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ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of the Potato People in "School Daze." The guide, called a "Cuesheet," contains seven pages of reproducible activity sheets for use in class with activities and discussion questions on the following topics: (1) Meet the Characters (introducing students to what characters are, and who they are; and including some puppet activities; (2) New Experiences (helping students relate the theme of new experiences to their own lives); (3) The Three "M"s: Mime, Music, and Masks (how actors communicate to the audience the meaning of the play using mime, music, and masks); (4) Mime Time (with activities for students to explore mime through group mime, narrative pantomime, a sound and mime story, and discussion questions); and (5) Playing Your Part (about attending a performance and the audience's role). Resources are listed for further exploration. (SR)

"The Potato People in School Daze": Presented by
Theatre Beyond Words. Cue Sheet for Students.

by Rachel Briley

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The Potato People in School Daze

presented by
Theatre Beyond Words

Welcome to *Cuesheet*, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed to be used before and after attending a performance of *The Potato People in School Daze*.

Look for a picture of a

potato next to activities and discussion questions.

What's in Cuesheet?

Meet the Characters, page 2

New Experiences, page 3

The Three "M"s:
Mime, Music, and
Masks, pages 4-5

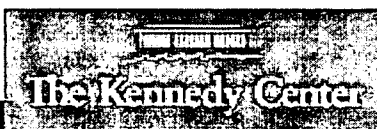
Mime Time, pages 6-7

Playing Your Part,
page 8

Resources, page 8

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3



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Meet the Characters

What are characters? Characters are people in the play that the actors will pretend to be. Here are some of the characters (called Potato People) in *School Daze*:



Nancy Potato



Momma Potato



The Teacher



Ina-Mae O'Naise
(IN-uh-MAY oh-NAY-zee)
Nancy's classmate

Before the Performance

Why do you think the characters in this play are called potato people?



Puppet Activities

These character pictures can be used to make puppets:

1. Photocopy this page.
2. Cut out each picture.
3. Glue each picture to a piece of cardboard and cut it out again.
4. Glue or tape each piece of cardboard to a popsicle stick. This is the puppet's handle.

After the Performance

How much of the play's story can you remember? Use your puppets to retell the story as you remember it. Compare stories. Create new adventures for the characters by inventing your own story.

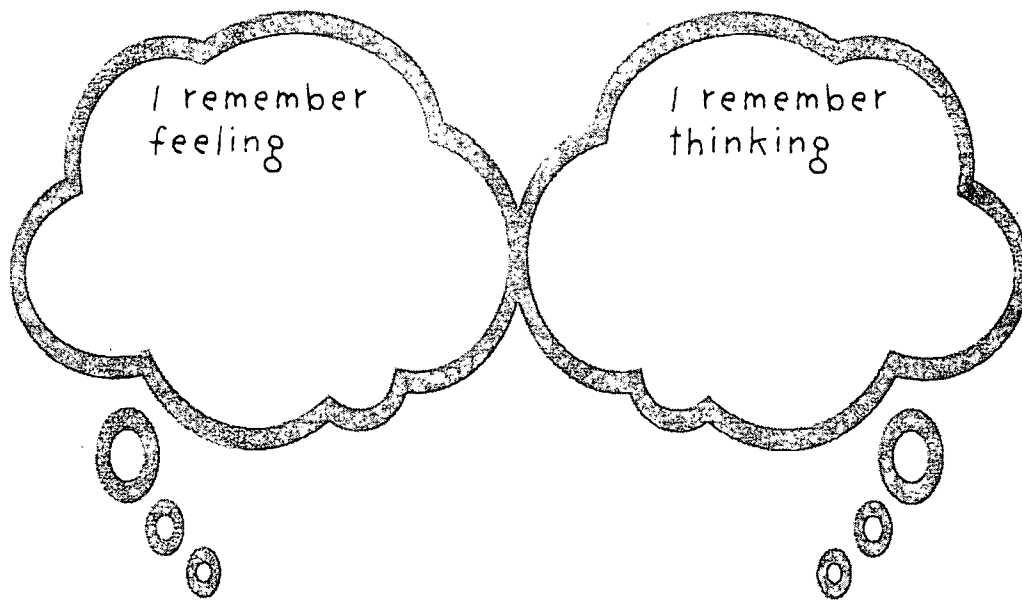
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New Experiences

The play is about Nancy Potato's first day of school. She meets new friends, learns about sharing, and plays all day! But it is not so easy for Momma Potato. She has a hard time letting Nancy go. So, she follows her to school!



Draw a picture of a new experience for you. It could be your first day of school, the first time you tried out for a play or a team, the first time you played in a recital, or any "first time" you remember. Were you scared? Excited? Confused? A little bit of everything? In the clouds above your picture, write some of the feelings and thoughts you remember having. Share your pictures and words with your classmates.



