



NEW MEXICO YOUNG ACTORS

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(505) 821-8055



“THE MAGIC MRS. PIGGLE-WIGGLE”

By Betty McDonald

Book, Music and Lyrics

By Chad Henry



STUDY GUIDE

MRS. PIGGLE-WIGGLE SYNOPSIS

It's raining and thundering and Mary O'Toole is running away. She winds up on her neighbor's doorstep and cautiously enters Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's upside down house. (We'll come to understand that the neighborhood often turns to Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle in times of trouble because she fixes things.) Mary meets Penelope the parrot and learns that the hump on her hostess's back is really a lump of magic. Mary has an adventure in dishwashing and learns what magic is all about: it's not spells and witchery, but pure power-soaked imagination. Evelyn Crackle and her dad meet Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle at the grocery. Evelyn has a bad case of Answer-Backeritis, but Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle has a cure. Next, comes the Quadrangle family where son Harbin is a problem. He's s-l-o-w. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle diagnoses an acute case of Daydreaming. She makes his next flight of fancy entirely real for his family to share, and they begin to appreciate his genius. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle needs to find the chest of gold her pirate husband has hidden in the house and Dick, Hubert and Patsy are just the ones to help. Unfortunately, Hubert can't come until he's cleaned his room, so Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle administers her Won't Pick Up Toys Cure. When Mr. and Mrs. Rogers entertain the boss's wife, their daughter, Sharon, comes home from school and stumbles over everything. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle pops up with a little Gracefulness Powder for Sharon's Heedless Breakerosis and the scene becomes a glorious ballet. Two terrible twins CANNOT get along for even a second. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle knows that Fighter-quarrelitis is a common and contagious childhood disease and when the twin's parents catch the disease, it cures itself by the end of the day. Despite all her successes, Dick doesn't believe in the magic that Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle hands out. Nonetheless, he hunts for buried treasure at her house with the help of the lucky pirate coin Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle gave him. Suddenly Percy Piggle-Wiggle, the pirate captain himself, appears to invite Dick to sail with him as a treasure spotter. Dick can't go, of course, since he has school on Monday but he now has the knowledge that, "When everything's in a tangle, life's more fun from a magical angle."

Theater Etiquette

1. How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What did you see?
2. What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to the movie?
 - Theater features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.

- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times. The success of the play often depends on the audience.
- The theater is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear clothing and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

3. Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms:

Box Office, Acts & Scenes, Producer, Program, Overture, Costumes, Props, Director, Stage, Curtain Call, Stagehand, Lobby, Usher, Musical Theater, Orchestra Pit, Proscenium Arch, Playwright, Scenery, Makeup, Actor, Balcony, Play

4. Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.

- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience while trying to get comfortable in your seat. Lights go out before the curtain goes up and seating is very difficult after that time.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.
- The KiMo Theater is a Historic Landmark building. Please respect and preserve the beauty of the KiMo by not bringing food and beverages (including water, gum and candy) into the theater. These items are permitted in the lobby only.

- Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun. There is no intermission during the performance of *The Magic Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*, which is 80 minutes in length.
- Although you may wish to say something to the actors, you need to hold your thoughts, as you will disturb their concentration.
- Sing or participate if and only if you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.
- Listen to how the music sets the moods and affects your own feelings.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song or dance or joke.

Classroom Discussion & Activities (Post-Performance)

1. What reason does Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle give for having a house that is upside-down? What would be some good things about having an upside-down house (like being able to roast marshmallows over a chandelier)? What would be some bad things about it?
2. Throughout the story Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle comes up with some pretty silly cures to some of the children's problems. Are these cures realistic? Do you think they would really work?
3. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's husband is a pirate. How do you think that they met? What sort of adventures do you think Captain Piggle-Wiggle has when he is out at sea?
4. Why do you think Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle takes such joy in helping others? How does it make you feel when you help someone else solve a problem that he or she is having?
5. If Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle were a real person that you could go to, what problem would you ask her to help you solve? What do you think her advice would be?
6. Why do you think Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle only has "cures" for problems that children are facing? Why doesn't she ever seem to help adults with their problems?

