Artistic Director, Robyn Flatt defines the artistic mission and oversees the operations of the organization, consisting of twenty-five full time staff members and more than 200 actors, designers, theater artists and educators.

**See page 16 for the TEKS that your field trip to Dallas Children's Theater satisfies!**

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# CURTAINS UP ON PUTTING A PERFORMANCE TOGETHER

Every DCT performance you see is the result of many people working together to create a play. You see the cast perform on stage, but there are people you do not see who help before, during, and after every production.

## The DIRECTOR

Determines the overall look of the performance.

Guides the actors in stage movement and character interpretation.

Works with designers to plan the lights and sounds, scenery, costumes and make-up, and stage actions.

## The DESIGNERS

Plan the lights, scenery, costumes, make-up, sound, and actions to help bring the director's vision to life.

There are also designers who work to create the posters, advertisements, programs and other media for the performance.

## The STAGE MANAGER

Before the performance, creates a cue sheet to guide the crew in getting things on and off the stage during the performances. During the performance, uses this cue sheet to direct people and things on and off the stage.

## The CREW

Builds and operates the scenery, costumes, props, and light and sound during the performance.

## The CAST

Performs and presents the story to the audience.

## The AUDIENCE

That's right! There can be no performance without you- the audience. The role of the audience is unique because you experience the entertainment with the performers and backstage crew. You are a collaborator in the performance, and it is important to learn your role so you can join all the people who work to create this Dallas Children's Theater production.



# CURTAINS UP ON THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Watching a play is different from watching television or a sporting event. When you watch T.V., you may leave the room or talk. At a sporting event you might cheer and shout and discuss what you're seeing. Your role as a member of the audience in a play means you must watch and listen carefully because:

- You need to concentrate on what the actors are saying.
- The actors are affected by your behavior. Talking and moving around can make it difficult for them to concentrate on their roles.
- Extra noises and movement can distract other audience members.



## Are you ready for your role in this performance?

Check the box next to the statements that describe proper etiquette for an audience member during the performance.

- Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun.
- Share your thoughts out loud with those sitting near you.
- Wave and call out to the actors on stage.
- Sit on your knees or stand near your seat.
- Bring snacks and gum to enjoy during the show.
- Reward the cast and crew with applause when you like a song or dance and at the end of the show.
- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything or disturb other audience members while you are being seated.
- Keep all hands and feet and items out of the aisles during the performance.

## CURTAINS UP AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Attending a play is an experience unlike any other. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story as it happens. Dallas Children's Theater brings stories to life through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. Playwrights adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and onto the stage. Designers and technicians create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. Carpenters build the scenery and make the place of the story become a real place, while costumers and make-up designers can turn actors into the characters you meet in the stories. Directors help actors bring the story to life before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs and audiobooks of stories.



Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance. Ask students the following questions and allow them to write or draw pictures of their experience at DCT.

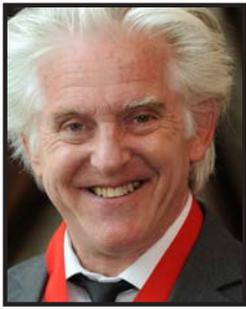
1. What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the theater? What did you notice first on the stage?
2. What about the set? Draw or tell about things you remember. Did the set change during the play? How was it moved or changed? Was there any space besides the stage where the action took place?
3. How did the lights set the mood of the play? How did they change throughout? What do you think "house lights" are? How do they differ from stage lights? Did you notice different areas of lighting?
4. What did you think about the costumes? Do you think they fit the story? What things do you think the costume designers had to consider before creating the costumes?
5. Was there music in the play? How did it add to the performance?
6. What about the actors? Do you think they were able to bring the characters to life? Did you feel caught up in the story? What things do you think the actors had to work on in order to make you believe they were the characters?



- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from the stage. Consider your work from the viewpoint of the actors on stage. How might things look from where they stand?
- Write a letter to a cast member telling them what you liked about their character.
- Write how you think it might feel to be one of the actors. Are the actors aware of the audience? How might they feel about the reactions of the audience today? How would you feel before the play began? What about after the show ends?
- Which job would you like to try? Actor, Director, Lighting or Sound Crew Member, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Costume Designer, or another role? What skills might you need to complete your job?
- Choose a favorite story and draw or use the computer to create a program cover design for a theatrical adaptation of your story.

