

**StoryMakers: Professional Theater for Young Audiences
Touring Company**



Performance Guide

An Original Play by Don Butler
Lyrics by Mary Stucchi and Don Butler

Director
Don Butler

Associate Director
Mary Stucchi

Cast
Quinn Doyle
Gustavo Garcia
Carley George
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Scenic Artist
Katie Fredrickson

Costume Designer
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Welcome to **StoryMakers'** production of ***Chasing Our Tales: A Play on Words!***

This original Theatre for Young Audiences play explores the fascinating origins of familiar idioms or expressions such as *turn a blind eye*, *butter someone up*, and many more. Through humor, physical storytelling, and folktales from around the world, students discover how language evolves while exploring timeless lessons about courage, empathy, perseverance, responsibility, and creative thinking.

The production is presented using Story Theater, an exciting theatrical style where actors transform into many different characters using only their voices, bodies, imagination, and a few simple theatrical elements.

This guide provides classroom activities before and after the performance to deepen students' understanding while supporting Language Arts, Social Studies, Theatre, and Skills for Learning & Life Resiliency standards.

StoryMakers

Chasing Our Tales: A Play on Words

Recommended Grade Levels: 3-5

Suggested Curricula: Language Arts, Social Studies, Theater, SLL

Standards: ELA.3.F, ELA.3.R, ELA.3.C, ELA.3.V, HE.3.R.1, HE.3.R.2, HE.3.R.3, HE.3.R.4, SS.3.A, SS.3.G, SS.3.E, SS.3.CG, TH.3.C, TH.3.S, TH.3.O, TH.3.H, ELA.4.F, ELA.4.R, ELA.4.C, HE.4.R.1, HE.4.R.2, HE.4.R.3, HE.4.R.4, SS.4.A, SS.4.G, SS.4.E, SS.4.CG, TH.4.C, TH.4.S, TH.4.O, TH.4.H, ELA.5.F, ELA.5.R, HE.5.R.1, HE.5.R.2, HE.5.R.3, SS.5.A, SS.5.G, SS.5.E, SS.5.CG, TH.5.C, TH.5.S, TH.5.O, TH.5.H, TH.5.F

Chasing Our Tales is a play on words, which is appropriate since it really is a *play...on words*. We'll learn where a lot of phrases we use every day come from and we'll *monkey around* with a *mad hatter* (not the Alice one) and we might even *butter you up*. Or tell a tale or two about a tail or two. So come on, *bite the bullet*, *break the ice* and *let your hair down*. You can learn a lot of life skills if you don't *turn a blind eye* while we're ***Chasing Our Tales!***



Tales

“The Stone in the Road”
English folktale
(SLL) Civic Responsibility

“The North Wind”
Nordic folktale
(SLL) Courage, Empathy, Justice,
Perseverance, Trust

“Tops and Bottoms”
English folktale
(SLL) Responsibility, Rewards of Hard Work,
Perils of Laziness

“The Edge of The World”
Irish Folktale
(SLL) Appreciating What You Have, Dangers of Selfishness,
Making the Most of Your Opportunities, Self-Awareness

Mini-Tales

“Horatio Nelson – Turn a Blind Eye”
“Butter Someone Up”
“Spilling the Beans”

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’s 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 myths, 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.

As You Watch the Performance, Look For

See if you can spot these Story Theater techniques during the performance:

1. Third-Person Narration – Actors often describe their own actions before acting them out.
2. Multiple Characters – One actor may play several different roles throughout the performance.
3. Space Objects – Invisible props and scenery created through movement and imagination.
4. Minimal Scenery – Actors create entire worlds using only their voices, bodies, music, and a few simple theatrical elements.
5. Ensemble Storytelling – The actors work together to tell each story, supporting one another through movement, narration, song, and sound effects.
6. Imagination in Action – The audience becomes part of the storytelling by imagining the world the actors create.

In Story Theater, the audience isn't just watching the story—they help create it. Every time you imagine an invisible object, believe a character's adventure, or picture a magical place, you become part of the storytelling.

Chasing Our Tales Supports Florida Skills for Learning & Life (SLL) framework

The SLL framework teaches students social-emotional and character competencies. Required by Florida law, the curriculum focuses on resilience, responsible decision-making, relationship building, and mental health. Schools integrate these traits into daily routines through Core Competencies. Students are taught self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and critical problem-solving skills to boost academic performance and workforce readiness. The District rotates monthly themes/topics such as Responsibility, Grit, Empathy, Perseverance, and Citizenship. These competencies represent life skills that build confidence, support mental and emotional health, and enable youth and adults to overcome challenges.

