

The Marcia P. Hoffman

PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTE

presents the

Bank of America SchoolTime Series

About the Show

Expanding the Classroom

The Great Alphabet Adventure by Julia Flood



The Great Alphabet Adventure

What surprises await Alex in ***The Great Alphabet Adventure!*** As a storm dashes his plans for a night of electronic entertainment, Alex is forced to find another way to spend his time. The string of visitors to his room offers quite a story along with inspiration to read. Enjoy the adventure, from A to Z.

Eckerd Theater Company

Eckerd Theater Company (ETC) is a touring company of professional artists, educators and administrators under the umbrella of The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute, the education center for Ruth Eckerd Hall at the Richard B. Baumgardner Center for the Performing Arts in Clearwater, FL. ETC seeks to provide the finest in performance and arts education experiences to family audiences of all ages. Since its inception in 1988, Eckerd Theater Company has performed for more than one million young people and their families throughout the state of Florida and in venues as far north as Canada and as far west as the Mississippi River.

From eight local performances of its first production in 1988 through 189 performances in the 2007-2008 season, ETC has been a proud ambassador of Ruth Eckerd Hall, creating professional productions of original works, adaptations of classic literature and the finest published scripts for the theater. ETC productions entertain while they explore such themes as diversity, multiculturalism, self-worth, loyalty and tolerance.

ETC began touring the state of Florida in 1991 and national touring began in 1993. Since 1996, the Company has been on the Florida Arts on Tour roster, a state program providing funds to allow productions to travel to remote and underserved parts of the state.

In 1998, Julia Flood took the reins as ETC Artistic Director. In 1999, a State of Florida Challenge Grant provided funds for The Florida Project, a collaborative process bringing national and Florida theater artists and educators together to develop a new theater-for-young-audiences piece about the South. ETC was invited to showcase at both the Southern Arts Exchange in 1999 and the 2002 International Showcase of Performing Arts for Young People, performing alongside companies from Germany, Canada, the U.S. and the U.K.

Since February 2003, Eckerd Theater Company has made its home in the 182-seat Murray Studio Theater in The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute.



Background Information

As Easy as A, B, C

An old Latin saying asserts, “The spoken word is forgotten but the written word remains.” For years, humans have felt the need to record ideas, thoughts and emotions in some enduring way.

The evolution of the alphabet stretches back through many cultures. Think about the cave men. Through pictures (or pictographs), people tried to convey stories or history. The Egyptians used *hieroglyphics* to communicate messages. The first alphabets were developed in China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Central America. The Chinese language is based on a number of different characters that represent things or ideas, while our method of writing applies an alphabet based on sounds of letters and syllables.

The Phoenicians were great traders and city builders and they developed an alphabet first so they could write home from far away. The modern Western alphabet (with some changes) is based on that of the Phoenicians.

The Greeks, who learned the alphabet from the Phoenicians, wrote many books and were very inventive. The Greek alphabet is seen as the link between the ancient alphabets of the Mediterranean world and the alphabet of today. Note the similarity between many of the Greek and Latin letters (in capitals) on the chart.

The Greeks passed the alphabet on to the Romans, who eventually ruled the whole Mediterranean area and the rest of Europe as well. Remember that Latin was an important language for a very long time throughout this whole region. Thus English, Spanish, Italian, French and several other languages are based on Latin. All of these languages use the alphabet the Romans developed.

The need to record ideas and words can be traced

ALPHABETS

Phoenician	Greek	Latin
𐤀	A	A
𐤁	B	B
𐤂	Δ	D
𐤃	E	E
𐤄	H	H
𐤅	K	K
𐤆	Λ	L
𐤇	M	M
𐤈	N	N
𐤉	O	O
𐤊	P	R
𐤋	Σ	S
𐤌	T	T

You cannot open a book without learning something.
- Chinese proverb

I would rather be a poor man in a garret with plenty of books than a king who did not love reading.
- Thomas B. Macaulay

through very important inventions. In 1902, a shorthand machine was developed in France to keep up with the speed of speech. The fountain pen was invented in 1854 and the typewriter in 1882. Letters are tangible language. Joining together in endless combinations to actually show speech, letters convey our messages and tell our stories. While we encounter these tiny shapes hundreds of times a day, we take for granted the long, fascinating history behind one of the most fundamental of human inventions — the alphabet.

Information courtesy of http://www.4to40.com/earth/history/index.asp?article=earth_history_historyofalphabet

Social Studies: History, Geography; Foreign Languages: Comparisons

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Background Information



Exploring the Past

Where and when did children's literature actually begin? The origins of books written for children can be traced through the evolution of storytelling. In ancient times, **oral** tales were shared and then repeated. Adults might have been drawn in by a love story and children by **adventure** or monsters. A good storyteller would use gestures, sounds, attitude, and just the right words to keep the audience's attention. Then the storyteller would look for feedback, whether it be surprise, laughter, or perhaps tears. In time, some storytellers introduced audiences to a "visual story" or *theater* by using puppets to tell their stories.

Some of the first stories told in ancient times were Aesop's Fables, which featured animals and taught moral lessons. In the Middle Ages, little was written for children and few could read. Childhood itself was not a focus and children grew up quickly and accepted responsibility early.

For a period of time, children had to be content primarily with works written for adults. As time passed, **fables** and other tales were written with children in mind. Animal stories remained popular. Remember, there wasn't much distinction between **fantasy** and reality in stories in this period. **Authors** often combined magic and enchantment with the serious. Miracles weren't questioned and many stories sparked the imagination. Books for children began to be full of excitement, wonder and mystery.

During the mid-15th century, the printing press was developed in Europe and enabled printing in large quantities for the first time. Lower production costs resulted in more literature becoming available. Many books for children were instructional, such as *Books of Courtesy*.

In the 17th century, childhood began to take on new importance. Society recognized the needs of children. Religion was a force that encouraged children to read as knowledge of the Bible was emphasized. Colleges were established and essays were written about a child's capacity and need to learn. John Locke

believed it was the responsibility of adults to see to it that children were properly educated. At that time, children were still reading adult works like *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*.

In the 18th century, John Newbery produced the first major publication for children entitled *Little Pretty Pocket Book*. In the early 19th century, *Tales of Mother Goose* presented retellings of **fairy tales** such as *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Sleeping Beauty*. Writings for children were still viewed as somewhat inferior. During this time, the Grimm brothers introduced their folk tales. Some adults viewed these works as adult themed and alarming.

The Victorians followed in The Golden Age of the 1900s. Children's literature flourished. More authors and **illustrators** began turning their talents toward children's books. This was the time of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. For the first time, some books were written purely for enjoyment. British children seemed to prefer stories set in faraway lands while Americans were more attracted to adventures set in America. "Dime Novels" were very popular at this time. School stories and adventure books such as *Treasure Island*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* were written for boys. Domestic stories such as *Little Women* and *Anne of Green Gables* were written for girls. Luckily, with the improvement of printing techniques, illustrators were drawn to children's books. By the beginning of the 20th century, libraries began to have children's sections.

Today we enjoy great diversity in children's books. Works include picture books, fantasy, realistic fiction, informational and more. There is great appreciation for quality as numerous children's book awards have been established including the Newbery Medal (most distinguished American children's book written in a given year) and the Caldecott Medal (most distinguished American contribution to children's book illustration).

Reading is a discount ticket to everywhere.
- Mary Schmich

Information courtesy of <http://www.southernct.edu/~brownm/300hlit.html>

Vocabulary

Show Related

Author—writer of a book, etc; one who makes literary composition his/her profession

Fable—a short narrative, often with animals that speak and act like humans, intended to teach a moral lesson

Narrative—the telling of a story

Galosh—a waterproof shoe or boot

Stern—the rear part of a ship

Oral—spoken

Plot—the pattern of events or main story

Setting—where a story takes place

Character—a person a story is about, a person portrayed in a story

Illustrator—an artist who makes illustrations (pictures) for books, magazines

Valor—courage, boldness, bravery

Fairy tale—a fanciful tale of legendary deeds and creatures, usually intended for children

Fantasy—fiction characterized by fanciful, imaginary elements

Stem—a curved upright beam of a ship or boat

Adventure—an unusual or exciting experience

Doubloon—a former Spanish gold coin

Journey—a trip, usually quite some distance

Wizard—one who practices magic

Voyage—a long journey, usually by sea

Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.
- Margaret Fuller

Definitions courtesy of <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

Art Form Related

Script—the written form of a play, motion picture, or radio or television broadcast

