THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS

Hey There, Howdy, Everybody!

Material for **THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS: HEY THERE, HOWDY, EVERYBODY!**
was created by Kevin Richard Woodall, Ted Brackett, Laura Canty-Samuel and John Stone,
with classic sketches drawing from material created by founding Artistic Director Judith Martin
Performed by Addison Jinojosa, Marisa LaRuffa, John Stillwaggon and Kevin Richard Woodall
Music by John Stone and Donald Ashwander
Scenic Artists: Florencia Escudero and Jonathan Peck Production Supervisor: James Huggans
Directed by Kevin Richard Woodall

2025-26 Study Guide

Dear Teachers,

The following study guide has been designed to help make your students' experience of our show be as meaningful as it can be. For many children, it will be their first time viewing a live theatrical production. We encourage you to use this guide to prepare your students before they come to the show as well as to discuss topics, themes and ideas back in the classroom so that their appreciation will be all the more memorable and significant.

The Paper Bag Players are thrilled to present our 67th season's show, *Hey There, Howdy, Everybody!* The show gets off to a galloping start with the actors on horseback in "Howdy," a rollicking song and dance that the audience joins. The Western theme continues with "The Cactus and Balloon," a tale about an unlikely friendship. In the classic, "Tree Angel," trees discover how to outsmart a woodchopper with a little help from the audience and their very own angel. "Lost and Found" imagines the world of a lost glove. The hour is rounded out with a deliriously silly tug-of-war game, dancing chicken who steals a lunchbox, trio of cake-eating sleepwalkers, a giant parade of cats, and more!

The cast of Hey There, Howdy, Everybody! (from left to right) John Stillwaggon, Marisa LaRuffa, Kevin Richard Woodall, Addison Hinojosa, John Stone

At the heart of this adventure are two special words: inspiration and imagination. We use paper and cardboard materials to tell our stories, just like children do! We draw inspiration from children and the imaginative ways they play, and we hope through our own performances to inspire them in turn. From the entire Paper Bag Players team, thank you for joining our theatrical rodeo! Get ready to laugh, sing, dance, shout "Yahoo!" and greet your friends with a *Hey There, Howdy, Everybody!*

A Note for Students to Prepare Them for the Show

One thing that makes live theater different from television and the movies is that the show is taking place in the very space you are, at the very moment you are watching it. Your presence is a very important ingredient: without an audience, there is no show! You are part of the show whether you are silently listening, laughing or clapping. Sometimes, you will be called upon to help the performers, shouting advice, getting out of your seats to dance, and singing along with them. We can't wait for you to see our show – and to be part of it, too! Finally, **we love to hear from you**: If you have time to draw us a picture about your favorite moment, or a letter telling us what made you laugh or think about something in a new way, we will certainly appreciate it. Your artworks and letters are always treasured!

HOWDY!

Our show opens in a happy and sunny Western locale we call Sunshine Town, where everyone gleefully gets along, sings and dances. You'll see horses and a cow, tumbleweed, and a giant friendly farmhand named Big Ron. We'll invite you to join in with us, slapping your knees, clapping your hands, turning in a circle, and dancing in a Western "ho-down."

Discussion

When the people of Sunshine Town greet each other, they like to say, "Howdy," which is a popular way to say *Hello* in the West. It is short for "How do you do?" Because the word is very welcoming, we thought it's the perfect way to welcome you to our show.

❄ How do you like to say Hello to your friends, family and teachers? Do you sometimes say "Hi," "Hey there?" Can you think of ways people say Hello in other parts of the world where English isn't the first language? Does anyone know how to say Hello in Spanish? (*Hola!*) Chinese? (*Ni hao ma!*) French? (*Bonjour!*).

❄ What are some ways to greet someone without making any sound? Did you think of a wave? How about a high five, handshake, a fist bump, or even a big smile?

❄ How about ways of saying *Goodbye* in English, other languages, or without making a sound?