The Three "M"'s

Mime, Music, and Masks

Theatre Beyond Words is the name of the company that performs *School Daze*. Theatre Beyond Words performs "visual theater." Without using any words, the actors communicate to the audience the meaning of the play. They use mime, music, and masks.

Mime

Mime is a silent form of theater. Mime actors tell stories without using any words.

traditional—handed down from generation to generation

contemporary—of the present time

sets—all the items on stage that show the setting of the play (for example: classroom walls, book shelves, windows)

sound effects—recorded sounds or sounds created by performers to emphasize or add to the meaning of stage actions (for example: a slamming door, a police siren, running water, or a thunderstorm)

scene—a division or part of a play

Traditional Mime: An actor with a white-painted face performs without using words, props (objects), or special costumes. With only body, hands, and face, the actor uses movement and gesture to show feelings, things, experiences, and environments.

Contemporary Mime: Costumes, props, and **sets** are used in mime performances to help tell the story. Sound, and sometimes even spoken words, are used with the "body language" of mime. Theatre Beyond Words performs Contemporary Mime.

Before the Performance

Try the mime activities on pages 6–7. Notice how easy or difficult it is for you to communicate without using words.

After the Performance

List four reasons why you could tell that Theatre Beyond Words performs contemporary, not traditional, mime. Compare and discuss your lists with other students.

Music

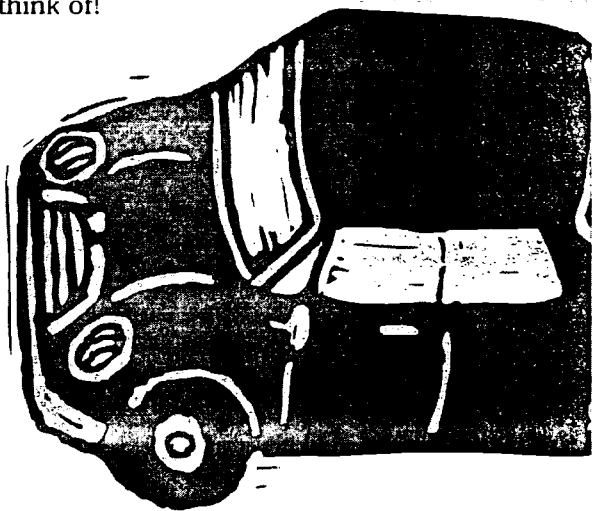
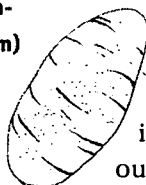
In *School Daze*, music and sound effects are important. They give you information about the characters' feelings and actions. All the music is recorded, but the **sound effects** are both recorded and live. After the play is written and rehearsed, the length of each **scene** is timed. The music and sound effects are then planned to fit with the mimed actions of the scene. This takes a lot of practice.

During the Performance

Listen for all the sound effects and music in the performance. What information does each sound give you about what happens on stage or off stage? What information does a sound give you about the way characters are feeling? Listen for car horns honking, the school bell ringing, and the toilet flushing. What other sounds do you hear?

After the Performance

Try to re-create some of the sound effects you heard in the play. You may use your voice, hands, body, rhythm instruments, paper, pots, pans, spoons, rocks, sand, dry macaroni, dry beans or peas, Velcro, zippers, straws, water in a plastic container, or anything you can think of!



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Masks

Masks have a long history in the theater. They were used 2,500 years ago in ancient Greece, and they are still used by actors today. The Potato People masks are made from **papier-mâché**. They are known as **'Basel'** (BAY-zul) masks because they originated in Basel, Switzerland.

Theatre Beyond Words leaves its masks white. This allows shadows from the stage lighting to create expressions on the masks. All the actors in *School Daze* wear Basel masks.

papier-mâché—a substance made of flour, water, glue, and paper. It is molded into shape when wet, and becomes hard when it dries.

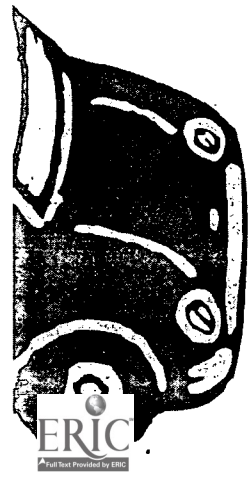
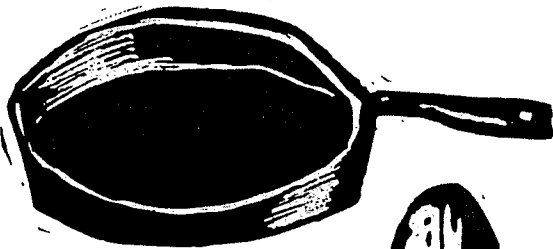
Basel—a city in northwest Switzerland on the Rhine River. During the annual winter carnival in Basel, townspeople buy masks, paint them, and wear them.

