



Arts and Culture for Early Years

Presents

Old Man and the River

**RESOURCE GUIDE FOR
EDUCATORS**

Dear Educators

The Old Man and the River is a very accessible performance for young children. The story builds confidence in the young viewer because as it unfolds the repetition of events, actions and sounds builds a “knowing”... and thus a sense of competence and success with the medium.

The writers, directors and puppeteers have brought together their outstanding abilities to create a table puppet play that is skillfully designed for this age group of children who are beginning to use symbols in their own communication. The play brings the children into a world where actions and gestures tell a story.

As the three days of the story pass there is a repetition to allow the children to feel that they can anticipate what is going to happen but at the same time there is a change and it is ‘readable’ to the children because they have learned the pattern of the narrative.

Themes for *Old Man and the River*:

- Making friends
- Respecting the natural world and our environment
- Routines and adjusting to change
- Empathy, inclusion, and acceptance

Pre-Show Suggested Activities

Pre-Show Discussion:

There are many different types of puppets. Ask the children to list together all the puppets they know and can imagine. We know Elmo is a puppet, can my hand be a puppet? Can a pencil be a puppet? A sock? What makes a puppet?

In *Old Man and the River*, the style of puppetry is **Tabletop Puppetry** which means just that, the puppet characters perform on a stage that is like a table. Some puppet shows the puppeteers hide but not in this show. In *Old Man and the River*, the puppeteers are visible.

Read the synopsis:

A little old man lives in his little house in the woods by the river. Every morning when the sun comes up, the little old man wakes and makes his way through the wood to the river to fish. And every day when the sun goes down, he makes his way back home and goes to sleep. Every day is the same and he likes it just so! But one day, a strange and magical creature jumps out of the water and wants to befriend the little old man!

- What do we know already?
- What do we want to know?
- Ask the children what they think might happen in the story?

Ask the children about older people in their lives. Do they have grandparents or elderly neighbours? How are older people different than children-how they move, how they talk, etc.

What is it like to make a new friend? If we want to make friends, what are some of the ways we can offer friendship? When we want to play, what are some of the ways we can offer play?

Vocabulary

What/who we see in the story:

House	Forest	The Old Man
Bed	Trees	The River Faerie
Door	Tree stump	The Leaf
The Sun	Hill	Broom
The Moon	River	Fishing Pole
Cloud	Bridge	The Dragonfly

Actions in the story:

Blowing	Hiding	Sitting
Bowing	Hugging	Sleeping
Bubbling	Inviting	Sneaking
Climbing	Playing	Stretching
Dancing	Rising	Swaying
Drooping	Searching	Sweeping
Fishing	Setting	Swimming
Flying	Shaking	Swinging
Following	Shuffling	Walking
Giggling	Sighing	Whispering

Post-Show Suggested Activities:

Drama & Movement:

“Show me with your body and face and noooooooo Sound!”:

- 1) The students had a chance to play this game as part of the pre-show introduction but they will love to play it again.

Make each emotion prompt a surprise or use a small drum or bell to signal when they should show you the emotion.

“Can you show me with your body and your face and noooo sound you’re.....HAPPY!?”

OR

“Can you show me with your body and your face and noooo sound you’re Happy? (wait a beat then ring the bell or hit the drum). Clapping is fine but we avoid it for little ears.

List of emotions: Mad, Scared, Surprised, Sad, Happy,

List of Actions/Feelings: Really Hot, Really Cold, Searching, Listening

You can play this game sitting or have them stand in their own space and use their full bodies. Ask them to make their faces and bodies bigger and bigger to encourage them to go further than their initial choice and then say “Freeze!” or “Hold” and take pictures of each amazing actor with your **imaginary** camera.

After each one, ask them to **Wipe it Off!** (Make a swishy sound as you do) or if they are standing **Shake it Off!**

Retelling the Story of Old Man and the River with our bodies!

First recount the story together in a circle to remember all the key events.

There are 3 days in the story, that will help!

List all the characters in the story:

Old Man
The River Faerie
The Tree Sisters
The River

The Dragonfly
The Sun
The Moon
The Cloud
The Leaf

“Old Man’s Tomorrow”:

Ask the children what they think will happen the next day in the story.

Will the River Faerie return? What else might happen?

“Moments of Empathy” – Discussion and Reflection:

After seeing the performance, you may ask the children about different moments in the play to explore the feelings and perspectives of the characters.

Consider questions that include all characters like the trees, the river, the sun, the moon! Here are some questions to get the discussion started:

Why does the Old Man need to sweep?

