

The Remember Balloons

Learning Guide



Illustrated by Dana Wulfekotte

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The Remember Balloons Learning Guide written by Emily Kamwesa.
Produced by Dominic and Ashley Moore-Dunson.



Dear Teachers,

I am both excited and deeply honored that you have chosen to bring your child(ren) to experience *The Remember Balloons*. This show holds a special place in my heart, as it was born out of my own family's journey with Alzheimer's disease. I often wish that a show like this had been present for my family, as it would have provided a tool to initiate some of the more difficult conversations and emotions everyone faced.

With this in mind, we created *The Remember Balloons* not only to introduce families and young people to positive and appropriate ways to engage in those difficult conversations but also to immerse them in the whimsical and joyful world of storytelling. Our show is filled with moments that encourage the audience to dance, move, and laugh, offering a sense of playfulness and wonder. We believe it's essential to balance the more challenging themes with extreme moments of joy and fun, so your child(ren) will experience a full range of emotions—just as life itself offers.

To support you in preparing your young audience members for the performance, we have developed an education and resource package. I encourage you to explore the "Invisible Mom Guide," which is designed to help you prepare your children for a specific emotional section of the performance called *Invisible Mom*. We believe that this guide will be an invaluable tool in ensuring that your child(ren) can fully engage with the story in a way that is both thoughtful and supportive.

In addition, there are a number of materials, ear marked for grade levels, to prepare your students to recognize elements of narrative and abstract storytelling through dance.

Thank you once again for trusting us with your time, energy, and most importantly, your child(ren) in this theater experience. We look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Warm regards,

Dominic Moore-Dunson
Creator, Director & Choreographer of *The Remember Balloons*



Know Before You Go

Length of Performance

Duration: Approximately 45 minutes, w/ optional Q&A

Storytelling and Content

"The Remember Balloons" combines dance, pre-recorded music, narration and visual projections to tell its story. The performers dance and use physical movements to express their characters feelings.

What the Performance Portrays:

The performance explores themes of love, joy, loss, grief and family connection, particularly in the context of Alzheimer's disease. It highlights the impact of these themes on families and the importance of sharing memories and supporting one another.

Sensitive Themes

**Please be Advised*

The performance includes themes related to Alzheimer's disease and memory loss. It is presented with sensitivity, but some content may evoke strong emotional responses, particularly for those who have personal experience with the themes presented.



Performers and Presentation

Actors/Costumes/Multiple Roles: Three dancers play multiple characters. To become different characters, they change costumes, their facial expressions, and how they move their bodies. Dancers tell stories with their bodies not their words.

Sound and Music

Music: The performance features a range of musical styles, including blues, jazz, classical and the Motown sound, creating rich soundscapes that complement the story.

Character Expressions: Some characters may express themselves through audible vocal expression.

Sensory Information

Be aware approx. 30mins into the show there is a section called "Cacophony," which involves intense soundscapes, and technicolor flashing stage lights. This may be overwhelming for some attendees, so please consider this when preparing your group. Please note while stage lights will be flashing there are NO strobe lights.

About The Show

“...an approachable, energetic blend of contemporary and social dance -- picture the leaps, turns, and leg extensions of late American modern dance combined with whimsical storytelling and the boogie down moves of living room dance parties and backyard cookouts.”

Short Synopsis

James's Grandpa has the best balloons because he has the best memories. He has balloons showing Dad when he was young and Grandma when they were married. Grandpa has balloons about camping and Aunt Nelle's poor cow. Grandpa also has a silver balloon filled with the memory of a fishing trip he and James took together. But when Grandpa's balloons begin to float away, James is heartbroken. No matter how hard he runs, James can't catch them. One day, Grandpa lets go of the silver balloon—and he doesn't even notice!

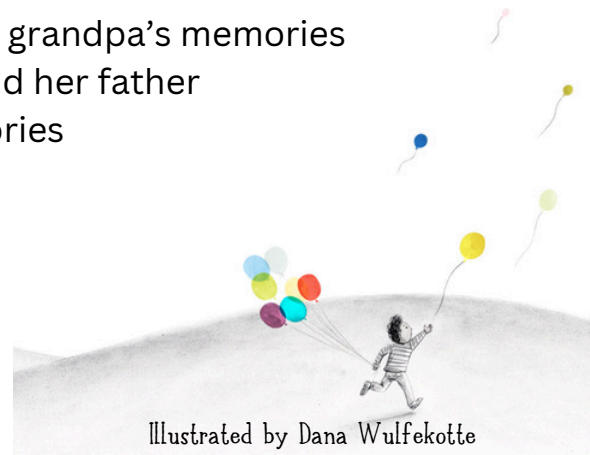
Grandpa no longer has balloons of his own. But James has many more than before. It's up to him to share those balloons, one by one.

Characters

James- a curious young boy who wants to learn about his grandpa's memories

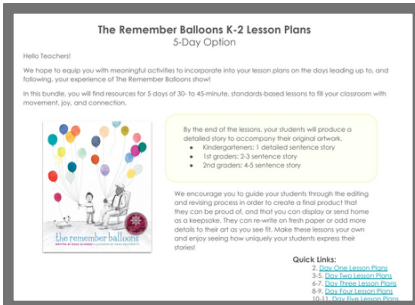
Mom- a parent figuring out how to take care of her son and her father

Grandpa- a fun loving elderly man who is losing his memories



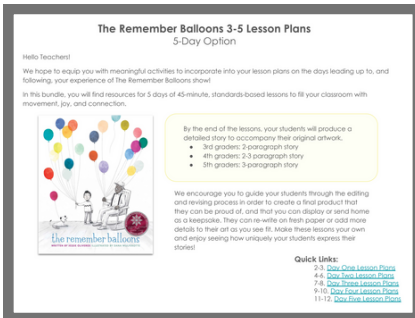
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Lesson Plans



K-2 Lesson Plans

(click link above)



3-5 Lesson Plans

(click link above)



All Grades Invisible Mom Guide

(click link above)

The lesson plan packages for The Remember Balloons meet education and national arts standards, including reading comprehension, creative writing, arts & crafts, and storytelling.

