



# Crabgrass Puppet Theatre

## Study Guide for

# The Pirate, the Princess & the Pea

**CRABGRASS PUPPET THEATRE'S** shows are aimed at educating as well as entertaining our audiences. School performances include a demonstration of the puppets and techniques we use. This study guide provides background information about the show and suggestions for classroom activities.

### **SYNOPSIS**

The show begins with the misadventures of the pirate, who is trying to sail the ship all by himself. His mates have left the ship to go into different careers, and the pirate misses them, “though they smell so vile and rank.” He is trying to get to a deserted island, hoping for a chance at one more treasure hunt. Meanwhile, a princess sails in on a raft and gets to the island first. They both follow clues on the treasure map, unaware that there is anyone else on the island. Once they meet – surprise! – they each deny looking for treasure, and pretend to be on the island for something else. The princess sends the pirate off with a fake clue, and leaves after she finds the next real clue: “the treasure’s close, or so I’ve heard, but you must ask the pirate’s bird.”

The pirate soon discovers the real clue, and it’s a race to find the pirate’s bird! The princess knows exactly what to look for, but the parrot is not cooperating. The pirate comes up with more and more ridiculous birds, none of which will speak to him. The princess finally catches up with the parrot, who tells her that the treasure is under the pirate’s ship. Terrific! Off she goes to swim to the bottom of the ocean . . . except that her princess dress has a built-in flotation device and she can’t stay under the water for more than a second! “I

need some different clothes,” she thinks, and tricks the pirate into switching clothes with her. But how can she get rid of him long enough to find the treasure? She insists that he prove that he is a “real pirate.” She uses the tried-and-true “Princess and the Pea” method and gets him to sleep on a pile of mattresses. While he sleeps, she swims down into the ocean in her new pirate clothes.

But the princess isn’t the only one on the ocean floor . . . an octopus chases her away from the treasure and grabs her just as she surfaces. Pirate to the rescue! The pirate saves the princess, the octopus attacks the pirate, the princess saves the pirate! They escape the octopus and work together to bring the treasure chest to the island.

“I’ve been waiting for this my whole life!” the princess says. “So have I,” agrees the pirate. They open the treasure chest, and inside they find –

Oh, come on, you didn’t really think we were going to give away the ending, did you?

### **WHERE DO WE GET OUR IDEAS?**

In our show, “The Pirate, the Princess and the Pea,” we use some elements from Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale, “The Princess and the Pea.” Why did we do this? Well, we were ready to do a new show, and were looking around for ideas. Someone told us we should do a show about pirates. We laughed at that, but then we thought, “hmmm. Maybe we SHOULD do a show about pirates.” We started with the pirate sailing his ship to a deserted island to find treasure. But this is theater, and with theater, you need conflict – there

has to be something or someone keeping the pirate from what he wants. Otherwise the pirate gets to the island, he looks for the treasure and finds it. Pretty boring show, don't you think? So, how about a princess? She could be looking for the treasure, too. And she has to get the pirate out of the way so she can get to it first. How does she do that? Maybe she makes him "prove" that he's a real pirate. And she remembers what she had to do to prove she was a real princess . . .

That gives you an idea of how we come up with some of the stuff in our shows!

## ABOUT THE PUPPETS

**HAND PUPPETS** have the most direct control of any type of puppet; your fingers and hand are not moving a rod or string that *then* moves the puppet, they are moving the puppet directly. Our hand puppets have two fingers in the head, two fingers in one arm, and the thumb in another arm.

**ROD PUPPETS** are moved from below or behind with rods (sticks). The sea monster, the octopus, and the pirate who climbs on top of the mattresses are all rod puppets.

**SHADOW PUPPETS** are two-dimensional (flat) figures that are placed against a screen that has a light behind it, so that the audience sees the shadow of the puppet. The puppets have rods that allow the puppeteer to hold them against the screen and move different parts. Shadow puppets can also be played on an overhead projector. This show uses shadow scenery and several shadow puppets for the underwater sequence.

**PUPPET STUNT DOUBLES!** In movies and TV, when a character has to do something physically difficult, such as somersaulting off a cliff or diving over a car, they use a "stunt double" rather than the actor. A stunt double is trained to do these things, and they find a stunt double who looks enough like the actor so you don't notice. We do almost the same thing: when we need a puppet to do something special, we just make another

puppet. We made several for this show: the princess who is dragged off by the octopus, the pirate who sits on top of the mattresses, and the pirate who crawls over to get the dress in . . . well . . . in his undies.

**HOW ARE THE PUPPETS MADE?** We make all of the puppets, as well as the scenery and stage. The puppets' heads are first sculpted in clay. We then make a plaster mold of the head, so that when the plaster has dried, it takes the shape of the head and features. We pour a liquid rubber, called neoprene, into the mold. When that cures (dries), it becomes hard, and we have a durable hollow puppet head. The sea monster body is made from the flexible hose from a clothes dryer, and the octopus is made from very flexible rubber.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### DRAW TREASURE MAPS

1. Draw a treasure map of your neighborhood. Show where the treasure is ("X marks the spot"). Draw the landmarks (definition: an object that marks the boundary of land, or a large object on land that is easy to see and can help a person find the way to a place near it, or an important building or monument). Landmarks in your neighborhood might be a park, a big tree, a store, or a house that stands out from the others. One of your neighbors could even be a landmark if he or she is almost always in the same place (someone who is always sitting on their porch, for example).