Cast—*noun*, the actors in a play, musical or theatrical production

Rehearse—to practice or recite in private for a public performance

Hand props—the articles or items carried by an actor that help define a character or situation

Set—the scenery for a show or particular scene

Director—one who manages, supervises, and directs a show

Produce—to prepare for public presentation

Block—arranging the movement of the actors by the director as noted in the script

Stage Manager—head of stage management team; one who calls cues and changes of scenery and props

Upstage—away from the audience

Dialogue—conversation between characters in a drama

Kill—to switch off, as in “kill the lights”

Cue—command given by Stage Manager to lighting, sound, or set to take action

Strike—take down the set and remove it from the stage

Downstage—toward the audience

Curtain call—when the cast gathers on stage for bows at the end of a performance

Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.
- Harry Truman

Definitions courtesy of www.theatrecrefts.com/glossary

Expanding the Classroom through Discussion

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

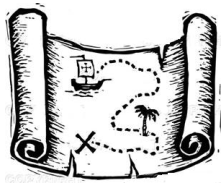
1. What are some of your favorite types of books/stories (mystery, comedy, adventure)? Why?
2. Can you remember one of the first books you ever read by yourself?
3. Which, if any, books have you read more than once? What makes them special to you?
4. Have you seen any movies based on books you have read?
5. How is a play different from a movie?

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. How did this performance make you feel?
2. Which one of Alex' visitors was your favorite? Why?
3. What would you do if the power went out at your home? How would you spend your time?
4. Why do you think Zora made a special visit to Alex?
5. If you could write a play, what would it be about? Describe some of the characters.

There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island.
- Walt Disney

Teacher Guided Activities



A Story Treasure Hunt

A room without books is like a body without the soul.
- Cicero

Have the class select a well-known fable or folk tale. Simplify the plot into a sequence of events that can be transcribed onto cards with short sections of the tale on each. Ask students to hide the cards out of sequence throughout the school or classroom. Give a treasure map showing the exact locations where all the cards are hidden to another class. (Or, with clues, one card can lead to the next.) Instruct groups of students to find the cards and assemble them in the correct order. The treasure is finding the **WHOLE** story. Two classes can trade treasure hunts by putting the stories on cards of two different colors. The treasure hunts go on simultaneously, and when each class has found the other's story, it confirms it by assembling it, learning the plot and sending representatives to retell it or to act it out as a skit for the other class.

Maps should include symbols (N,S,E,W) and keys (to represent certain things/places in the school/classroom) for practice with map reading skills.

Activity courtesy of www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/lessonideas/indexhtml#hunt

Language Arts: Reading, Literary Analysis, Communication; Social Studies: Geography; Theatre: Skills and Techniques

*So please, oh PLEASE, we beg, we pray,
Go throw your TV set away,
And in its place you can install,
A lovely bookshelf on the wall*
- Roald Dahl, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Story Stew



Materials: apron, pot, wooden spoon, storybook, index cards

The teacher wears an apron and supplies a cook pot. Students are told they will be making a story stew today. The teacher explains that like a good stew, a good story has a lot of ingredients. The activity continues as the teacher pulls index cards and discusses what is written on each. Printed on each card is either "Characters" (who is the story about), "Setting" (when and where the story happens), or "Plot" (what happens in the story). Discuss familiar books as examples.

Activities:

- Read a story and identify the elements
- Create a new "story stew" by making up characters, a setting and a brief plot. Students can then develop a story based on the story elements.

Activity courtesy of <http://www.teachers.net/lessons/posts/1353.html>

Teacher Guided Activities

Friendship Partners



Discuss the word “friendship” with the children. What makes a good friend? What are the qualities of a good friend? What things do the students like about their closest friends? What sorts of things do they do together?

1. Read a story to the class about making friends. Identify problems (if any) the characters experience and the steps they take to make new friends.
2. Identify “friendly” vs. “unfriendly” behavior. Discuss ideas/strategies for making new friends.
3. Discuss whether new friends should always be like us. Should they look the same, talk the same way? Why or why not? Can friends teach us new things?