# CURTAINS UP ON THEATER VOCABULARY

ACTOR	any theatrical performer whose job it is to portray a character
CAST	the group of actors in a play
CENTER STAGE	the middle of the stage
CHARACTER	any person portrayed by an actor onstage. Characters may also be animals, and sometimes things.
CHOREOGRAPHER	the person who designs and teaches the dances in a production
COSTUME DESIGNER	the person who creates what the actors wear in the performance
DIRECTOR	the person in charge of the entire production
DOWNSTAGE	the area at the front of the stage; closest to the audience
HOUSE	the area in the theater where the audience sits in the theater
LIGHTING DESIGNER	the person who creates the lighting for a play to simulate the time of day and the location
ONSTAGE	the part of the stage the audience can see
OFFSTAGE	the part of the stage the audience cannot see
PLOT	the story line
PROSCENIUM	the opening framing the stage
PROJECT	to speak loudly
PROP	an object used by an actor in a scene
SET	the background or scenery for a play
SETTING	the time and place of the story
SOUND DESIGNER	the person who provides special effects like thunder, ringing phone, or crickets chirping
STAGE CREW	the people who change the scenery during a performance
STAGE MANAGER	the person who helps the director during the rehearsal and coordinates all aspects of the lights, sound, and scenery with the actors during the performance
UPSTAGE	the area at the back of the stage; farthest from the audience



## CURTAINS UP ON THE AUTHOR

**BARRY KORNHAUSER** served as playwright-in-residence of the national historic landmark Fulton Theatre in Lancaster, PA, for 25 years. His honors include the Charlotte B. Chorpenning Cup Award, Helen Hayes Outstanding Play Award, Ivey Playwriting Award, AATE Distinguished Play Award and the Bonderman Playwriting Prize. His work has taken him on grand adventures everywhere from a one-room schoolhouse to the White House and to such Tony Award-winning stages as the Children’s Theatre Company, La Jolla Playhouse, the Kennedy Center, and the Alliance Theatre.



## CURTAINS UP KARL SCHAEFFER

### KARL SCHAEFFER - THE MAN

Karl has appeared in many DCT productions including Dr. Seuss’s *The Cat in the Hat*; *Night of the Living Dead*; *Pinkerton!!!*; *The Emperor’s New Clothes*; *Babe, the Sheep-Pig*; *Holes*; *The Mummy’s Claw*; *Pecos Bill*; *The Island of the Skog*; *Frankenstein*; *The Stinky Cheese Man...*; *Honus & Me*; *Junie B. Jones & A Little Monkey Business*; *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*; *The Pied Piper’s Magic*; *How I Became A Pirate*; *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*; *The Curse of Castle Mongrew*; *Junie B. in Jingle Bells*, *Batman Smells!*; *Go, Dog. Go!*; *Charlotte’s Web*

and, most recently, *Skippyjon Jones*. Last Halloween he celebrated 30 years at DCT, he has performed with the Dallas Theater Center, Shakespeare Dallas, and Theatre Three. Karl is an Artist in Residence at DCT and teaches video classes in the DCT Academy.

## CURTAINS UP ON WRITING

*To have a good friend, you must BE a good friend.*

Begin this activity by leading a discussion on the characteristics of a good friend. The talk about the play and how the man BECAME a good friend to the balloon. Use your list of characteristics and allow students to give examples from the play about times when the man showed he was becoming the balloon’s friend. Jumpstart your discussion by talking about some of these characteristics of good friends.

Good friends:

Listen to each other.

Build each other up rather than put each other down.

Try to understand each other’s feelings.

Help each other solve problems.

Disagree without hurting each other.

Can depend on each other.

Care about each other.

Are honest with each other.



## A Recipe for a Friend

Consider the characteristics you think are most important for being a good friend. Use the recipe card template to write your own recipe for friendship. Share your thoughts with your classmates and display your cards in the classroom.

## My Recipe for a Friend

Ingredients:

Start with:

Add a dash of:

Mix in:

You'll have:

## My Recipe for a Friend

Ingredients:

Start with:

Add a dash of:

Mix in:

You'll have:

# CURTAINS UP ON MOVEMENT

## Fun with Balloons

The following activities can be adjusted according to the ages and abilities of your students.

Please note: If your school has a policy regarding balloons and possible latex allergies, you can use mylar balloons, qualatex bubbles, or other non-latex options. It is recommended that young children NOT try to inflate balloons as they can be a choking hazard.