Why do the trees whisper as the Old Man passes?

Why does the Old Man shoo the Dragonfly away?

Why was the Old Man scared of the River Faerie?

How does the River Faerie feel when the Old Man runs away and hides?

Why does the Old Man jump when the Sun is in his window?

Why do the Trees turn away from the Old Man?

Why does the Old Man allow the Leaf in his house at the end?

Visual Arts:

“Your Favourite Part”:

- 1) Let each child draw their favourite part of the performance.
- 2) Afterwards let them describe it to you and discuss why it was their favourite part.

Please share your pictures with us!

“Leaf Characters” (Activity Extension for “Leaf Play”):

- 1) If the children completed tracing a leaf in the preshow activity, now have the children trace their original (or another) leaf a second time and turn it into a character / puppet character with a face and other details using various materials such as construction paper pieces, markers, thread, pipe cleaners, etc.
- 2) Ask them to share with their classmates about why and what makes their leaf unique? Follow up by asking them about why and what makes themselves unique?

Create Your Own Dragonfly Puppet

Using this [instructional video](#) or the template attached, children can create their own puppet and explore how they can flutter and fly it just like in the play.

You can also find the link on our website here <https://weefestival.ca/resources/>

Drama/Dance/Movement

Below is link to the music created for the show by Nicky Phillips. It is the scene when the River Faerie first arrives and wants to be friends with the Old Man. A sneaky chase and hide and seek game begins until the Old Man hides in his house. The River Faerie knocks on the door and then the Old Man confronts him and shoos him away. The River Faerie sadly makes his way back to the river.

<https://weefestival.ca/resources/>

Drama, Movement

“Act Out the following moments in Old Man and the River”:

Ask children to find their own spot and show their ready bodies. Read out the prompt and then let them perform the moment. Use a bell or small drum to signal, “ready bodies” to show they’re ready for the next prompt!

The Old Man is sleeping, and the Sun is coming up!

The Sun comes into the Old Man’s house!

The Cloud covers the Sun.

The Old Man is sweeping his house.

The Leaves blow into the Old Man’s house.

The Trees are laughing so loud!

The Trees drop Leaves on the Old Man.

The Old Man and the River Faerie are up high in the Trees.

The Old Man is fishing, the Dragonfly visits.

The Old Man is fishing and the River is singing.

The River Faerie flies out of the River.

The Old Man is hiding. The River Faerie is searching.

The River Faerie is sad. The Trees are sad.

The Old Man is sad on the bridge.

The River Faerie comes back. He flies and dances through the air.

The River Faerie hugs the Old Man.

The Old Man and the River Faerie say goodbye.

Old Man and the River

Created by Lynda Hill and Thomas Morgan Jones
Inspired by the story by Thomas Morgan Jones
Concept, Dramaturgy and Direction by Lynda Hill
Original Design by Kelly Wolf
Original Music by Nicky Phillips
Lighting Design by Jennifer Lennon
Puppetry by Mike Peterson and Eric Woolfe

Artists Featured in 2016 Recording: Mike Petersen, Ingrid Hansen, Kira Hall, Andrew Young,
Stage Management-Sandi Becker

Artists for 2020 Digital Education Outreach: Hilary Adams, Alexandra Montagnese, Jeffrey
O'Hara, and Andrew Young
Stage Management-Elizabeth McDermott

Old Man and the River was developed and premiered by Theatre Direct as part of the 2014 WeeFestival of Arts & Culture for Early Years. Since then, it has performed for thousands of children and their families in Toronto, throughout Ontario and across Canada.

WeeFestival of Arts and Culture

Artistic Director-Lynda Hill
Festival Coordinator-Ariane Burtin
Education Coordinator-Allison Basha
Education Resources by Krysta Sero

Translation and French Language Consultation:
Dominique Denis, Stephanie Filippi, and Ariane Burtin

Thank you to our supporters and funders!

Canada Council for the Arts
Ontario Arts Council
The Department of Canadian Heritage
The Toronto Foundation-Lentilberry Fund

A Centres-Based Approach to Exploring the Play

Exploration of the play can continue in various activity centres within your classroom:

CONSTRUCTION

Learning Goal:

I can build a bridge

Materials:

Building materials such as blocks, popsicle sticks, lego, tape, straws.