Before You See the Show

More Than Folktales: Chasing the Origins of Everyday Expressions

While each folktale explores an important life lesson and character virtue, the fun doesn't stop there! Between stories, the StoryMakers ensemble takes audiences on a playful journey into the surprising origins of familiar words and expressions we use every day.

Through comedy, music, audience interaction, and Story Theater techniques, the actors investigate how language evolves over time by exploring the colorful histories behind common idioms and phrases. Students will discover that many expressions have fascinating stories of their own—some historical, some humorous, and all memorable.

Throughout the performance, students will encounter the following phrases:

- Butter Someone Up
- Turn a Blind Eye
- Spilling the Beans

As the performers "chase" these expressions between folktales, students will strengthen their understanding of figurative language, expand their vocabulary, and discover that words often carry rich histories that connect language, culture, and storytelling.

These engaging interludes make ***Chasing Our Tales*** an ideal companion to classroom instruction in idioms, figurative language, vocabulary development, and oral communication.

During the Performance

Encourage students to notice:

1. How many characters each actor plays.
2. When actors narrate instead of speaking as characters.
3. How actors create scenery without sets.
4. How music helps tell the story.
5. Which idioms are mentioned.
6. Which stories teach important lessons.

After the Performance

Discussion Questions

Story

1. Which tale was your favorite?
2. Why?
3. Which character changed the most?
4. Which story surprised you?

Language

1. Which idiom was new to you?
2. Which phrase do you hear most often?
3. Why do you think languages create idioms?

Story Theater

1. How did actors become different characters?
 2. What imaginary objects did actors pretend to use?
 3. How did narration help tell the story?
 4. Did you miss having elaborate scenery? Why or why not?
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Skills for Learning & Life

1. Which character showed perseverance?
 2. Which character solved a problem creatively?
 3. Which story taught kindness?
 4. What lesson can you use in your own life?
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Classroom Activities

Language Arts Idiom Detective

Students interview family members.

Ask:

"What expressions do you say all the time?"

Create a classroom Idiom Wall.

Research meanings.

Illustrate literal and figurative meanings.

Write Your Own Idiom

Students invent a brand-new idiom.

Examples:

"Don't untie the rainbow."

Then explain:

- What does it mean?
 - When would someone use it?
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Folktale Comparison

Compare two tales.

Discuss:

1. Setting
2. Characters
3. Problem
4. Solution
5. Moral

Use a Venn Diagram.

Social Studies

Stories Around the World

Discuss:

1. How geography influences stories.
2. Why animals appear in folklore.
3. Why cultures preserve traditions.

Students locate each country on a map and identify one interesting fact.

Theatre Activity

Story Theater Challenge

Small groups perform a familiar fairy tale using Story Theater techniques.

Rules:

1. No props.
 2. Everyone narrates.
 3. Everyone plays multiple characters.
 4. Use movement and sound effects.
 5. Perform in under five minutes.
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Creative Writing

Choose one prompt.

1. Tell the story from the North Wind's point of view.
 2. Explain the origin of a brand-new idiom.
 3. Write a dialogue between two idioms.
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Vocabulary

Students should know:

character	dialogue	ensemble
folklore	folktale	homograph
homonym	homophone	idiom
improvisation	mime	moral
narrator	pun	setting
synonym	theme	

Critical Thinking

1. Why do people tell stories over and over?
 2. Can a story belong to more than one culture?
 3. Why do idioms survive for hundreds of years?
 4. What makes imagination powerful in theater?
 5. How is live theater different from movies?
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Extension Challenge

Create your own Story Theater performance.

Students adapt a favorite classroom story using:

1. narration
2. ensemble acting
3. multiple characters
4. sound effects
5. songs
6. movement
7. imagination instead of props

Reflection

Complete one sentence.

1. I learned...
 2. I was surprised that...
 3. My favorite character was...
 4. One lesson I will remember is...
 5. One idiom I will start using is...
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Teacher Notes

Chasing Our Tales celebrates literacy by demonstrating that words carry history, stories preserve culture, and imagination transforms simple ideas into extraordinary adventures. Presented through the dynamic Story Theater form, the production encourages students to become active listeners, creative thinkers, collaborative artists, and curious readers. By connecting folktales from diverse traditions with the colorful idioms students encounter every day, the performance reinforces that language is both a practical tool and a living art form—one that continues to grow through storytelling, music, and shared human experience.