You will need: Balloons  
Stopwatch  
Balloon Boppers - *see instructions for making your own below.*

- Provide each student with a balloon and encourage them to bat them so that they stay in the air. Once the students have become proficient, you can make the activity more challenging by adding more balloons. Encourage them to work as a group to keep all the balloons aloft. Extend the activity by asking students to 'sort' the balloons by color into different areas.
- Divide your class into teams of three or four. You'll need at least two balloons per student for this game. Each person should have one balloon and the others should be in a pile or basket near the group. Instruct each group to begin the activity by batting their individual balloons in the air. Use the stopwatch to set a time challenge for them to keep all the balloons in their group in the air. Extend the challenge by seeing if groups can work together to add one balloon at a time until the entire pile of balloons is in the air. How long can they keep them all off the floor?
- Begin by instructing student to stand in a circle. Tell them that you will toss a balloon and call out a name. The student named should try to catch the balloon before it hits the ground. It then becomes that student's turn to toss the balloon and name another catcher. Extend the activity by calling out a name and having them keep the balloon in the air using a different body part; i.e. head, knee, foot, hand, elbow.
- Provide the students with balloon boppers and encourage them to bat the balloons into a target or goal or over a net.

## Make Your Own Balloon Bopper

You will need: Wire clothes hangers  
Panty hose or tights  
Pliers  
Duct tape

### Here's How:

Twist the hanger into an oval shape.

Bend the curve into a handle with the pliers. Make sure you carefully bend the sharp ends in and cover them with duct tape.

Cut one leg from the pair of hose and fit it over the hanger. Secure the end with tape.

Use the bopper as you would a tennis racket to bat the balloons.

## CURTAINS UP ON SCIENCE

### OH BUOYANT BALLOONS!

Use the following activity to help students understand the concept of *buoyancy*. Allow them opportunities to predict, strategize, test and analyze. Smaller children will need close adult supervision when using balloons and small objects.

You will need: A large sink, tub, or water table filled with water  
Balloons  
Small objects that can fit inside a balloon before inflating it like marbles, beans, or cotton swabs. Use a variety of heavier and lighter objects so students can work with quantity in mass.

Here's How:

Begin the activity with a discussion about buoyancy. Explain to the students that objects sink or float according to their density. Those that are denser than the water they displace will float and are said to be buoyant. Share with them that they will be trying to make a balloon, which is buoyant, heavier than the water it displaces so that it will sink rather than float.

Follow the Scientific Method and encourage your students to:

Purpose: Ask a question. Can we make a balloon sink?

Research: Discuss how the amount of air in the balloon might affect its buoyancy? Will the size of the object or balloon make a difference?

Hypothesis: Encourage students to predict what items and how many of them it will be most likely to sink the balloon.

Experiment: Young children will need close supervision during this step of the process.

Analyze: Discuss which items were most suited to sinking the balloon.

