

Winnie the Pooh

Study Guide

Dear Teacher:

We have created the following study guide to help make your students' theater experience with *Winnie the Pooh* as meaningful as possible. For many, it will be their first time viewing a live theatrical production. We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more significant and long-lasting. Our study guide provides pre- and post-performance discussion topics, as well as related activity sheets. These are just suggestions. Please feel free to create your own activities and areas for discussion. We hope you and your class enjoy the show!

Background

In 1926, A.A. Milne wrote *Winnie-the-Pooh* for his son, Christopher Robin Milne. On his first birthday, Christopher received a stuffed toy he called Edward, and who was later re-named Winnie (after a black bear at the London zoo), and Pooh (after a swan, as mentioned in a poem in Milne's *When We Were Very Young*.) Other characters in the story were based on Christopher's other stuffed animals, including the donkey Eeyore, Kanga and Baby Roo, and Piglet. Owl and Rabbit were inspired by animals who lived in the forest nearby. Illustrator Ernest H. Shepard based the look of his drawings on Christopher Robin Milne and his toys. The original stuffed animals are currently on display at New York City's Donnell Public Library.

Pre-Performance Discussion

1. Read A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* with your students. Much of the dialogue (and many of the songs' lyrics) come directly from Milne's writing, and children will enjoy hearing the familiar words and turns of phrase. If you run short on time, focus on the chapters that form the basis of our show's narrative: "kanga and Baby Roo Come to the Forest," "Eeyore Loses a Tail," "Eeyore Has a Birthday," and "Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting."
2. Explain that they will see a musical based on this book. In musicals, characters often sing to punctuate action or to illuminate character. On the basis of the stories you have read together, what moments do your students think will be "musicalized?" What other expectations do they have of a live show? For example, will there be a real Owl speaking? Will there be a forest with real trees on stage?
3. Review proper theatre etiquette with your class. They may be seeing our show as part of a class trip, with many other schools attending. They should carefully follow their teacher's or group leader's directions. During the show, they should be quiet, so that they do not disturb other audience members (and the actors!) during the performance. However, actors love cheers and applause, especially at the end of songs and when the show is over. This is a great way to thank actors for all their hard work in performing this show for you!

4. Some of the vocabulary in the show may be challenging for your students (especially words said by Eeyore and Owl), so you may wish to review the following words:

Apologize	Fierce	Pathetic
Clever	Miserable	Relations
Cunning	Mission	Stoutness
Dangerous	Mope	Woe

You may also find a “Christopher Robin’s Wagon” word search featuring the show’s characters later in this study guide.

5. Discuss the concept of “prejudice” - disliking people for silly reasons, like the way they look, the way they talk, or the way they dress. These reasons often have nothing to do with what the person is like on the inside. Have your students disliked people because of the way they look? How do they think they felt about being disliked for those reasons? How would your students feel if someone didn’t like them because their feet were big, or because they had brown eyes?
6. Discuss the idea of friendship. What makes someone a good friend? What are some of the qualities your students look for in a new friend? What are some things friends do with each other?

Post-Performance Discussion

1. As soon as possible after the performance, engage your class in discussion about the show. Who were their favorite characters and why? Which were their favorite moments and songs in the musical? Compare and contrast the book and live performance, as well as other adaptations of the Pooh stories they may have seen. Did the show meet their expectations? Why or why not?
2. In our musical, Rabbit decided before he had even met her, that he didn’t like Kanga - in fact, he wanted her to leave the forest. Even Piglet was afraid that large animals like Kanga would be fierce and dangerous. Were their assumptions correct? How do you think Rabbit felt when he discovered that Kanga was actually a very nice animal?
3. One reason Rabbit is afraid of Kanga is because she is new to the forest. How do your students respond when they meet new people or find themselves in unfamiliar circumstances? Is it easy for them to feel comfortable after that? Why or why not?
4. Little Piglet says “it’s hard to be brave when you’re only a very small animal.” Sometimes it’s hard to be brave when you’re a very small person, too. What sort of things make your students nervous? Explain that it’s okay to be scared sometimes. On the other hand, have your students ever made displays of bravery? For example, while getting a shot at the doctor’s office, talking in front of a group of people, or while learning how to ride a bicycle without falling off.