❄ Did you know that in Hebrew and Hawaiian languages have something in common? They each have a word that is used for Hello, Goodbye, and Peace (and even more)! The Hebrew word is *Shalom*, and the Hawaiian word is *Aloha*.

Activity

❄ Activity: Play the "Hello" game. In an open space, walk in different directions. Every time you encounter someone, greet them with a different Hello (can be in English, other languages, or the silent methods). Keep moving until you've greeted 10 of your classmates. Challenge yourself to use a few different ways to say *Hello*!

THE CACTUS AND THE BALLOON tells the story of a prickly cactus standing in the desert who says he doesn't need any friends: he's afraid to get too close to anyone because whenever that happens, they get hurt! One day, a joyful, red balloon floats into his world and tries to become friends. If they can make it work, it will be a very unlikely friendship – imagine that: a cactus and a balloon!

Discussion

Did you ever make friends with someone who at first you didn't think you would like? What changed? Can you think of some funny pairs of unlikely friends? To get you started, here are a few ideas:

- ❄ A chicken and a dinosaur
- ❄ A shovel and a snowflake
- ❄ A cat and a mouse
- ❄ A dolphin and a cloud

TREE ANGEL tells the story of trees in a vast forest who are in danger of being chopped down by a lumberjack. Suddenly, a tree angel appears and thinks of a way to save them.

Discussion

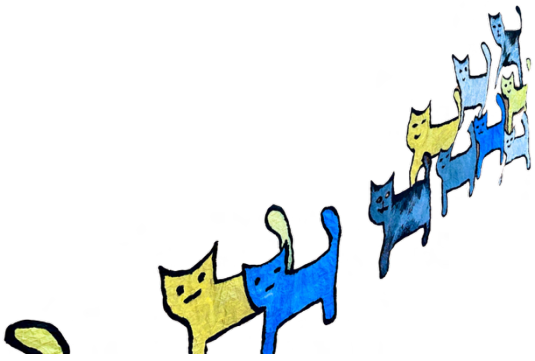
❄ Did you realize that the same person (Kevin) plays the tree angel and the woodchopper? When he's the angel, Kevin holds a silver stick that serves as a long trumpet. When he's the woodchopper, the very same stick becomes an axe.

❄ Historical fact: *Tree Angel* dates back to the earliest days of The Paper Bag Players, over 60 years ago! Even though it's a very old play, it has **relevance** today (that means, the story still is meaningful and important now). At the start of the play, the angel tells us, "The forests of this country are disappearing fast, so I have been appointed to try to make them last." What the angel says is still true: there are forests and jungles in this country and others that are endangered by fires, drought and manmade choices (such as logging, clear-cutting, and industry).

❄ The tree angel solves the problem for his trees by giving them feet so they can stand and run away. He also gives them the power to make faces and scare off the lumberjack. Can you think of some ways you might save trees that are in danger?

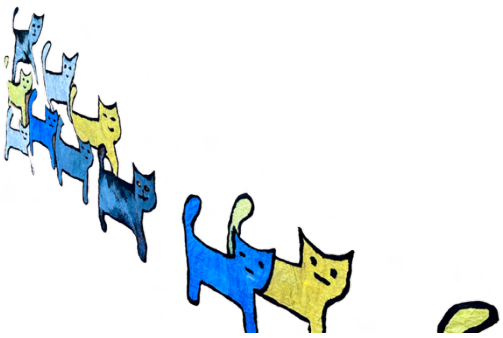
Activity: Can you draw trees with feet, too? What other special powers could you draw on a tree to save it from danger? Now that the tree is safe, can you draw a happy tree?

MEOW is a playful theatrical piece that uses music, movement, repetition, and surprise to tell its story. As a woman encounters what appears to be a single stray cat, children quickly discover that there are many more cats hidden just out of sight. Each reveal builds anticipation, humor, and visual delight. This piece encourages young audiences to practice close observation, notice patterns, and think about listening, choices, and unexpected outcomes. "Meow" demonstrates how imagination and theatrical magic can turn ordinary objects into lively storytelling tools. Children will enjoy counting the cats, noticing color changes, and predicting what might happen next, while delighting in the playful rhythm of the scene.