Conclude: Allow time for students to draw or write about their findings

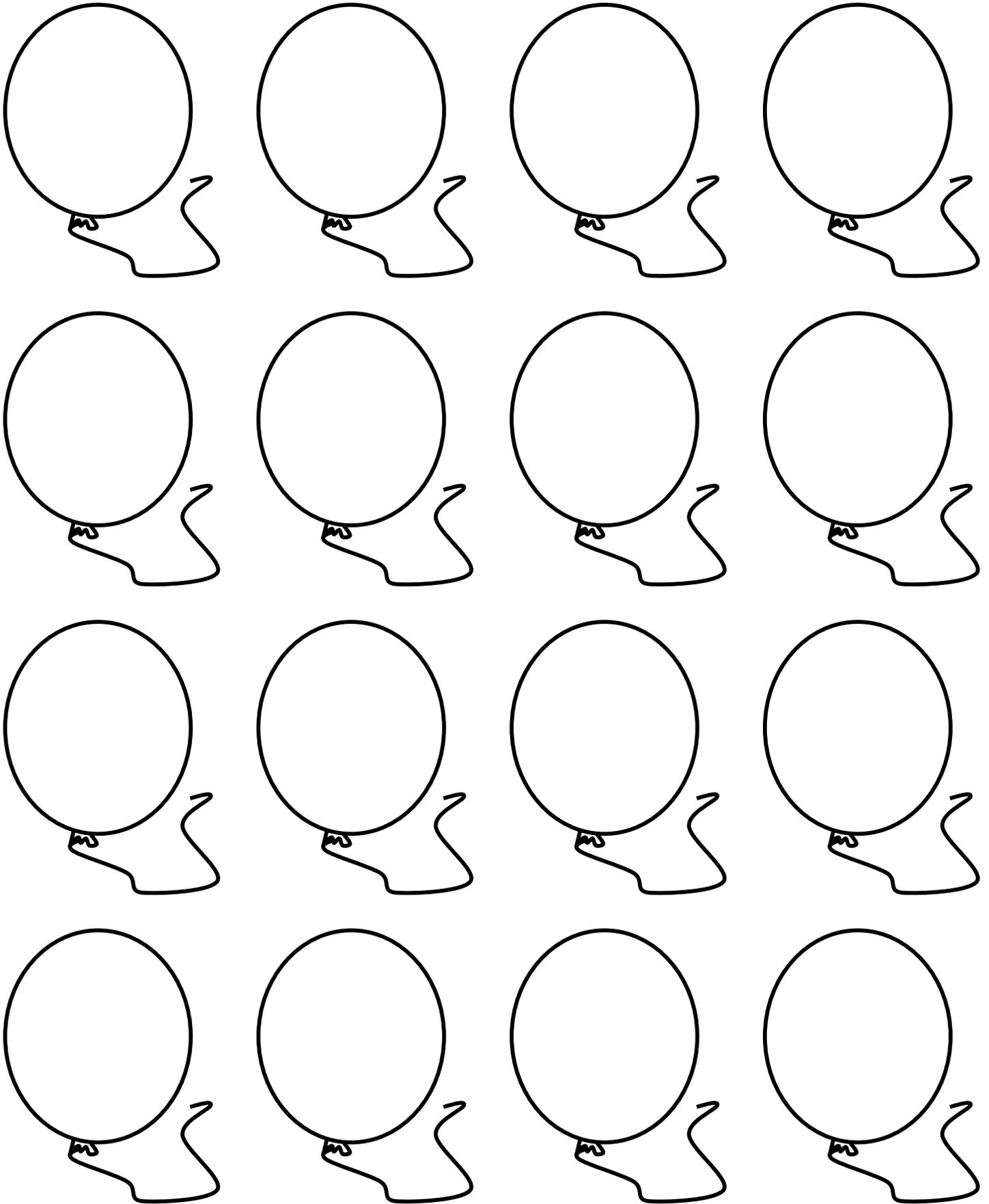
## CURTAINS UP ON MATH

### PAIRS AND PATTERNS

Jumpstart this activity with a discussion about what is a pair and what makes a pattern. Encourage students to find pairs and patterns around the classroom. Look for obvious pairs like shoes and socks and not-so-obvious pairs like scissors.

Provide each student with a copy of the Pairs and Patterns sheet and materials with which to color them. Give them time to color the lines of balloons in pairs and in patterns. Older student can be encouraged to design patterns for the balloons that include shapes and lines as well as color.

PATTERNS AND PAIRS



## **CURTAINS UP ON EXPRESSION**

DCT's production of *Balloonacy* is done with no dialogue or speaking at all. Actor Karl Schaeffer must tell a story using only his body movements and expressions. Use the following activity to help students understand non-verbal communication.

### **MIRROR, MIRROR**

Begin the activity by allowing students time to explore with full-length mirrors. Instruct them to watch themselves as they express different emotions through facial gestures and body language. Encourage them to use their whole bodies to express emotions such as surprise, joy, sadness, and anger. Extend the activity by dividing the class into pairs and have one member of the pair use non-verbal expression which the other names the emotion being expressed.

## **CURTAINS UP ON DRAWING**

You will need: Crayons, markers, or colored pencils  
Balloon Faces Master Worksheet

In DCT's production of *Balloonacy* we are able to 'read' the emotions of the balloon though it has no facial expression. How is this so?

What are facial expressions? What can we tell about a person's feelings by the look on their face? Are there some common features that express a particular emotion? What kind of feelings are expressed through a frown? A smile? A wide opened mouth or pair of eyes?

Think about the different feelings the balloon in the story may have felt and draw expression on the balloons in the worksheet to show how it may have looked with facial features to express those emotions.

## **CURTAINS UP ON MORE**

*The Red Balloon* – an Oscar-winning short film by Albert Lamorisse made in 1956 and still a classic today. It is available on DVD through the Criterion Collection and can be viewed on some streaming services.