After your map is drawn, write at least three clues to help someone find the treasure. The clues should lead them from one landmark to another (where they will pick up the next clue), and finally to the treasure. Is your treasure buried, or is it hidden some other way?

Can you write your clues so that they rhyme?

2. Draw a treasure map of somewhere you've never been. Where is the treasure hidden? What landmarks can you include to help the person looking for the treasure? Is your imaginary world an island? A desert? A castle? Another planet?

Now write a story telling us about the treasure. Who left the treasure there? Why didn't they take it with them? Who is looking for the treasure, and how did he or she find out about it? What about this place makes it hard to find the treasure?

### **HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN, AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA"**

How many of you know the story "The Princess & the Pea," or "The Princess On the Pea?" Read or listen to the story. This is by a man named Hans Christian Andersen, who was born in Denmark in 1805. When he was a boy, his father read to him from "The Arabian Nights," telling him wonderful stories of far-away places and magical beings. When he was about thirty years old, he published his first book of fairy tales. Some were retellings of stories he had heard, and some came from his imagination. He continued to write fairy tales for the rest of his life. Some of his other stories are "The Little Mermaid," "The Emperor's New Clothes," and "The Ugly Duckling."

Look online and in books to see what Denmark looks like. This is where Hans Christian Andersen lived and wrote. There are some wonderful statues of him and some inspired by his stories. There is a statue of "The Little Mermaid" in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. See if you can find a picture of it, and pictures of other statues. There is one in Central Park in New York City and a number in Denmark.

## **PIRATE DICTIONARY: HOW TO TALK LIKE A PIRATE!**

This will come in handy on September 19, when it is International Talk Like a Pirate Day. You can practice until then, and become really good at it!

**Aarr!:** Pirate exclamation, done with a growl.

**Ahoy:** Hello

**Avast:** Stop and pay attention

**Davy Jones' Locker:** The bottom of the sea, where many pirates and their ships end up.

**Disembark:** To leave the ship

**Down the hatch:** to eat something quickly

**Embark:** to get on board ship to go on an adventure

**Foul:** bad

**Grub:** food

**Land ho!:** I see land!

**Landlubber:** someone who doesn't want to go to sea or has never gone to sea.

**Matey:** friend

**Plunder:** treasure taken from others

**Port:** left side of the ship

**Shiver me timbers!:** An exclamation of surprise

**Starboard:** right side of the ship

**Weigh anchor:** pull up the anchor and prepare to leave

**Yo ho ho!** an expression used by happy pirates

## FAMOUS PIRATES & MAP SKILLS

Below is a list of famous pirates and the seas where they sailed. See what you can find out about one of these pirates, and locate on a map or globe the places where they worked.

**Anne Bonney** sailed in the Bahamas

**Blackbeard** sailed in the Caribbean, and off the coast of North and South Carolina in the United States

**Henry Morgan** sailed around Cuba, Panama and Venezuela.

**Edward England** sailed on the African coast and in the Indian Ocean.

**William Kidd (Captain Kidd)** sailed in the Indian Ocean

**Cheung Po Tsai** sailed the South China Seas.

## DISCUSSION

Does the Princess like being a princess? What would she rather do?

Why is the pirate sailing all by himself? Does he like it?

Why did the princess make the pirate prove he was a real pirate? Is that really what she was trying to do?

What did the pirate and the princess have to do to get the treasure chest? Was it easier to do it alone or together?

## THE PIRATE'S BIRD

Pirates who sailed in the tropics often brought home exotic birds. Parrots were popular because they were colorful and could be taught to speak. Find out more about parrots. What do they eat? How large are they? What can they learn to say? Do they understand the meaning of what they're saying? What color are their eggs?

## INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS ON AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR:

Many children do not have much experience with live performance, and do not understand that live performance is different from a sports event, a movie, or television. It is helpful to discuss audience behavior with them prior to the performance. In addition to the basics (pay attention, don't talk, don't yell out), the following is important:

**Applauding:** this is the main way the audience shows its appreciation to the performers. Teachers can explain this prior to the performance, and can lead the way by applauding at the end of stories and at the end of the show.

**Laughing:** is another way of showing appreciation! We are *trying* to make the audience laugh, and sometimes we will visit a school where the teachers quiet the children when they laugh. We *want* them to laugh! Young children may need to be reminded that after they laugh, they need to quiet down again to listen.

**Is it okay for teachers to laugh?** YES! We are performing for teachers as well as students, and there is plenty of humor in our shows for adults. Many teachers seem uncomfortable laughing in a school performance, but teachers' laughter does several important things. Overall, it shows the children that the teachers are paying attention to and enjoying the performance, which elevates the children's interest. It also raises the children's understanding of more sophisticated humor: when teachers laugh at something the children didn't find funny, the children often realize quickly that it *was* funny, and we get a second wave of laughter. The most enjoyable performances we do are the ones in which both teachers and students are engaged and responding.

**Teachers: please be courteous to the performers!** We're well aware of how overworked and short of time most teachers are these days. But if teachers are correcting papers or carrying on conversations during a performance, they are unable to become involved in the performance, discuss it with their students afterwards, or set an example for the children by responding and applauding at the correct times.