

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A CREATIVE & THEATRICAL STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



Based on the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture
Adapted from the novel by Mountain Community Theater

AGES 4 AND ABOVE

DECEMBER 2 - 18 STUDENT MATINEE

NOVEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 21 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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PlayMIRACLE ON 34TH STREET
Based on the novel byValentine Davies
and the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture
Adapted byMountain Community Theater

Poster Art.....Kim Rae Lyle

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 pages 17 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 ADAPTATION

An adaptation is a change made in something so that it can fit a new use. This performance of *Miracle on 34th Street*, is an adaptation of the 1947 novel written by Valentine Davies, which is meant to be read, into a play, which is meant to be performed and viewed.

Consider these questions for discussion before you attend the DCT production:

- What kinds of things did the authors have to consider in writing a script of the story?
- Do you think the performance will be shorter or longer than a book version of the tale?
- What will the characters look like? Will they match illustrations you might have seen? What differences can you expect?
- What about the story? What changes might you expect in adapting it for the stage? Why would these changes be necessary?

After the performance, consider these questions:

- Were there any characters or events that were in the book but not in the play? Why do you think these choices were made?
- Did the changes make the story stronger or was it weaker because of them?
- What do you think the set and costume designers need to consider when bringing the book to the stage?
- What things helped to tell the story on stage?



Give it a try:

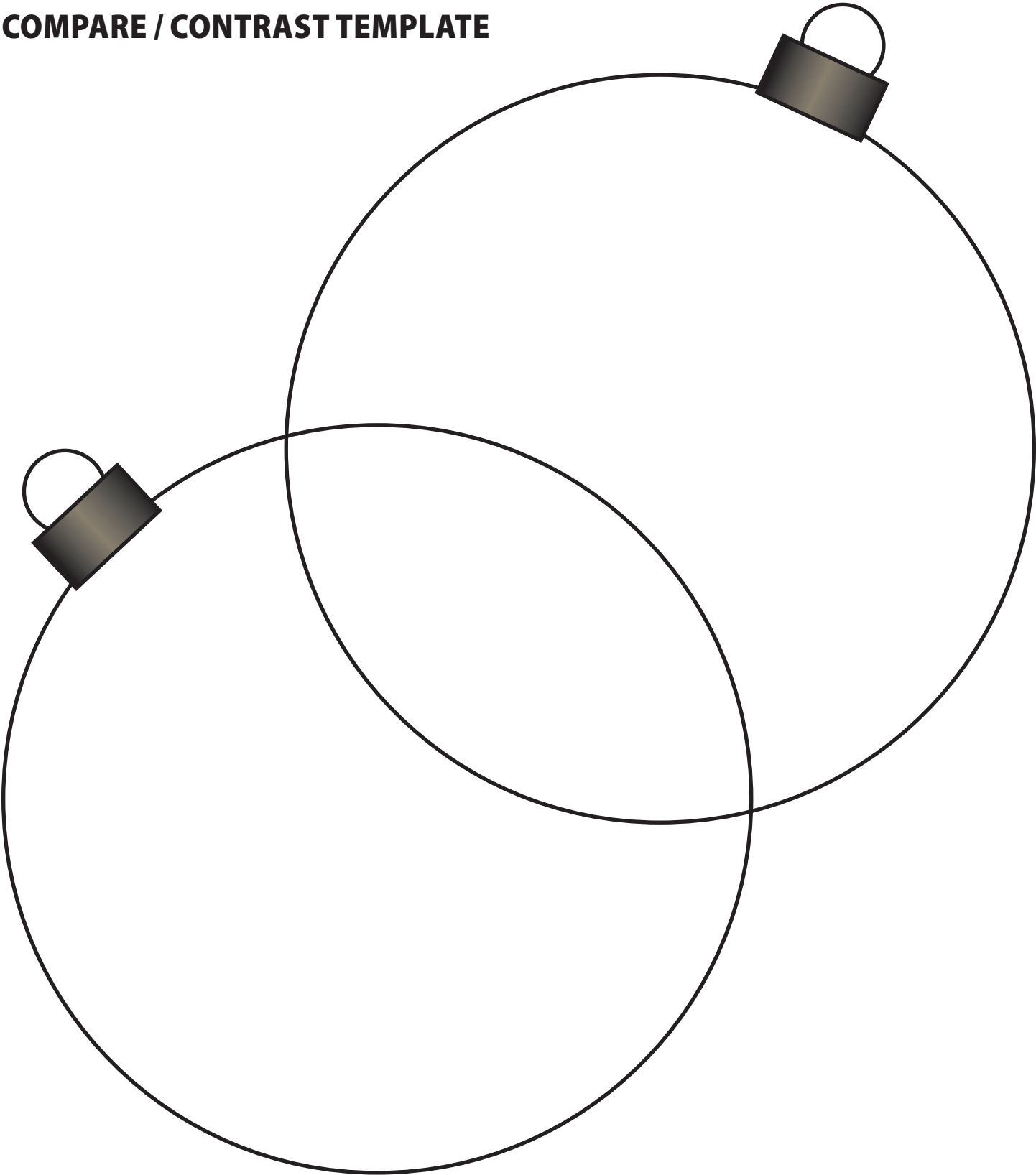
- Use the compare and contrast template on the next page to illustrate the similarities and differences between the book and DCT's performance of *Miracle on 34th Street*

CURTAINS UP ON THE AUTHOR



Valentine Davies was born August 25, 1905, in New York City. After graduating from the University of Michigan, he spent some time in the Coast Guard before moving back to New York, then Hollywood, to pursue a writing career. In 1947, Davies wrote the novel, *Miracle on 34th Street*, which became a movie the same year, earning the author an Academy Award for Best Original Story. He also wrote and directed *The Benny Goodman Story* (1956) and was nominated for another Academy Award for the screenplay of *The Glen Miller Story* in 1955. He died in Hollywood on July 23, 1961.