*More stories about friendship:*

Toot and Puddle: You Are my Sunshine by Holly Hobbie

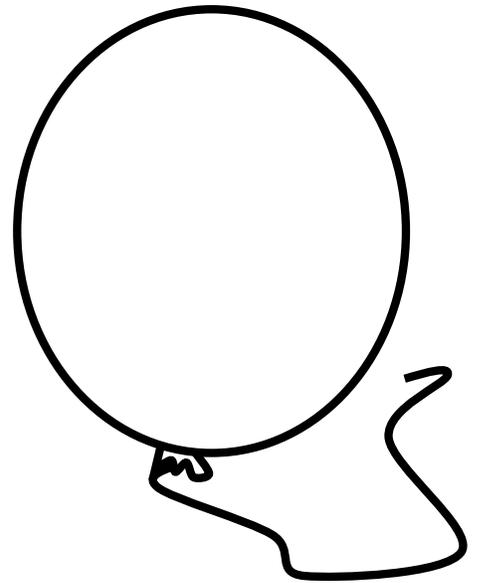
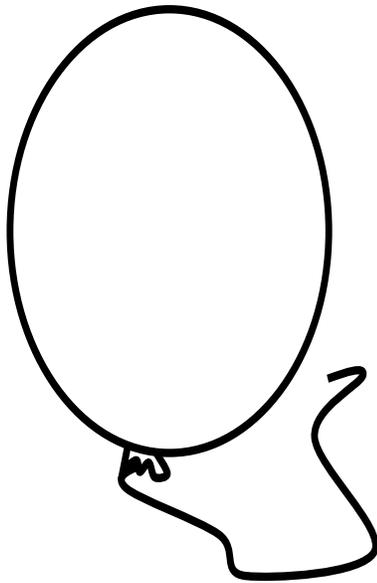
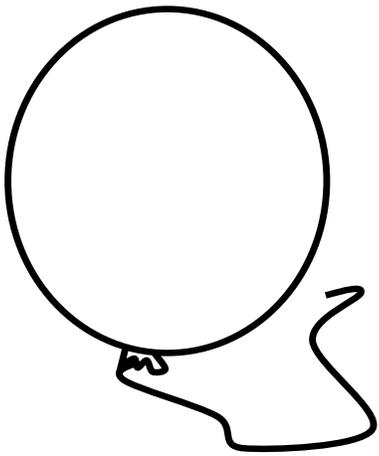
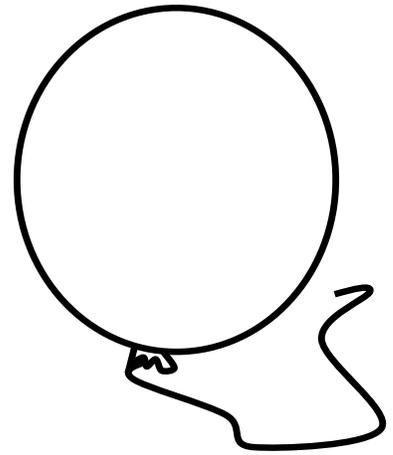
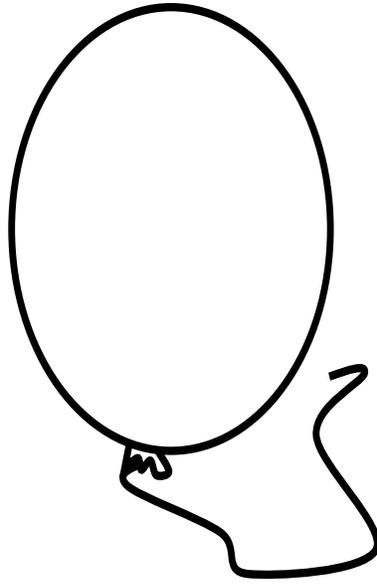
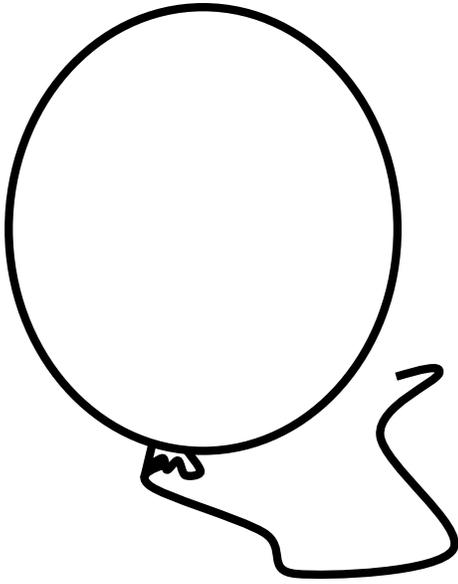
Days With Frog and Toad by Arnold Lobel