After the Performance

How did you feel about the Potato People's white masks?
How did the white masks require you to use your imagination?



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Mime Time

Activity: Silent Communication.

Can you "talk" without using words? Without using words, say:

Yes!	Stop!	It's over there.	I'm angry!
No!	I'm cold.	You are safe!	I'm sleepy.
Come here!	I'm hot.	You are out!	I'm sad.
Go away!	I'm hungry.	I don't know.	I'm happy!



Activity: Group Mime

Practice silent communication as a team.

Directions: **1** Copy each of the following phrases on a slip of paper. **2** Fold each slip of paper so that the phrase cannot be seen. **3** Form teams of four or five students each. **4** Each team picks one slip of paper. Open the paper and look at the phrase. Do not show your phrase to the other teams! **5** Each team practices "miming" the phrase written on their slip of paper.

6 Each team "performs" their phrase for the rest of the class (the audience). **7** The audience tries to guess the phrase. (Note: If the audience guesses your team's phrase quickly, you have done a great job!)

8 Create your own phrases and try this activity again.

The phrases:

"Look before you leap!"

"Hold your horses!"

"Slow as a snail."

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched!"

"April showers bring May flowers."

"Don't put all your eggs in one basket!"

"Every cloud has a silver lining."

"A rolling stone gathers no moss."

"The early bird gets the worm."

"A stitch in time saves nine."

"People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."



Activity: Narrative Pantomime

This activity will give you practice pantomiming actions in a story. You will also match sound effects to actions in the story.

Directions:

First time: **1** Form groups of five students: One person is the narrator, two people are the sound effects team, and two people are the mime artists. **2** The narrator practices reading "A Sound and Mime Story" at right. **3** The sound effects team creates sounds to match **each bolded action**. **4** The mime artists use their bodies and faces to act out the story. (All members of the group should experiment with new and different ways of communicating.) **5** All group members come together to practice, matching the sound effects and narration to the mimed action. **6** Each group performs its version of the narrative pantomime for an audience of classmates. **7** Switch roles and try it again!

Second time: **1** Form groups of seven students. **2** Follow the directions above, but this time add a music team (two students).

Third time: **1** Form groups of six students. **2** Two people are the sound effects team, two people are the music team, and two people are the mime artists. There is no narrator. **3** Act out the whole story without a narrator reading the words.

Fourth time: Perform the story again without a narrator, but this time the mime artists wear masks.

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A Sound and Mime Story

Nicky and Jamie were late to meet their friends. Nicky came *rushing down the stairs* with Jamie right behind, and they ran out the front door together. Jamie *slammed the door closed*. Brrrr! It was chilly out—the *wind was blowing so hard* that all the leaves on the trees seemed as though they would tear right off. They quickly *zipped up their jackets* and *started running up the sidewalk*. Just as they were about to reach the top of the hill, it *started to rain*—gently at first, then *harder and harder*. A storm was brewing! There was lightning and *thunder* and before they knew it, *hail was pounding down*. It was *landing on all the car roofs, the houses, the glass windows and the trees*. Nicky saw an empty tool shed in the neighbors' yard. It was the perfect place to hide out from the storm, but they had to *climb the rusty, old, creaky fence* to get to it. Nicky made it over the fence. Jamie's *pant leg* got caught on one of the wires

sticking out of the fence. It *ripped from the top of the knee all the way down to the bottom of the shin*. Jamie pulled and pulled at the pants and finally got over the fence. They ran together *through the mud* into the safety of the tool shed.

Discussion Questions

Which presentation (First, Second, Third, Fourth)...

...did you enjoy creating the most?

Why?

...did you enjoy watching and listening to the most? Why?

...was the easiest to understand? The hardest? Why?

How did groups express the same action or event differently?

How did adding sound and music make you feel? Did it help or hurt in communicating the idea of the story?

After the performance, discuss how participating in this activity helped you understand the work of the theater artists in *School Daze*.

Sound Effect Materials

voices

bodies

hands

rhythm instruments
(wood blocks, sticks,
cymbals, maracas, etc.)

paper

comb

Velcro

pots

pans

spoons

zippers

cardboard

rice in a can

beans in a can

pen that clicks

Music Materials

voices (hum, sing, whistle)

kazoos

recorders

slide whistles

drums

rhythm instruments

any musical instruments

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Playing Your Part

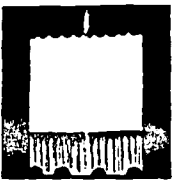
Use this key to read about attending a performance. You might want to try to mime the directions. Use your bodies (not your voices!) to show how audience members play their parts during and after a performance.



watch



listen



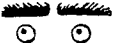

performance




audience



clap

When you  and 

to a , you are


part of the 


The  is an important


part of the . To hear all

the sounds and see all the actions,



the  must  and

 carefully. If you talk, you and

other people in the 

will not be able to .

When the  ends, you may

 for the .

Resources

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