



**NEW MEXICO YOUNG ACTORS
THE FROG PRINCE OF SPAMALOT STUDY GUIDE**

THE FROG PRINCE OF SPAMALOT
by Edith Weiss

Based on the Brother's Grimm fairy tale.
Directed by Rachel Ribeiro
Costumes by Jaime Pardo
Sets by Mike and Wendie Cutcher

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to New Mexico Young Actors' production of ***The Frog Prince of Spamalot***. We are offering this study guide as a way to help you prepare your classes for our upcoming production. Included in this guide are a history and synopsis of our story, a list of characters, a vocabulary list and lesson ideas, as well as some audience protocol reminders. We always enjoy hearing from you and your students and look forward to receiving any pictures, stories, or comments about the production. Thank you for your interest in and support of New Mexico Young Actors. We look forward to seeing you soon!

History and Synopsis

Jacob Grimm, born in 1785, and Wilhelm Grimm, born in 1786, were two of nine children born to Philipp and Dorothea Grimm in Hanau, Germany in the last two decades of the 18th century. They spent their lives as librarians, linguists, and folklorists. Between 1812 and 1814, they published two collections of fairy tales numbering 200 in total. These collections have since become known as Grimms' Fairy Tales, the most famous of which have been the basis for countless books, plays, and films ever since. Titles from the Grimm collection that still spark the imagination of children today include *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rumpilstiltskin*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rapunzel*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *The Frog Prince*.

At the top of the play we meet Hyronomous A. Frog in his bog catching flies, which he greatly dislikes. Gloria, the Good Witch, enters and informs Hyronomous that he used to be a prince and in order to return to his former self he must get a kiss from a maiden. The best place to start looking for maidens is at the castle of Spamalot.

Hyronomous arrives at Spamalot and meets the five princesses of the castle playing a game with their handmaiden, Delphinium. Hyronomous joins in the game and Delphinium takes a liking to him. The princesses reluctantly agree to allow Hyronomous to reside in the castle. Sir Lancelot

Pancelot, a dim-witted knight, arrives and recites poetry to his betrothed, Princess Gladiola. Later, the princesses are at the castle with the maid, the cook, and Aunt Queen Bea, and are trying to teach Hyronomous how to dine with proper etiquette. A cream pie is brought to the table and while Hyronomous is trying to help, it ends up in Gladiola's face.

Hyronomous decides he will make it up to Gladiola by becoming a super hero. He rushes into the next scene and carries Gladiola out. Later we learn that Hyronomous accidentally dropped Gladiola down a hill. Sir Lancelot, having learned of the amphibious interloper, enters to rid Spamalot of all frogs. A battle ensues. Sir Lancelot mistakenly duels with his page, Arthur, and they, along with the princesses, fall into a trap previously set by Gladiola intended for Hyronomous. Our hero, believing he has caused enough trouble, declares he will return to his bog. He is stopped by Delphinium, who in her dismay at his departure, gives him a goodbye kiss. Hyronomous changes into the prince and declares his love for Delphinium. The rest of the party is rescued from the trap, Gladiola and Sir Lancelot are married, and all live happily ever after.

Cast of Characters

Hyronomous A. Frog, an odd frog who hates flies

Gloria the Good Witch, no-nonsense good witch

Princess Gladiola, oldest, bratty princess

Princess Tulip, third oldest, athletic princess

Princess Violet, youngest, insecure princess

Princess Peony, fourth oldest, book-loving princess

Princess Rose, second oldest, smart aleck princess

Delphinium, over-worked handmaiden

Sir Lancelot Pancelot, a pompous knight

Arthur the Page, Lancelot's page

Cook, has resigned herself to castle life

Aunt Queen Bea, absent-minded queen

Bertha, Aunt Queen Bea's maid

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION (PRE-PERFORMANCE)

1. *How many of you have experienced a live dramatic performance? What did you see?*

2. *What are some of the differences between seeing a live performance and watching television or going to a movie?*

- Theater features live actors on stage. 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 atmosphere of a live performance 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 costumes and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they portray.
- 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 • Costumes • Props • Director • Stage • Curtain Call • Stagehand • Lobby • Usher • Musical Theater • Orchestra Pit • Playwright • Scenery • Makeup • Actor • Balcony • Cue • Play

4. *Introduce your students to the following terms found in our story:*

bog, dander, handmaiden, amphibian, turgid, paragon, soufflé, curtsey, herpetology, vanity, trivial, rhetorical, gregarious, swoon, dither, knave, thwart, pantaloons

THEATER ETIQUETTE

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. Lights may go out before the performance begins 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.
- Try your best to remain seated once the performance has begun. There is no intermission during the performance of *The Frog Prince of Spamalot*, which is 50 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.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song, dance, or joke.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES (POST- PERFORMANCE)

1. *Write an Epilogue:* Predict what happens next in the story. Write an article in which you tell the readers what happens after the main characters are married. What happened to the other characters in the story? Do the princesses ever find true love? Be as specific as possible and keep with the spirit of the original story.

2. *Discuss real life situations that reflect the moral in The Frog Prince of Spamalot.*

a) Ask the children what important traits they value in another person. Why is it important to be sincere and honest in your relationships? Explore how putting others first is better than bragging about oneself. Why is it important to always consider one's inner qualities rather than a person's physical characteristics?

b) Discuss how Sir Lancelot Pancelot always wants to solve problems with fighting or violence. How could he have changed his approach to conflict? What about his relationship with Princess Gladiola? How could he be more respectful toward her?

c) Reflect on the characters in the play. Ask your students which character they identify with the most. Why? List positive and negative traits of each character. What might each character do to improve his or her flaws?

3. *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? Identify musical instruments that were played. Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings? When a theater production 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.)

4. *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? Suggest a scene (a farm, a school yard, a classroom, a shopping center, a neighborhood, a city street, a castle, an amusement park, a forest) and ask students to describe a basic stage set for the scene.

5. *Costumes*: What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (historical accuracy, sewing, theatrical effects, knowledge of fabric, etc.)? Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?

6. *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 for the play.
- Create a fairy tale castle, including a moat, turrets, walls, and grand rooms.

7. *Language arts*:

- 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 or theater critic. Write a newspaper-type review of the play.
- Read the original fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. Expand that into other Grimm fairy tales and fantasy stories by other authors, such as Hans Christian Andersen. Assign various stories for the students to read and investigate.

8. *Theater*

- 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 discover 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). What do these different jobs contribute to the theatrical production?

9. History

- Research the history of fairy tales. Discuss oral and folk tradition in the dissemination of fairy tales.
- Research the history and biography of the Brothers Grimm.

Resources

Books

Grimm, Jacob & Grimm, Wilhelm. *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1945.

Internet

The story of The Frog Prince: <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/175/grimms-fairy-tales/3066/the-frog-prince/>

Information about the Grimm Brothers: <https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>

A list of over 200 Grimm fairy tales: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimmtales.html>

Classroom fairy tale activity guide: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/tguide/>

Much of this material is contributed with the kind permission of the *Cincinnati Children's Theater*, *Pioneer Drama Service*, and *Plays for Young Audiences*. This study guide was compiled by Billie J. Little, a former Board member of New Mexico Young Actors, Inc., and Paul Bower, Executive Director of NMYA.