Activity: Pair students up (out of their usual group of friends) and ask them to interview each other and write down (or have the teacher write) some of their partner’s interests: music/TV/movies, school subjects, hobbies, sports, food, etc. (Provide questions specific to your students.) Children should then come before the class with a drawing of one/some of their “friendship partner’s” interests or just describe what they learned about each other. The partners should identify interests that they share as well as any new interests about which they have learned.



When I Grow Up

In *The Great Alphabet Adventure*, Alex meets a variety of characters in different lines of work, e.g., an astronaut, a sea captain, a wizard, a king, a pirate and a scientist, to mention a few. All have very interesting stories to share. Ask the students if they have given thought to what they would like to be when they grow up. Would they like to be a writer, an athlete, a nurse/doctor, a business person?

Read a story about different occupations. Have a class discussion about different careers. Discuss jobs seen in and around the neighborhood.

Activity: Ask students to talk with parents, neighbors and family friends about their job titles, what’s done on the job, how they found their jobs, what skills are needed, what’s good and bad about their job or career choice, etc. Students should ask for something they can bring to school to have the class guess what the job is. Give the example that if the person is a librarian, the child could bring in a book. For a postal worker, he or she could bring in a letter or stamps. The next day, ask students to present their “job items” while the class tries to guess the careers. Share details about the job until someone guesses it correctly. Ask students if the information has helped them in considering what they might want to do when they grow up.

If you wish to expand this activity, divide students into groups and have them act out other professions. Students can continue “career” dramatic play by setting out prop boxes with different clothing and items. In addition, guests can be invited to speak to the class about their professions.

Activity courtesy of http://pbskids.org/berenstainbears/caregiver/Bears_AG_FINAL.pdf (see pp. 37 and 30)

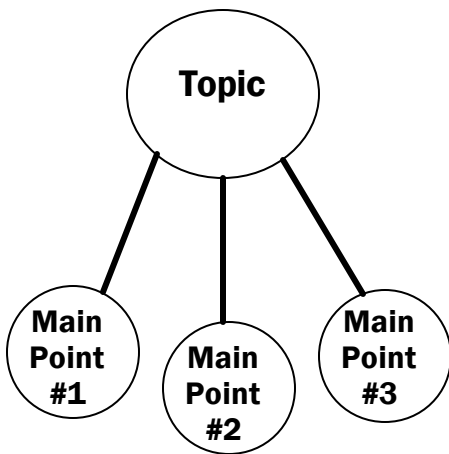
Health Education: Responsible Behavior; Language Arts: Literary Analysis, Writing, Communication;
Theatre: Skills and Techniques, Creation and Communication; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques

Bank of America SchoolTime Series

Florida Writing Connections

Reading is a very important skill we carry through life. Think about why reading is so important to our growth and success. It is your turn to convince others that time spent reading is time well spent. Write about why we should read more. What do we gain from reading and how will it help us later in life? Think about the many different items to read like newspapers, magazines, items on the Internet, etc.

Helpful Hints



Language Arts: Writing

We want to hear from YOU! Write to us at The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall, 1111 McMullen Booth Road, Clearwater, FL

RUTH ECKERD HALL
RICHARD B. BAUMGARDNER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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Additional Resources

Ask your school or local librarian for help in locating these books for you and your students!

Will I Have a Friend?
by Miriam Pfister

Good Night, Good Knight
by Shelley Moore Thomas

How I Became a Pirate
by David Shannon

The Letters Are Lost!
by Lisa Campbell Ernst

Fix-It
by David McPhail

A to Z Mysteries—
The Kidnapped King
&
A to Z Mysteries—
Invisible Island
by Ron Roy

When the TV Broke
by Harriet Ziefert

H is for Home Run
by Brad Herzog

For Older “Bookaneers”:

Treasure Island (The Illust.
Children’s Library)
by Robert L. Stevenson

Captains Courageous
by Rudyard Kipling

The Adventures of Peter Pan
by J. M. Barrie

Check out these Internet
sites for additional
information!

<http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/HistoryofChildLit/>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/themes/abc.shtml>

<http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forkids/kidsclub/flash/index.html>

Student Guide Concepts

Page 1 – Language Arts: Writing, Communication; Theatre: Aesthetic and Critical Analysis; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques

Page 2 – Language Arts: Reading; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques

Page 3 – Language Arts: Reading; Visual Arts: Skills and Techniques

Page 4—Language Arts: Reading; Mathematics: Numbers

