



CHILDREN'S THEATER

DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER ON TOUR
presents



Conceived by Gayle Cornelison
Written by Mary Hall Surface and
the original cast of the California Theater Center

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.

Dallas Children's Theater on Tour
BEHIND THE CURTAIN
A Creative & Theatrical Resource Guide for Teachers

Dallas Children’s Theater on Tour

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A Creative & Theatrical Resource Guide for Teachers

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Play MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

Conceived by Gayle Cornelison

Written by Mary Hall Surface and
the original cast of the California Theater Center

Director of Production Andy Long

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Special Note: On a few occasions in the play, the “n-word” is spoken by characters who are prejudiced against Jackie Robinson. The use of this word is intended to accurately represent the persecution that Mr. Robinson experienced, in keeping with the historical context. It is not meant to offend the audience in any way, nor is it meant to suggest to children that using the word is permissible. DCT advises using the opportunity to discuss with your students how those types of words, and the unfair treatment that Mr. Robinson faced, are unacceptable in our society.”

DALLAS CHILDREN’S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 270,000 young people from 100 zip codes, 40 cities and 12 counties each year through its eleven 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.

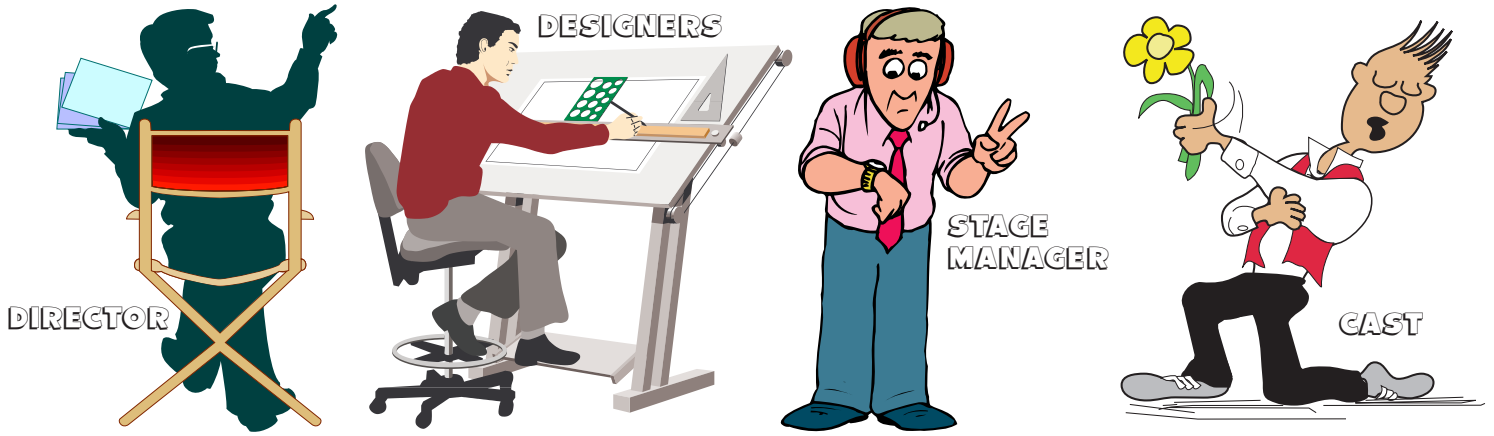
DCT is committed to the integration of creative arts into the teaching strategies of academic core curriculum and educating through the arts. Techniques utilized by DCT artist/teachers are based upon the approach developed in *Making Sense with Five Senses*, by Paul Baker, Ph.D.

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.

Permission is granted for material included in this Resource Guide to be copied for use in the classroom

Curtains Up On Putting Together A Performance

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 that you do not see who help before, during, and after every production.



Director

- Determines the overall performance “look” of the performance
- Guides the actors in stage movement and character interpretation
- Works with designers to plan the lights and sound, scenery, costumes and make-up, and stage actions

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.

Stage Manager

- Before the performance, creates a cuesheet to guide the crew in getting things on and off the stage during the performances
- During the performance, the stage manager uses this cuesheet to direct people and things on and off the stage at the proper times

Crew

- Build and operate the scenery, costumes, props, and light and sound during the performances

Cast

- Includes all of the performers who present the story on stage

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 DCT 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 because they share the room with you. 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.

- 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 entertainment experience. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story “as it happens”. Dallas Children’s Theater brings to life stories through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. Writers adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and on to the stage. Designers and technicians create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. Carpenters build 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 and make it happen before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs and tapes 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 with 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?