Extension:

The water table could be incorporated with a challenge to create a bridge across the water

Science and Technology:

Overall Expectation 4:

Use technological problem-solving skills in free exploration, focused exploration, and guided activity

CREATIVE

Learning Goal:

I can make a puppet

Materials:

Craft materials such as popsicle sticks, wool, construction paper, card stock, googly eyes.

Visual Arts: V3.1:

Use problem-solving skills and their imagination to create visual art forms

WRITING

Learning Goal:

I can label my picture with the names of characters from the play

Materials:

Colouring materials such as crayons, markers, pencil crayons and paper. List of character names if desired for copying

Language: 4.3:

Write simple messages using a combination of pictures, symbols, knowledge of the correspondence between letters and sounds and familiar words

DRAMATIC PLAY

Learning Goal:

I can re-tell the story of the Old Man and The River

Materials:

No materials necessary, but could include the following as inspiration a broom, blue fabric, leaves.

Drama and Dance: D3.2:

Dramatize rhymes, stories, legends, and folk tales from various cultures, including their own

Language: 2.9:

Retell stories, in proper sequence, that have been read by and with the EL–K team, using pictures in the book and/or props

LISTENING

Learning Goal:

I can move my body to match the music / I can move my pencil to match the music.

Materials:

Listening station, variety of instrumental music, paper and pencil if desired.

Drama and Dance: D3.1:

Use problem-solving skills and their imagination to create drama and dance

➤ **Connections to: *How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH) Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, Ministry of Education (2014):***

We strive to create learning environments that incorporate Belonging, Well-being, Engagement and Expression (HDLH, 2014):

- **A child will feel a sense of belonging** when they can “participate fully in ways that are most comfortable to them” (HDLH, 2014, p 26).
- **A child should experience well-being**, as “through active play and physical exploration, children gain increasing levels of independence, learn to persevere and practice self-control, and develop a sense of physical, emotional, and intellectual mastery and competence” (HDLH, 2014, pp 29-30).
- **A child feels engaged** when they can “express joy and wonder in their encounters with the environment, the natural world, and other people” (HDLH, 2014, p 37).
- **A child can express** themselves when they are able to “use varied forms of creative expression to communicate feelings, experiences, ideas, and understanding of the world around them”; and when they can “participate in meaningful interaction and communication with peers and adults, regardless of their abilities” (HDLH, 2014, p 43).

➤ **Connections to: “The Domains of Development” defined in *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT), a Framework for Ontario Early Childhood Settings, Ministry of Education (2014)* and “The Benefits of Dramatic Play” described in *Playing and Learning: In Early Childhood Education, Dietze, B., & Kashin, D. (2012):***

Dietze and Kashin (2012) state that **theatre experiences inspire role play which fosters empathy** as the child “begin[s] to understand that other players have perspectives different from their own” (p 97). **“Dramatic play connects to the whole child and contributes to multiple developmental domains”** (p 99):

- **SOCIAL**: “When children have positive role models who support dramatic play, they gain skills in executing dramatic play and in turn **they become more socially competent**” (p 107).
- **EMOTIONAL**: “Dramatic play **enhances children’s emotional development**. Unlike adults, children generally are not able to verbalize feelings. They experience the same feelings as adults; however, **they express their feelings through play. Children feel safe in play**” (p 105).
- **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**: “Story drama is used in the early learning environment as a way to help children understand the structure of a story and see how language affects others. For early learning practitioners, it offers **a natural and authentic way to promote literacy learning**” (p 115).
- **COGNITIVE**: “When engaged in dramatic play, children start to make sense of their world”. **In Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory**, “children assimilate concepts and ideas, practice, and expand on their ideas during play with others. **Play interactions contribute to children developing perspective-taking**, especially when they can **put themselves in another’s shoes while role-playing**” (p 97).
- **PHYSICAL**: “When children act out stories, situations, and ideas, **they use their bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to express themselves**. They do this through gesture, voice, and/or movement” (p 98).

References

Dietze, B., & Kashin, D. (2012). *Playing and learning: In early childhood education*. Toronto, Ontario: Pearson Canada Inc.

Follari, L. (2015). *Foundations and best practices in early childhood education: Histories, theories, and approaches to learning (3rd Ed.)*. Toronto, Ontario: Pearson.

Ministry of Education. (2014). *Excerpts from "ELECT": Foundational knowledge from the 2007 publication of early learning for every child today: a framework for Ontario early childhood settings*. Toronto, Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Ministry of Education. (2014). *How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years: A resource about learning through relationships for those who work with young children and their families*. Toronto, Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Ministry of Education. (2016). *The Kindergarten Program*. Toronto, Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario.