

BUGS & BALLOONS in "THE LIZARD OF OZ"

The shows by BUGS & BALLOONS are created to entertain our audiences while we share our love of the arts ... sculpture, costuming, dance, story-telling, creative dramatics, and minimal theatre (represented by our balloons). This study guide is designed to introduce our company, present a synopsis of the story line, and offer suggestions for classroom activities.

Annie Hickman and Allynn Gooen formed BUGS & BALLOONS soon after they met in the late 1980's.

* For the previous ten years Annie had combined her training and talents in sculpture and dancing with her interest in the world of nature and created her solo shows: All American Bug Show and Weaving the Wild that toured schools, theatres, and festivals around the country. She also made costumes for the Muppets, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Off-Broadway productions, and a number of event/party companies.

* Meanwhile, Allynn gave up working puppets with the world famous Bil Baird's Marionettes as well as teaching college theatre, speech, and broadcasting courses to create his own original theatre using balloons to form his sets, costumes, and props. On television, he has appeared on Shining Time Station, Nickelodeon, and Fred Penner's Place. He has performed his solo show - Goowin's Balloowins - at festivals, theatres, corporate meetings, and various events... wherever his high-energy zaniness is called for.

* Individually they have both performed throughout the US and in Australia, Japan, and Canada. Since joining forces their performances have taken them to China, Singapore, France, and Bali.

Synopsis:

Dorothy and her dog Toto find themselves in the Land of OZ. To return home they must find the Great Lizard of Oz but are pursued by the Evil Witch. Along the way they are joined by the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodsman, and the Lion whom are all hoping for help from the Lizard as well.

Format:

Audience volunteers are chosen, dressed in balloon costumes, and then play almost all of the parts. As Allynn plays storyteller and director, the children enact the story and interact with Annie (who plays the tornado, the yellow brick road, the witch's castle, and the Lizard of Oz).

Recommendation before the show:

Make sure the students know the basic story of the Wizard of Oz. They can enjoy the show without knowing the original story, but this is a spoof and they will enjoy it more if they recognize the fun turns we're taking with the story.

Activity #1:

Many "journey stories" have the same basic structure:

- 1) Something is missing, stolen, or lost and happiness needs to be restored
- 2) A hero gets special tools or weapons (often from a magician or wise person) and follows the quest
- 3) The hero overcomes several dangers or challenges
- 4) The hero succeeds and happiness is restored

Divide the class into groups of 2-4 and have them create a story with this format...it can be as complicated or as simple as they like ... it can be set in the past, the present, or the future. Have the groups present their stories to the class:

- 1) Read it
- 2) Perform it as a puppet show
- 3) Present it as a storyboard or comic book
- 4) Enact it

Activity #2:

Have the children take a story they know, change one word in the title, and create a new fun story.

Activity #3:

Have the children write us letters of what they thought about the show.

Activity #4:

Have the children draw pictures of their favorite creatures in the show.

Activity #5:

Have the children draw pictures of costumes they'd like us to make out of balloons.

Activity #6:

Take some books out of the library about making masks or costumes and make some.

Send letters and pictures to:

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