Discussion

❄ What did the woman think at first when she saw just one kitty?
❄ What happened each time the paper unrolled?
❄ Were you surprised when more cats appeared? Why?
❄ What happened when the cats heard, "Kitty?! Supper!"?
❄ What made this scene funny without needing many words?



Creative Thinking Prompts

❄ What do you think the cats were doing inside the paper before they came out?
❄ Where do you think they ran when it was time for supper?
❄ What other animals could hide inside a giant piece of paper?
❄ How would the story change if the woman *did* take one kitty home?

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and Found is a playful city-street story about a glove that becomes separated from its owner and must navigate the challenges of being lost. Through humor, audience participation, and lively characters made from everyday materials, the piece explores feelings of belonging, fairness, and helping others. As the glove, newspaper, and broom interact, students are invited to think about empathy, responsibility, and what it truly means to "clean up."

Understanding the Story

- ❄ What happened when the glove fell out of the pocketbook?
- ❄ Why did the glove want to stay in one place instead of leaving?
- ❄ Why was the newspaper afraid of the broom?
- ❄ How did the audience help the pocketbook?

Feelings & Empathy

- ❄ How did the glove feel when it was lost?
- ❄ Have you ever lost something important to you? How did it feel?
- ❄ How did the glove and newspaper help each other?

Fairness & Responsibility

- ❄ Was the broom doing its job? Was it being fair?
- ❄ Is there a difference between cleaning up and being mean?
- ❄ What could the broom have done differently?

Creative Art Projects

Lost & Found Art

❄ Ask students to draw something they would be sad to lose, and then draw how it would feel to be found again.

❄ Older students can add speech bubbles showing what the object might say.

Paper Object Characters

❄ Using paper, cardboard, or recycled materials, have students create:

- A glove
- A newspaper
- Or a brand-new "lost" object

❄ Give the object a face and a name.

Language & Imagination Play

Headline Makers

- ❄ The newspaper loved making headlines.
- ❄ Invite students to invent their own:
  - "LOST TOY FOUND UNDER BED!"
  - "MITTEN RETURNS HOME!"
- ❄ Younger students can dictate; older ones can write or draw.

What Happens Next?

- ❄ What do you think happens when the pocketbook gets home?
- ❄ Does the newspaper get read?
- ❄ Does the broom ever change its mind?

Big Ideas to Emphasize

- ❄ Objects, and people, can feel lonely.
- ❄ Helping others matters.
- ❄ Being neat is important, but kindness is more important.
- ❄ Sometimes things get lost, but they can be found again.

HAPPY DAY

Happy Day is a playful musical piece that explores how different people can feel very different emotions on the same day. Through song, movement, and humor, the characters experience happiness, sadness, amusement, and anger, before discovering how problems can be solved when we work together. This piece invites students to notice emotional clues in music, movement, and facial expression, and to reflect on how feelings can change.

Feelings & Emotions

- How did each character feel at the beginning of the play?
  - Happy / Sad / Amused / Angry
- What clues helped you know how they were feeling? (music, words, faces, movement)

Changing Moods

- Did anyone's feelings change during the play?
- What helped the characters feel better by the end?
- Can you have more than one feeling at the same time?

Problem Solving

- What was the problem in the story?
- How did the characters figure it out?

Movement & Drama Games

Emotion Freeze Dance

- Play music.
- Call out an emotion: *happy, sad, angry, silly*.
- Students move their bodies to show that feeling.
- Freeze and ask:
  - What does your body look like when it feels that way?

Finish the Song

- Start a line:
  - "What a day, a ___ day…"
- Students choose a feeling and make up a line to go with it.
- Encourage rhyme, rhythm, or silly ideas.

Art & Creative Projects

My Feelings Day

- Draw a picture of a day when you felt:
  - Happy
  - Sad
  - Silly/Funny
  - Angry
- Add one thing that helped you feel better.

Emotion Masks or Faces

- Create paper faces showing different emotions.
- Use them during a rereading or replay of the story.