George and Martha: The Complet Stories of Two Best Friends by James Marshall

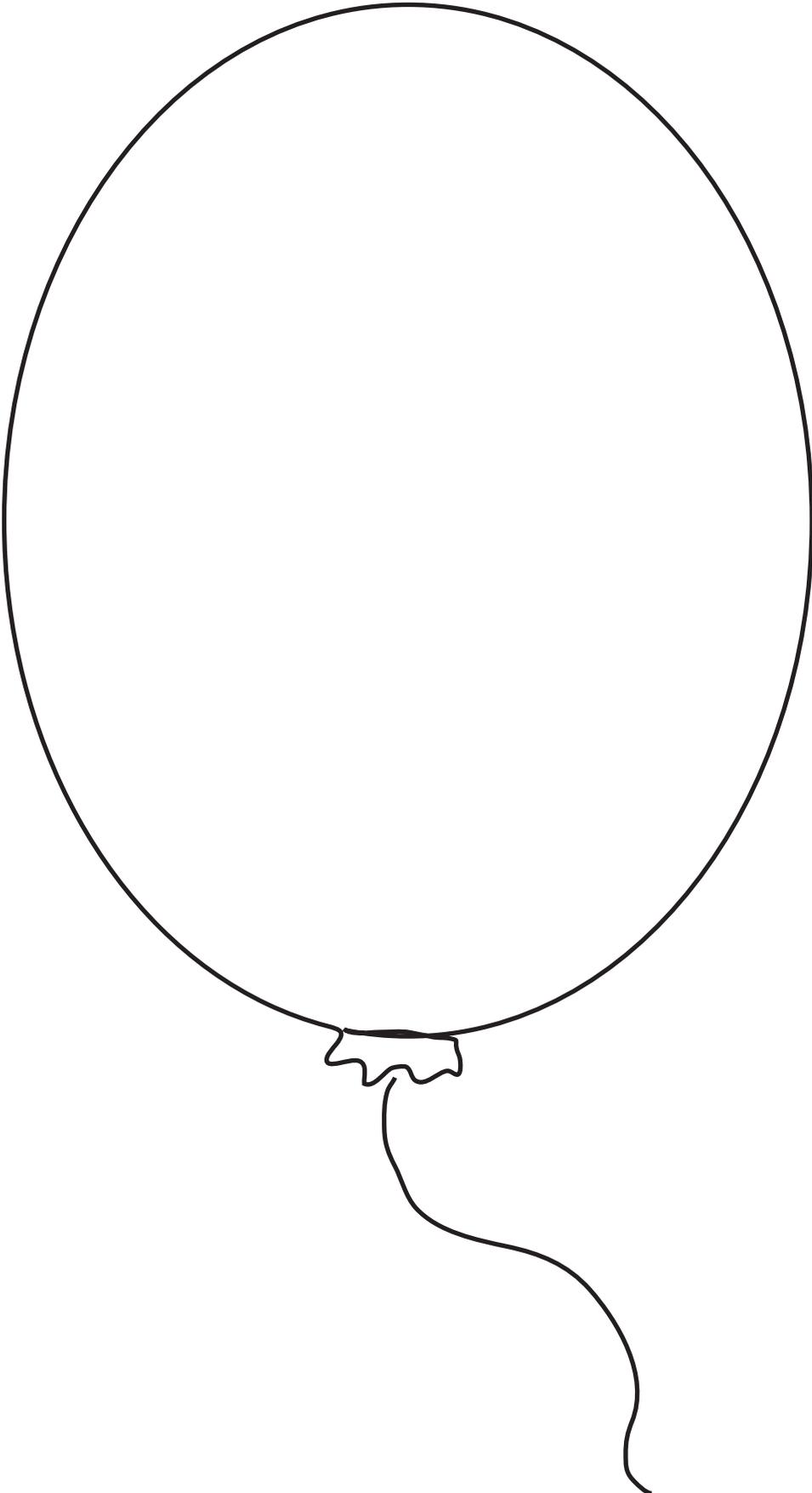
Best Friends for Frances by Russell Hoban

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi

BALLOON FACES



**BALLOON BLACKLINE MASTER**



## **T.E.K.S. satisfied by BALLOONACY**

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117.4 - Theatre, Kindergarten.

K.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Begin to identify appropriate audience behavior.

D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

117.7 - Theatre, Grade 1.

1.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify appropriate audience behavior.

D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

117.10 - Theatre, Grade 2.

2.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior.

D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.