Cross-Curriculum Activities

Physical Education

1. **Pooh's Stoutness Exercises.** At the beginning of our musical, we see Pooh practicing his stoutness exercises. "Stoutness" means sturdy or strong. Here's a simple exercise rhyme you can do with your class at the beginning or the end of your school day - or any time your students may need to stretch. You may mix up the sequence as desired - or even go forwards and backwards.

*Way up high, reach for the sky!
Hands down lower, on your shoulders!
Yummy, yummy, pat your tummy!
Lower, please - down to your knees!
Way down low, touch your toe!*

2. **Animals in the Hundred Acre Wood.** Your students may notice that different animals in the forest move in different ways - Baby Roo jumps a lot, Rabbit walks very quickly, and Pooh waddles. Direct your class to move like different animals - encourage them to be very physical! For example, if you say "giraffe" they should stretch like a giraffe's neck, if you say "bird" they should flap their arms like wings, if you say "elephant" they should stomp the ground. If you like, your students may also make sounds mimicking these animals.

A variation on this game is to arrange your class in a circle, with one member in the middle. This student should act like an animal, and the first classmate who correctly guesses what animal they're impersonating gets to be "it," while the first classmate takes the guesser's place in the circle.

Social Studies / Geography

1. **Getting Around in the Hundred Acre Wood.** There are lots of different places in the Hundred Acre Wood. Have your students draw a map featuring these locations: Pooh's house, Piglet's house, Owl's house, Rabbit's house, Kanga's bathtub, Eeyore's thistle patch, the Heffalump trap, Pooh's thinking spot. What do each of these places look like?

A more advanced variation on this activity is to divide up a piece of paper into eight squares and have students draw a different part of the forest in each section. After that, ask your students how to get from place to place on their map (for example: one square to the left and 3 squares up).

English/Language Arts

1. **Rhyme Time.** A.A. Milne (and Pooh!!) enjoy making up silly rhymes. In this study guide you'll find a "Pooh's Rhyme Time" worksheet. Have your students choose the best rhyme for each word from a list. They may want to say the words out loud so they can accurately hear them - sometimes rhyming words look alike and sometimes they don't!
2. **Toy Stories.** A.A. Milne wrote the Pooh stories about his son, Christopher Robin and his toy friends. Do your students have a favorite toy, or perhaps an imaginary friend? Do they wonder what their toys do when they're away at school? Have your students tell, draw, or write a story about the adventures their toys have every day.

A round-robin version of this activity is to start a story about a toy and have each class add another part of the tale. For example, you might say "One day my teddy bear was hungry for a mid-morning snack, so he wandered into the kitchen looking for something to eat. But when he got there, he saw..." And then the first student could say "the cat was blocking the doorway and wouldn't let him pass," and further students could amend the teddy bear's story.

3. **Adjectives All Around.** Explain to your students that an "adjective" is a describing word. For example, wet, scratchy, and fuzzy are all adjectives. Write the names of each of the Winnie the Pooh characters on the board in columns. With your class, brainstorm adjectives that could be used to describe each character. Christopher Robin could be kind, sweet and young, while Pooh could be hungry, silly and nice. See how many different adjectives you can come up with.

Science

1. **Animals Everywhere!** Animals of all sorts live in the Hundred Acre Wood - Owls, Rabbits, Bears, Piglets, Donkeys and even a Kangaroo! Have your class perform research on these different animals. Where do real-life bears usually live? What do rabbits eat? What do you call a grown-up piglet? Can your students discover any other unusual facts about these animals?

For example - a kangaroo (a marsupial) carries her young in a built-in pouch on her belly. Owls are nocturnal animals (active at night rather than during the day). You may also ask your students to research other types of animals - penguins, whales, wolves, bats, etc.

For younger students, you may wish to set out a group of objects of varying size, along with containers of different shapes. Which objects do your students think will fit best in the different containers? Have them actually place these objects in the containers to make sure. Can certain objects fit in more than one container? Can some of the containers even fit within each other? You might want to use Russian stacking dolls to demonstrate this physical science principle.