**GIVE IT
A TRY!**

- 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 what you liked about the 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? Acting, Directing, Lighting and Sounds, 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.

Most Valuable Player

Curtains Up on the Authors

Most Valuable Player is unique in that it was written by a group of individuals. The director of the California Theatre Center, Mr. Gayle Cornelison, conceived the idea for the show and Mary Hall Surface took the idea and wrote and developed the play along with the original company (members) of the CTC.

Consider a discussion of the merits of working together to create something. Look for comparisons between working as a team to write a play and working together as a team in baseball. What might Jackie Robinson have to say about Most Valuable Player and its creation?

Curtains Up on SOCIAL STUDIES

Most Valuable Player tells the story of Jackie Robinson, whose extraordinary determination helped win the fight against racial inequality and the prejudices that were prevalent in American society throughout his lifetime. Use the following activities before the performance to help your students understand the social and political injustices Jackie Robinson and other African-Americans faced.

*“The right of every American to first-class citizenship is the most important issue of our time.”
– Jackie Robinson*



**TEACHER'S
TIP**

Discuss the following words with your students. Provide dictionaries for students to clearly define the meanings of: **prejudice, discrimination, equality, and boycott.**

Why do you think people are prejudiced?

What do you think causes prejudiced thinking?

Do you think people can change their thinking? Why or why not?

Does discrimination still exist today?

What examples can you name?

What measures have we taken to protect American citizens from discrimination?

What forms does discrimination take beyond that of race?

Some of the St. Louis Cardinals threatened to boycott during the playoff game with the Dodgers because of Jackie Robinson's presence in the League.

What other significant boycott events in our history of civil rights can you name?

When is boycotting an effective method of resistance?

When would it be ineffective?

“Jackie, we’ve got no army. There’s virtually nobody on our side. No owner, no umpires, very few newspapermen. And I’m afraid that many fans may be hostile. We’ll be in a tough position. We can win only if we can convince the world that I am doing this because you’re a great ballplayer, and a fine gentleman.” - Branch Rickey, president and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers

Curtains Up on SOCIAL STUDIES (continued)

The Brooklyn Dodgers' president, Mr. Branch Rickey shared Jackie Robinson's frustrations about the inequalities and discrimination within the baseball league but he encouraged Jackie to "fight" using "passive resistance."

Use the following questions as a starting point for this activity.

What is passive resistance?

Why would Branch Rickey encourage Jackie Robinson not to fight back?

Why does it sometimes take more courage not to fight those who antagonize us?

Did the technique work for Jackie Robinson?

What finally influenced him to alter his approach in dealing with people who were against him?

USE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Allow students to work as a class and list other American citizens who worked peacefully to effect a change in our social or political systems. Assign small groups the task of researching and gathering information to present to the class. Provide each group a copy of the outline list for preparing their presentations:

Include the following in your group report:

- I. Visual Presentation: provide a collage, a power point presentation, video, or other video representation of your subject. Use photos, words, drawings, and other images to capture the essence of the person you have researched.
- II. Audio Presentation: use music or vocal images to create a "soundtrack" to your presentation. Be creative!
- III. Written Presentation: prepare a written report describing your subject and his or her influence on America's (or the world's) social or political systems. Use the following questions to help you in your research.
 - In what ways did your subject's life affect his/her desire to work for change?
 - What actions did your subject take to work for change?
 - What similarities and differences did you find between the life and example of your subject and those of Jackie Robinson?

Curtains Up on WRITING

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Imagine you are a sports journalist assigned to cover the National League playoffs between the 1947 Brooklyn Dodgers and St. Louis Cardinals. You have an exclusive interview with Jackie Robinson before the game. Write a list of questions you would like to ask him then write an article about the game based on what you learned at DCT's performance of MVP.

Try taking it one step further and read some articles from the late 1940's. Examine the language usage and write your article using similar terminology and structure.

What's In a Phrase?

Choose one of the following statements made by Jackie Robinson and write your reaction to it. What do you believe is meant by the statement? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not?

"There's not an American in this country free until every one of us is free."

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

"How you played in yesterday's game is all that counts."

Poetry in Motion

"There was never a man in the game who could put mind and muscle together quicker than Jackie Robinson."
-- Branch Rickey

Write a descriptive poem about Jackie Robinson using the knowledge you've gained from the show. The following format will help you.