The content is differentiated in several ways. First, it is broken up into 2 age groups - Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade. Within K-2 lessons, student worksheets are further differentiated for Kindergarteners. For each age group, there are various options based the amount of time available.

At the heart of each option is an expressive art and writing project that allows students to creatively share their favorite memory and actively engage with their classmates' memories.

vocabulary

Show's Key Concepts

Memories	are like special pictures in our mind that help us remember people, places, and fun times we've had.
Alzheimer's Disease	is a disease that causes people to forget names, places, and how to do things, making daily life harder.

Storytelling Tools

Choreography	is creating dance moves and patterns for a performance. It's like making a dance story with steps and music.
Music Composition	is creating new songs or pieces by choosing notes, rhythms, and sounds to tell a story or express feelings.
Video Projection Design	involves creating videos to show on large surfaces, using images and effects to help tell a story during a performance.
Lighting Design	uses lights to create moods and focus on different parts of a performance, helping to tell the story and set the scene.



What is Alzheimer's?



Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking, and behavior. Symptoms eventually grow severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.

Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other cognitive abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life.

Alzheimer's is not a normal part of aging. The greatest known risk factor is increasing age, and the majority of people with Alzheimer's are 65 and older. Alzheimer's disease is considered to be younger-onset Alzheimer's if it affects a person under 65.

Alzheimer's worsens over time. Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, where dementia symptoms gradually worsen over a number of years. In its early stages, memory loss is mild, but with late-stage Alzheimer's, individuals lose the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to their environment. On average, a person with Alzheimer's lives 4 to 8 years after diagnosis but can live as long as 20 years, depending on other factors.

The most common early symptom of Alzheimer's are difficulty remembering newly learned information. Just like the rest of our bodies, our brains change as we age. Most of us eventually notice some slowed thinking and occasional problems with remembering certain things. However, serious memory loss, confusion and other major changes in the way our minds work may be a sign that brain cells are failing.

Alzheimer's changes typically begin in the part of the brain that affects learning. As Alzheimer's advances through the brain it leads to increasingly severe symptoms, including disorientation, mood and behavior changes; deepening confusion about events, time and place; unfounded suspicions about family, friends and professional caregivers; more serious memory loss and behavior changes; and difficulty speaking, swallowing and walking.

People with memory loss or other possible signs of Alzheimer's may find it hard to recognize they have a problem. Signs of dementia may be more obvious to family members or friends. Anyone experiencing dementia-like symptoms should see a doctor as soon as possible.

Resources: Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Foundation of America

Bios



Dominic Moore-Dunson (Producer, Director, Choreographer)

Dominic Moore-Dunson, one of Dance Magazine's 2023 "25 to Watch," is an award-winning choreographer, professional dancer, producer, and teaching artist. Dominic is the co-owner of MooreDunson Co., a performing arts production company housing national touring arts + entertainment products and local arts community impact initiatives. MooreDunson Co. is committed to Urban Midwest Storytelling, a style of presentation capturing the juxtaposition between the beauty and hopelessness of humanity. Known for his community-centric approach, Dominic is a champion of community engagement in dance and entrepreneurship.



Theron Brown (Composer, Arranger, Music Director)

A glimpse of gospel, jazz, and soul from the great legends is what inspires the sound of pianist Theron Brown's music. But the reason he plays is to encourage and influence people through his talents. Originally from Zanesville, OH, Theron resides in Akron, OH, where he is a Professor of Practice at The University of Akron, teaching jazz piano, and is the Program Coordinator for Curated Storefront's Artist Residency Program at the city's I Promise School. Theron also serves as an educator for the interactive piano learning app, Playground Sessions. Theron is heavily involved in the music community as the founder and artistic director of the Rubber City Jazz & Blues Festival.



Jessie Oliveros (Author of The Remember Balloons)

Jessie Oliveros is the author of THE REMEMBER BALLOONS, which won the 2019 Schneider Family Award Honor Book for Young Children and the 2019 Golden Kite Award for Picture Book Text. Her book was also named one of Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best Books and to the Kids Indie Next List. She grew up in Kansas and now makes more happy memories in San Antonio, Texas with her husband and their five children. www.jessieoliveros.com



Dana Wulfekotte (Illustrator of The Remember Balloons)

Dana Wulfekotte is a children's book author-illustrator and animator. She was born in Korea, grew up in New Jersey, and now lives in New York with her husband and two rabbits. She is the author-illustrator of Rabbit & Possum and Peanut Gets Fed Up, and has illustrated several books, including the Schneider Family Honor book The Remember Balloons. Visit her online at www.danawulfekotte.com.



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Invisible Mom Guide

Reflection Questions

Question 1: How do you know when you're upset?

Question 2: How do you find comfort when you're upset?

Question 3: How do you know when someone else is upset?

Question 4: What are ways you can comfort someone when they are upset?

