

StoryMakers

Professional Touring Theater for Young People

ONCE UPON A TIME...IN FLORIDA

Written and Directed by Don Butler



Student Study Guide

*We got some tales for tellin',
Some are tall and some are true,
But we won't tell you which is which,
We'll leave that up to you.*

Six actors, using the lively Story Theater form, bring folktales and history to life in a way you've never seen before. With storytelling, pantomime music and drama, the talented cast transforms an empty stage into a castle and a hut, battlefield and a graveyard – even a roaring hurricane. Just bring your imagination and the invisible will become visible, revealing fascinating slices of Florida's past.

In *Once Upon a Time In Florida*, you'll learn about...

- ❖ A Uzita Indian girl, a young Spanish explorer and the true story that became "Pocahontas",
- ❖ Florida's part in the Civil War,
- ❖ Florida's early settlers and how they *might* have come to be called "Crackers",
- ❖ And Henry Flagler and his magnificent railroad.

Program

Prologue (Song: “Tellin’ Tales”)

Story One: “The Animals and the Bird Scarer”

(Song: “The Graveyard Blues”)

This tale is a composite of several Native American legends that seek to explain how three animals came to look the way they do today. A fox, a possum and a rabbit set off to steal some corn from land occupied by a Great Spirit. Disguising himself as a scarecrow or “bird-scarer”, as the Indians called them, the Spirit teaches the naughty animals a lesson they will never forget.

Story Two: “The Real Pocahontas?”

(Song: “The Conquerors”)

Some historians believe Captain John Smith “borrowed” the story of Pocahontas’ saving his life from a report of something that actually happened in Florida 80 years earlier. In this story, Juan Ortiz, a young soldier serving with the Spanish explorer Panfilo de Narvaez, is captured by the Uzita chief Hirrihugua. Hirrihugua hates the Spanish because they killed his mother and cut off his nose. The chief’s daughter, Ulele, believes the young Spaniard is a good man and begs her father to spare his life. When her father decides to torture Juan by having him cooked over hot coals, Ulele talks him out of it. (Is this story starting to sound familiar?)

Story Three: “Cracker Jack”

(Song: “Jackie Boy”)

Although there are many explanations, no one really knows for sure where the term “cracker” came from. Adapting one of the many classic “Jack Tales”, we offer our slapstick version of how the term came to be.

Story Four: “Incident at Olustee”

(Son: “Word Goin’ Round”)

On February 20, 1864, at a place called Ocean Pond (near Jacksonville), the Union Army was defeated by the Confederate Army. The Yankees were pushed back until they occupied only the territory east of the St. John’s River. The Battle of Olustee, as it’s now called, ensured that Florida was not brought back into the Union until the war ended. In this scene, we see the courage and kindness, cruelty and injustice that are all part of war.

Story Five: “Uncle Henry”

(Song: “Work All Day/Let the Hurricane Blow”)

This final story is about Henry Morrison Flagler, who co-founded Standard Oil with John D. Rockefeller. It tells how this wealthy industrialist fell in love with a swampy peninsula and then did what almost everyone thought was impossible: he built a railroad that opened up Florida to the world.

Finale: (Song: “Once Upon a Time”)



The Story On Story Theater

So what's the story on Story Theater? What is it and where did it come from? Story Theater was the idea of a man named Paul Sills whose mother was a famous acting teacher named Viola Spolin. She is called the mother of improvisation. Improvisation is when actors work without a script and usually take suggestions from the audience and then make up a play or scene right on the spot without using sets, costumes or props.

Paul Sills took this idea and developed it into what we call Story Theater. Although what you see on stage has been rehearsed and the actors have used a script, a lot of what they do comes through playing theater games and improvising on fairy tales, folk tales or just about any good story. The magic of Story Theater happens when the actors use what we call "space objects". They simply "find" an object in the air and make you see it. When the actors believe that what they are doing is real, and that the things they are using are real, then suddenly, they are. When the actors can "see" the invisible and "touch" the invisible, like magic, it becomes visible and you can see it too. But they have to believe so that you can believe.