JACKIE ROBINSON
Provide a noun describing him
Add two adverbs
Add three adjectives
Rename the subject with a noun

Center your poem on a sheet of paper and use decorative illustrations before displaying it in the classroom.

Curtains Up on ART

Create a multimedia collage of images that depict either the history of racial inequality in our country or the development of baseball as "America's Pastime". Use a variety of media- pencil, crayon, pastels, chalk, paint, photographs and other print media.

Display the collages in the classroom or hallway and allow your students time to study and reflect on them.

Curtains Up on MATH

Sabermetrics is the official term given to the analysis of baseball through objective evidence, particularly baseball statistics. The term was coined by Bill James and is derived from SABR, which is an acronym that stands for the Society for American Baseball Research.



**GIVE IT
A TRY!**

Distribute baseball cards to students and discuss what the statistics on the cards mean. Then use the following formulas to determine the statistics based on hypothetical situations.

Batting Statistics

Batting average is determined by dividing the number of base hits by the total number of at bats.

On-base percentage is determined by dividing the total number of hits plus walks plus hits by pitch by at bats plus walks plus hits by pitch plus sacrifice flies.

Slugging percentage is found by dividing the total number of bases of all base hits by the total number of times at bat.

Try using sabermetrics to objectively analyze Jackie Robinson's career.

Jackie Robinson's Career Stats

Games (G): 1382

At-Bats (AB): 4877

Runs (R): 947

Hits (H): 1518

Doubles (2B): 273

Strike Outs (SO): 291

Triples (3B): 54

Home Runs (HR): 137

Walks (BB): 740

Runs Batted In (RBI): 734

Hits By Pitch (HP): 72



Diamond Math

The ball field itself is a mystic creation, the Stonehenge of America. - Roger Kahn in *A Season in the Sun* (1997)

Make copies of the baseball diamond layout sheet (page 12) for use with these activities:

Using the measurements on the layout sheet, determine how long it would take runners to make it to first, second, and third base at varying speeds.

What is the distance between second base and home plate?

How long would a runner need to make a double play if he ran 5 mph?

Investigate the Pythagorean theory and determine its application to the baseball diamond.

What other geometric figures are included in the design of a baseball diamond?

Curtains Up on HISTORY

Use the following facts to create a timeline of integration within Major League Baseball.

- 1845- Alexander Cartwright codifies the rules of baseball.
- 1867- The National Association of Baseball Players rejects the all-black Philadelphia Pythians from joining the league.
- 1876- The first major baseball league is formed and named The National League.
- 1878- Bud Fowler becomes the first African-American to cross the color barrier in organized baseball but he is shuffled between various teams until 1884.
- 1883- Moses "Fleet" Walker joins the minor league as a catcher and in 1884 he became the first black major league player when he joined the American Association Toledo Blue Stockings.
- 1887- In July, the International League bans future contracts with black players. By 1899, there were no black major league players left.
- 1901- In an attempt to break the color barrier, Baltimore Oriole manager John McGraw adds Charlie Grant to the team roster under the name Chief Charlie Tokohamato. His plan fails because fans recognize Grant because he was a prominent player on an all-black team.
- 1920- On February 14, Rube Foster organizes eight teams in the first black professional baseball league, the Negro National League.
- 1947- April 15- The Brooklyn Dodgers integrate with Jackie Robinson, July 15- The Cleveland Indians integrate with Larry Doby, July 17- the St. Louis Browns integrate with Hank Thompson and Willard Brown.
- 1959- On July 21, the Boston Red Sox sign Pumpsie Green and become the last major league team to integrate.

Use your timeline to consider the following:

For decades, baseball has been considered "America's Pastime" and is used as an example in phrases like "Baseball, Mom, and Apple Pie". In what way does the history of baseball's integration mirrored that of other areas of our society?

What role do sports play as an example for the larger society?

What role has baseball played in American culture over the years? What influence does it continue to have?

How has baseball been incorporated into American movies, literature, music, and advertising?

Real Characters/ Real People

The characters in *Most Valuable Player* are based on people who really were a part of Jackie Robinson's life. Use the internet and your library to find photographs and biographical information on some of the other characters in the play: Branch Rickey, Pee Wee Reese, and Leo Durocher. You might also be interested to find information on Jackie Robinson's younger brother who came in second to Jesse Owens in the Olympics! See what you can find out on your own.

CURTAINS UP ON MATH
Baseball Diamond Layout Sheet