COMPARE / CONTRAST TEMPLATE



CURTAINS UP ON WRITING

"I therefore demand that Mr. Gayley submit authoritative and tangible proof that Mr. Kringle is the one and only Santa Claus!" –Ms. Mara

Mr. Gayley was able to provide the proof needed because of the extraordinary number of letters the Post Office delivered to Mr. Kringle in the courtroom. Use this activity to help students understand the process of writing a letter and sending it through the mail. You might even include a visit to the Post Office or invite a postal worker to your class.

A Letter to Santa

Every year children around the world write letters to Santa to request gifts. In the play, Susan writes her letter to 'cheer him up'. Do you think Santa might ever feel less than jolly? Why? Can you write a letter to Santa telling him things that will cheer him? Be sure to include a greeting, body, and complimentary closing in your letter.

CURTAINS UP ON IMAGINATION

"Do you know what imagination is, Susan? ...Imagination is a place you can go to. A very wonderful country. You've heard of nations like England and Russia and Japan? Well, Imagi-Nation is a place like that. And the wonderful thing about that country is, once you get there, you can do anything you want."—Kris Kringle

Imagine Your Own Nation

If you could design your own country, what would it be like? Would it have a warm climate? A cold climate? What are the people like? What foods might they enjoy? How about the plants and animals in your country? What are the land formations like?

Take time to consider these and other characteristics you'd like in your 'Imagi-nation' and complete the following activity:

Choose any way you'd like to describe your country to your class: write a description, build a model, draw a map or a scenic picture, become a character from the country and pretend you're being interviewed about your country, create a travel brochure or imagine another way to present your Imagi-Nation to your class.

CURTAINS UP ON SCIENCE

UP, UP, UP!

Macy's parade has been an annual Thanksgiving tradition since 1924 and one of its biggest attractions is the many character and novelty flying balloons. Designing, constructing, and flying the balloons along the parade route requires lots of workers and a whole lot of science and engineering!

Here are some fascinating facts about the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons:

- The balloons were initially constructed of rubber but now polyurethane fabric is used. Can you imagine why? Do a little research and check your hypothesis. Were you on the right track?
- The balloons are filled with a mixture of helium and air. Each balloon is divided into several chambers for safety in case a balloon area should spring a leak. The chambers are filled with helium and air in order to keep them inflated and to allow them to fly in upright positions. Which chambers do you think are filled with the highest concentration of helium? Which may have only air?
- The average balloon is filled with 12,000 cubic feet of helium which is enough to lift almost 750 lbs!



If the parade features 15 giant balloons and each balloon uses an average of 12,000 cubic feet of helium, how much helium would be needed to fly all of the balloons?

The Paul Frank "Julius" balloon weighs 400lbs. and needs 14,000 cubic feet of helium to lift it. If it takes .064 lbs. of helium to lift one cubic foot, how much lift is there where Julius flies? Subtract his weight and you will see how much 'free lift' there is when Julius floats along the parade route this year!

CURTAINS UP ON SOCIAL STUDIES

"Mr. Kringle, is it?" "Yes, that is one of the names I am called."

Imagine Your Own Nation

Santa Claus is known the world over by many different names. Use the following activity to learn more about how people all over the world view Santa and his legend.

Begin the activity by asking students what they know about the legend of Santa Claus. Where did Santa come from? How did the legend begin?

Divide the class into groups and provide each group with one of the following areas in which they should focus their research. Encourage them to use library sources as well as the internet.

Images of Santa Claus from around the world
Names by which Santa is known around the world
Customs associated with Santa Claus in different countries
Legends of Santa

Each group should research and report on their findings. You can post on a map of the world the different names by which Santa is known and create a display of Santa images in your classroom or hallway. Allow students to choose some of the customs they may not be familiar with and try them out as a class.



Here are some web resources your students may find helpful in their research:

<http://www.pimsleurapproach.com/blog/traditions/the-legend-of-santa-claus-around-the-world> Offers a list of names by which Santa is known around the world and brief descriptions of the custom and legends that surround him.

The St. Nicholas Center has information about the saint from around the world. Images included <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/around-the-world-2/>

<http://www.history.com/topics/christmas/santa-claus> The History Channel site on Santa Claus

Use the information gathered in a display for the classroom or hallway.

CURTAINS UP ON DISCUSSION

"Faith is believing in things when common sense tells you not to." –Fred Gayley

To Believe or Not To Believe; That Is The Question

Teachers please note: The following activity may only be appropriate for older students since it deals with the subject of believing in Santa Claus.

Fred Gayley accepts the challenge of proving in a court of law that Kris Kringle is the one and only Santa Claus. What sort of evidence is he able to provide? Mr. Kringle swears to tell the truth. How does he persuade the court that he is?

Are the actors in DCT's performance of Miracle on the 34th Street able to persuade you that it is better for Susan to believe in Santa Claus? How do they do this?

Consider the following question: Which is better, the lie that draws a smile or the truth that draws a tear? What are your thoughts?

Which character did you most agree with Doris Walker or Fred Gayley? Was your opinion challenged at any time in the performance? Was it changed?

T.E.K.S. satisfied by MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

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.

117.13 - Theatre, Grade 3.

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

A - Evaluate and apply appropriate audience behavior consistently.

D - Observe the performance of amateur and professional artists and begin to compare vocations in theatre.

117.16 - Theatre, Grade 4.

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

A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior at performances.

D - Compare theatre artists and their contributions.

117.19 - Theatre, Grade 5.

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

A - Analyze and apply appropriate audience behavior at a variety of performances.

D - Analyze and compare theatre artists and their contributions.