The best thing about this kind of theater is that you are limited only by your own imagination. So, if you want to be in a castle, well then, go there! If you want to ride a horse, then saddle up! Fly that plane! Grab a ball! Sail that ship! There is nothing to stop you. And if you really see it—really believe it—others will too. Go ahead. Give it a try! It's fun. It's magic. It's Story Theater.

Definitions:

Folklore is any of the beliefs, customs and traditions that people pass on from one generation to another. Ballads, fairy tales, folktales, legends and myths are folklore.

Folktales are often stories of animals that act like humans and live in a world of wonder and magic. Most of them have a message or moral or explain natural phenomena, such as where the sun goes at night.

Legends are fictional stories associated with a historical person or place.

Trick Question:

The term “cracker” comes from:

- A) A Celtic word meaning “braggart” or “loudmouth”
- B) The practice of “corncracking” or grinding dried corn for use as grits or meal
- C) The sound of whips used to drive cattle and oxen
- D) An Appalachian folk tale

(Answer: It’s anybody’s guess!)

Before the Performance:

- ✚ Read some American folktales, like the Native American or African American trickster tales or stories about folk heroes like Paul Bunyan. Write a summary or book report of your favorite story.
- ✚ Interview members of your family to discover what folklore they might know of that they can pass on to you. Record your findings and share what you learn with your class.

After the Performance:

- ✚ How does the story of Ulele and Juan Ortiz differ from the story of Pocahontas and John Smith? How are they similar? Compare and contrast the two stories.
- ✚ Who were the Uzita Indians? When and where did they live? What happened to them after the arrival of European explorers in Florida?
- ✚ Was the Battle of Olustee the only Civil War battle in Florida? Find out which army controlled which parts of the state and what part Floridians played in the war.
- ✚ What was it like to be one of the early European settlers in Florida? What dangers and hardships did they face? How did they adapt to the environment?
- ✚ Learn more about Henry Flagler. Why was the building of his railroad through Florida and to the Keys so important?

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: MU.3.H.2.1, MU.4.H.2.1, MU.5.F.2.2, SS.4.A.1.1, SS.4.A.3.1, SS.4.A.5.1, SS.4.A.6.3, TH.3.S.1.1, TH.4.S.1.1, TH.5.S.1.3

Suggested Reading:

Native American Animal Stories, as told by Joseph Bruchac, illustrated by John Kahiones Fadden

Kids During the Age of Exploration, by Cynthia MacGregor

A Land Remembered, Childrens’ Edition, Volumes 1 & 2, by Patrick Smith

If You Lived at the Time of the Civil War, by Kay Moore, illustrated by Anni Matsick

The Yearling, by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

Henry Flagler: Builder of Florida, by Sandra Wallus Sammons



Places to See:

In 1902, Henry Flagler built a beautiful mansion, “Whitehall”, for his wife, Mary Lily Kenan. Today, it’s a National Historic Landmark and is open to the public as the Flagler Museum. The Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, One Whitehall Way, Palm Beach, FL, 33480
561-655-2833 • www.flaglermuseum.us



Loxahatchee River Historical Society operates the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, the Loxahatchee River Historical Museum and the Dubois Pioneer Home – all great places to visit!

Loxahatchee River Historical Society
805 North U.S. Highway One
Jupiter, FL, 33477
561-747-6639 • www.lrhs.org

Resources & Reference Materials

Scholastic’s “Myths, Folktales and Fairy Tales” Online Teacher’s Guide

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/index.htm>

Polk County School Board’s “Teaching American History with a Florida Flavor”

<http://www.polk-fl.net/staff/teachers/tah/tahfloridaflavor.htm>

Battle of Olustee and the Olustee Battlefield Site and Reenactment website

<http://battleofolustee.org/>

“Who Goes There: European Exploration of the New World”, a website created by students at Bartlett Elementary School in Michigan

<http://library.thinkquest.org/J002678F/>

Florida Cracker Country

<http://www.crackercountry.org/>

The Henry Morrison Flagler Museum

www.flaglermuseum.us