Florida Standards Connections

Chasing Our Tales — Folktales, Character Education & Resiliency

Folktale	Primary Lesson	Primary Character Virtue	Florida Resiliency Skills	Florida Standards Connections
The North Wind (Norway)	Honesty and perseverance help us overcome disappointment and adversity.	Perseverance	Emotional regulation, persistence, responsible decision-making, problem-solving	ELA: ELA.3–5.R (Theme, Character Development), ELA.3–5.C (Discussion & Reflection), ELA.3–5.V (Vocabulary) HE: HE.3–5.R.1–R.4 TH: TH.3–5.O, TH.3–5.H
The Stone in the Road (England)	Responsible citizens take initiative instead of waiting for someone else to solve the problem.	Civic Responsibility	Self-management, initiative, civic responsibility, goal setting	ELA: ELA.3–5.R (Theme & Moral), ELA.3–5.C (Speaking & Listening), ELA.3–5.F HE: HE.3–5.R.1–R.4 SS: SS.3–5.CG, SS.3–5.A TH: TH.3–5.H

Folktale	Primary Lesson	Primary Character Virtue	Florida Resiliency Skills	Florida Standards Connections
Tops and Bottoms (England)	Careful planning, creativity, and hard work lead to success.	Responsibility	Critical thinking, planning ahead, perseverance, learning from mistakes	ELA: ELA.3–5.R (Compare Characters & Plot), ELA.3–5.C (Writing & Discussion), ELA.3–5.V (Academic Vocabulary) HE: HE.3–5.R.1–R.4 TH: TH.3–5.O, TH.3–5.S
The Edge of the World (Ireland)	Opportunities and happiness are useless if you lack the awareness to recognize them.	Self-Awareness	Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making, and Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving	ELA: ELA.3–5.R (Author's Purpose & Theme), ELA.3–5.C (Reflection), ELA.3–5.V (Figurative Language) HE: HE.3–5.R.1–R.4 SS: SS.3–5.G, SS.3–5.A TH: TH.3–5.H, TH.5.F

How *Chasing Our Tales* Supports Florida B.E.S.T. ELA Standards

Through storytelling, music, dialogue, and audience engagement, students will:

ELA.3–5.F – Foundational Skills

- Build oral language fluency through listening to expressive narration and dialogue.
- Develop vocabulary through idioms, figurative language, and repeated phrases.
- Strengthen comprehension by connecting spoken language to meaning.

ELA.3–5.R – Reading

- Identify themes, morals, and central ideas in traditional folktales.
- Analyze characters' motivations, choices, and growth.
- Compare and contrast folktales from different cultures.
- Recognize story structure, setting, conflict, and resolution.
- Interpret figurative language, including idioms and expressions.

ELA.3–5.C – Communication

- Participate in collaborative discussions before and after the performance.
- Support opinions with evidence from the stories.
- Retell events in sequence using appropriate vocabulary.
- Write reflections, comparisons, and original stories inspired by the performance.

ELA.3.V – Vocabulary

- Determine the meanings of unfamiliar words through context.
- Explore the origins and meanings of common idioms.
- Distinguish between literal and figurative language.
- Expand academic and content-specific vocabulary related to theater, folklore, and storytelling.

Teacher Tip

Because ***Chasing Our Tales*** is centered on **idioms, figurative language, folktales, and oral storytelling**, it naturally reinforces several of the most emphasized Grade 3–5 ELA skills:

- Determining theme and central idea
- Understanding figurative language and idioms
- Analyzing characters and their choices
- Comparing texts from different cultures
- Building vocabulary through context
- Speaking and listening collaboratively
- Writing narrative and reflective responses

This alignment makes the production an excellent cross-curricular resource that integrates **English Language Arts, Theatre, Social Studies, and Florida's Resiliency Education Standards** into one engaging arts experience.

Please also add that in between stories, the players on stage will explore the origin of various phrases such as Buttering Someone Up and Turning a Blind Eye.

Theater Etiquette

Live theater is different from watching television.

Good audience members:

1. Listen carefully
2. Watch respectfully
3. Laugh when something is funny
4. Applaud to show appreciation
5. Stay seated unless invited to participate
6. Silence electronic devices

Actors can see and hear the audience!

Your attention helps create a wonderful performance.

Resources

These are published examples of other renditions of the timeless folktales brought to life on stage in ***Chasing Our Tales***:

“The Stone in the Road”

Bennett, William. *The Moral Compass*. Simon & Schuster, 1995.

“The Girl and The North Wind”

Snapp, Gwendolyn. *The Girl Who Called The North Wind*. Lulu.com, 2015.

“Tops and Bottoms”

Stevens, Janet. *Tops & Bottoms*. Harcourt Brace, 1995.

“The Edge of The World”

Holt, David and Bill Mooney, editors. *More Ready-to-Tell Tales from Around the World*. August House, Inc., 2000.

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