7. The children in the play, especially Dick, tell Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle often that they don't believe in magic. Do you believe in magic? Is anything that Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle does really magic or does it just seem that way?
8. How would you describe the way that adults are portrayed in the play? Are they realistic, or silly cartoon-like people?
9. In the play we were given the challenge of having a parrot that talks back on stage. How did our costume designer choose to solve this problem? Was it effective? Did you like it? How else do you think we could have done it?
10. Why do you think the playwright chose to tell the story of Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle as a musical? Did you like the music in the play? Which song was your favorite? Why?
11. Which of Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's cures did you find to be the most creative? Why?
12. MUSIC: Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? How could you tell? When was the music used? Why? Did it help develop the plot? What types of music were used, or were different types used? Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings? When a play is a musical, an actor must have additional skills. Can you name some? A musical costs much more to produce. Can you name some additional expenses? (e.g., orchestra, a practice piano, a score, a choreographer, etc)
13. SETS: Describe the sets used in the play you just saw. What props or details were used to suggest specific times or settings? How could lighting be changed to create a mood, season, time of day, etc.? What materials might have been used in building the sets? How were the sets and props moved on and off the stage? Describe a simple scene (a day in school, a trip to the mall, a ride in the car or on the bus) and ask students to describe a basic set for the scene.
14. COSTUMES: What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (research, sewing, theatrical effects, etc.)? Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?
15. DANCE: Describe the kind of dancing in the play. How is it different from the kinds of dancing you might know? What purposes could dance have in a play?

16. ART ACTIVITIES:

- Draw a picture of a favorite scene or character.
- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from on-stage.
- Re-create a scene from the play using clay forms in a box.
- Design a program cover for the play using the title, date, and an illustration inspired by the play.
- Draw an advertisement of program cover for the play.

17. LANGUAGE ARTS:

- Encourage the children to read the book for school credit.
- Choose a character that you liked and write a one-day's diary for that character. Write a letter to a cast member telling what you liked about her or his character.
- Discuss the play. Was there a hero or heroine? A villain? The setting? Was there a moral to the story?
- In 25 words or fewer, describe the plot of the play.
- Discuss the work of a movie/theater critic. Write a newspaper-type review of the play.
- Discuss live theater. Are the actors aware of the audience? Why might an actor change his presentation because of audience reaction? Would it be easy to be an actor? Conduct an interview with a classmate pretending to be one of the actors and find out the actor's feelings about being on stage, memorization, rehearsals, costumes, audience, etc.
- Make a list of all the personnel needed for a play (director, actors, musicians, author, designers-set, costumes, lights & sound, stagehands, choreographer, producer, etc.)

Problem Solving

In the play Mrs. Piggie-Wiggle solves many problems for people by helping them see how their actions are affecting other people in adverse ways. She oftentimes encourages the children she "cures" to take their problems to the extreme, to better understand the consequence of letting things get out of hand. For example, the Won't-Pick-Up-Toys Cure involves letting things get out of control until poor Hubert Prentiss is barricaded in his room by all of the belongings that he has refused to pick up. Have your students learn the art of problem solving and helping others in your classroom.

- Take a shoebox and cut a hole in the lid. Then decorate it in any way you chose.
- Next write down some possible problems on individual slips of paper in the form of a "Dear Abby" letter, but addressed to Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle. For example, you may write, "Dear Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle, I am concerned because my child won't eat his vegetables. What should I do? Signed, Worried Mother."
- Put up a large piece of newsprint on the wall and decorate it to look like a giant newspaper.
- When your students have a break or finish an assignment ahead of time, they may pick one of the problems from the box.
- They should then write a solution to the problem and post it on the giant newspaper.
- If your students are too young to write, you may want to have them share with the class their solution or cure for the problem in a short speech to the rest of the class.
- Encourage your class to add other problems to the Dear Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle box so that other members of the class may help solve them.

For more information on upcoming shows by New Mexico Young Actors, please visit our website at nmyoungactors.org. If your class would like to share drawings or comments with our cast, please send information to:

New Mexico Young Actors
7117 Loma del Norte Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

ENJOY THE SHOW!