Art

1. **It's a H-H-H-Heffalump!** In our play, Pooh dreams of a Heffalump. However, neither of them knows quite what a Heffalump looks like. Or what they eat. Or the best way to catch one. Have your class draw what they imagine a Heffalump to look like. Is it made up of a variety of different animal parts - for example, antlers like a deer, a mane like a lion, feet like a monkey, tail like a duck? What do their Heffalumps like to eat? Honey, acorns, something else? What is the best way to catch a Heffalump? A deep pit, a bed of flowers, a sticky surface? What would they do with their captured Heffalump? Send it to the zoo, make it a pet, teach it how to tap dance? Be creative!
2. **Ernest H. Shepard's Illustrations.** Winnie-the-Pooh Artist Ernest H. Shepard created his drawings of Rabbit and Owl by watching live animals carefully in the forest, and sketching them. If you have a classroom pet, have your students look closely at the animal and sketch it. When you sketch, just create the broad outlines - you can fill in the details later. If you don't have a classroom pet, you may do this activity by displaying photos of animals and having your students draw them.

Logic

1. You may introduce your students to the concept of sequences by using the “First-Second-Third” worksheet in this study guide. Instruct your class to look at the three pictures in each story, and number them in the correct order. Alternately, you may cut out these pictures and have your students manually move them around to see which sequence makes the most sense.

You may also perform this exercise with newspaper comic strips. Before class, cut up the squares in various comic strips and put each strip's square in a different envelope: Peanuts, Garfield, etc. Give each of your students a different envelope, and have them put the story panels in the correct order.

Resources:

A.A. Milne wrote four books for Christopher Robin Milne, all of which featured illustrations by E.H. Shepard. In order of publication, they are:

- *When We Were Very Young* (a book of poetry, 1924)
- *Winnie-the-Pooh* (volume one of Pooh’s adventures and the basis of our musical, 1926)
- *Now We Are Six* (an additional book of poetry, 1927)
- *The House at Pooh Corner* (volume two of the Pooh stories, including the introduction of Tigger, 1928)

Here are some other books and stories about toys your class may enjoy:

- *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* by Hans Christian Andersen
- *Corduroy* and *A Pocket for Corduroy* by Don Freeman
- *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Sharp
- *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems

There are several web sites devoted to A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh stories and characters:

- <http://disney.go.com/characters/pooh/index.html>
(Disney’s Pooh site, featuring lots of games and stories)
- <http://www.just-pooh.com/>
(includes historical information on A.A. Milne and the Pooh characters)
- <http://www.winniethespoohbear.net>
(more Pooh fun, including many links to other sites)

Answer Key:

Christopher Robin’s Wagon

W	K	I	N	N	I	P
R	A	B	B	I	T	I
E	N	T	H	E	P	G
O	G	O	H	R	I	L
S	A	A	S	O	I	E
L	L	Y	O	O	L	T
E	E	Y	O	R	E	D
B	E	O	W	L	A	R

First, Second, Third

1. Pooh is hungry.
Pooh eats honey.
Pooh is full.
2. Piglet is dirty.
Piglet takes a bath.
Piglet is clean.
3. Eeyore is dry.
It is starting to rain.
Eeyore is wet.

Secret Message: Winnie the Pooh is a silly old bear.

Pooh’s Rhyme Time

1. Hat/Bat
2. Wet/Pet
3. Ship/Zip
4. Pot/Spot
5. Bug/Rug
6. Care/Dare
7. Hear/Near
8. Nice/Mice
9. Snow/Grow
10. Tune/June

Name: _____

Christopher Robin's Wagon

Christopher Robin's friends are hiding in his wagon. See if you can find them! Look left-to-right and up-to-down. When you're finished, use the leftover letters to fill in the blanks to find a secret message for his best friend!

Friends to find: Eeyore, Kanga, Owl, Piglet, Rabbit, Roo

W	K	I	N	N	I	P
R	A	B	B	I	T	I
E	N	T	H	E	P	G
O	G	O	H	R	I	L
S	A	A	S	O	I	E
L	L	Y	O	O	L	T
E	E	Y	O	R	E	D
B	E	O	W	L	A	R



Illustration: Frances Evans

Secret Message:

Name: _____

Pooh's Rhyme Time!

Winnie the Pooh likes to make up silly rhymes. Rhyming words have the same vowel sound and ending consonant sound. Sometimes rhyming words look alike and sometimes they don't.

Help Pooh with his silly rhymes by circling the word in each row that rhymes with the first word.

Short vowel sounds:

- | | | | | |
|----------------|-----|------|-----|------|
| 1. hat | has | hot | bat | top |
| 2. wet | wit | pet | pen | wig |
| 3. ship | zip | sit | sup | shot |
| 4. pot | top | snap | pat | spot |
| 5. bug | cub | bus | rug | big |

Long vowel sounds:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| 6. care | for | cat | race | dare |
| 7. hear | heat | her | near | ten |
| 8. nice | nine | mice | spin | pit |
| 9. snow | sat | pond | on | grow |
| 10. tune | note | june | nut | tape |

Can you think of any other words that rhyme?