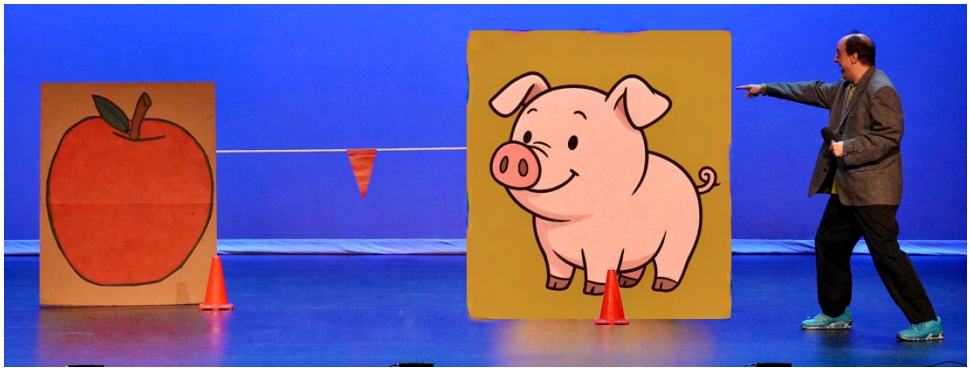
Chicken & Lunchbox Art

- Draw the chicken with the lunchbox.
- Ask:
  - What do you think the chicken was thinking?
  - Was the chicken being naughty or just curious?

Big Idea Questions

- How can music or dancing change how you feel?
- What helps *you* have a happy day?

VERSUS is a playful, game-show–style tug-of-war where everyday objects come to life through movement, music, and audience participation. Using humor and surprise, the sketch invites children to think about competition, rules, and cheering for their favorites, while also noticing how performers give personality to simple materials. This piece encourages students to reflect on winning and losing, expectation versus outcome, and the joy of shared play.



❄ **Expectations vs. surprises**
Before the tug-of-war, who did you *think* would win, the apple or the pig? Why?
How did you feel when the apple won?

❄ **Objects as characters**
How did the apple and pig show feelings or strength without talking?
What movements made them seem strong, silly, or excited?
How did the audience help make the match more exciting?

Design Your Own Tug-A-Mania Contestant
❄ Students draw an object (or letter, food, or animal) they think would be fun in a tug-of-war.
❄ Add details: eyes, expressions, or accessories.
❄ Ask students to name their contestant and say who they might compete against.

Thinking & Reflection Prompts
❄ Can something quiet (like an apple) still be powerful?
❄ What matters more in a game: strength, strategy, or surprise?

The Art & Fun of The Paper Bag Players: Workshops

Deepen your students' experience of the arts by taking them from seeing theater to creating it! Our innovative arts educational program is designed to expand upon the theatrical experience and bring to arts education into the classroom. Our workshops, led by The Paper Bag Players Creative Team, are tailored to children Pre-K – 3rd grade. Children become a Paper Bag Player for the Day, engaging in movement, storytelling, and improvisation, as well as creating sets, props, and costumes. Our 1-week and 2-week programs allow for in-depth exploration of each area and culminates in a class performance of the play for family, friends and community. Single 90-minute workshops are process-oriented, giving children the opportunity to fully explore working with paper in art, movement and dramatic play.

Children learn how to make theater out of what is all around them with the help of their own ideas, creativity, and a little bit of paper – just like The Paper Bag Players do! The paper transforms into everything from trombone to telescope, puppy to party dress. This dramatic play exercises children's imagination, as well as social, language and motor skills. Students work as a team and learn how to collaborate. Our workshops provide early readers and writers with an active context for literacy development and for exploring new and abstract concepts. In addition, teachers can witness The Paper Bag Players approach, tools, and techniques to enhance their own curriculum, utilizing low-cost, readily available, expressive paper.

Workshops are designed for groups of 10-25 children, can be held during or after school. For more details, or to book dates and times, call 212-353-2332. For examples of our work, CDs & DVDS, please visit www.thepaperbagplayers.org

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