Name: _____

First, Second, Third

Here are mini-stories about Pooh, Piglet and Eeyore – but the pictures are in the wrong order!

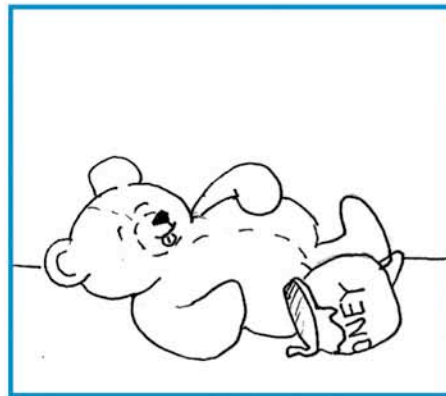
Write a 1, 2, or 3 by each sentence to put them in the correct order.



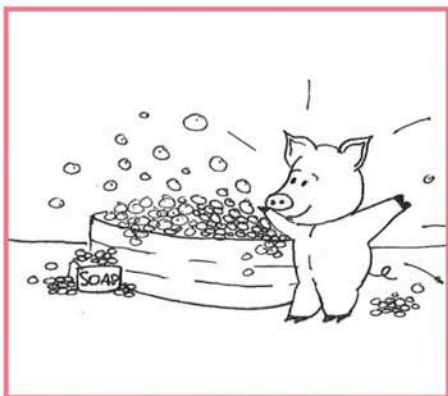
Pooh eats honey. _____



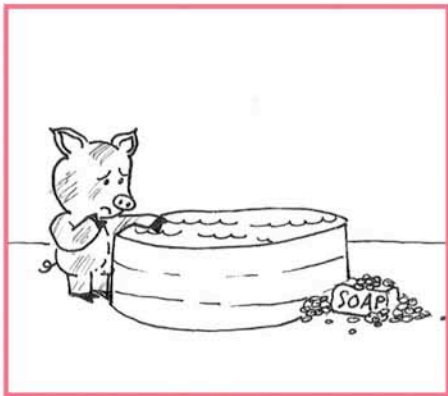
Pooh is hungry. _____



Pooh is full. _____



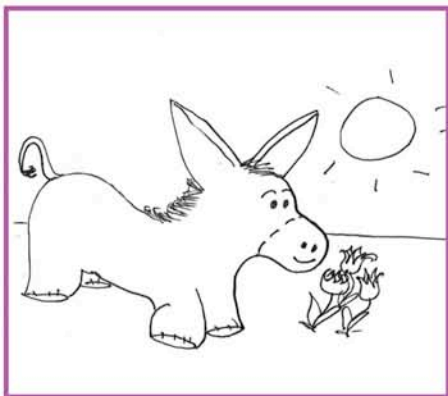
Piglet is clean. _____



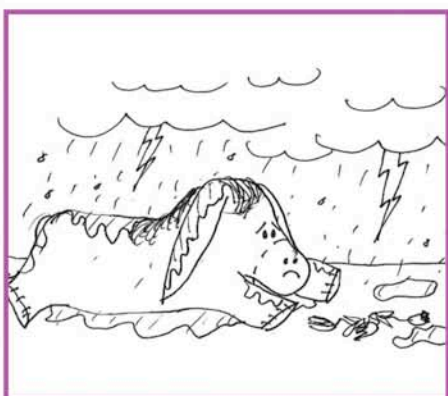
Piglet is dirty. _____



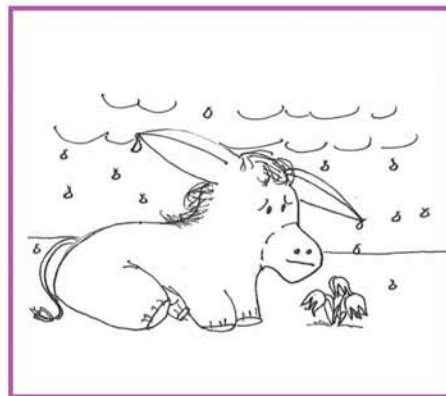
Piglet takes a bath. _____



Eeyore is dry. _____



Eeyore is wet. _____



It is starting to rain. _____