

A Show of Virtues



Teacher's Study Guide

In this original puppet production created and performed by Grey Seal Puppets, puppets enact classic stories that show the difference between right and wrong.

This show, inspired by William J. Bennett's collection *The Children's Book of Virtues*, helps children recognize and put into practice some of life's highest virtues, including courage, perseverance, politeness, and tolerance. Virtues are such an old idea that they sometimes seem to be forgotten. They're not. They're always lingering in the back of our head, waiting for an event or a story to trigger them. For *A Show of Virtues*, we have selected a variety of stories that we hope will trigger these virtues in your head. You'll find that the stories, like virtues themselves, have a familiar quality to them. We decided to use a salesman, played by the puppeteer, as an integral device to the stories and the virtues. The audience can plainly see his character grow as the performance progresses. He realizes, as does the audience, that virtues cannot be sold. However, they should be remembered, and we hope this play brings them to the front of your mind.



ABOUT A SHOW OF VIRTUES

A Show of Virtues was created by Grey Seal Puppets to help children recognize and put into practice some of life's highest virtues. It opens with the appearance of a salesman who brings with him a large trunk filled with things to sell. Like all salespeople, he tries various techniques and pressures to get us, the audience, to buy. However, unlike other salesmen, what he offers are not things; they are virtues.

Enticing us to want these virtues, the salesman tells several stories, each designed to feature a particular virtue. In the course of the performance the salesman and his puppets enact "The Little Hero of Holland" to exemplify courage, "The Tortoise and the Hare" for perseverance, "Please" for politeness, and "Why Frog and Snake Never Play Together" for tolerance.

Courage, perseverance, politeness and tolerance; these are only a few of the fine old character traits known as virtues. This word, "virtue," comes from the Latin word *virtus*, meaning "excellence" or "worth." Why do we need virtues? Here is what William J. Bennett, secretary of education and chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities under President Ronald Reagan, has to say.

"There are practical reasons [for virtues]: Your reputation, for example, is largely the sum of your virtues. There are social reasons. The kind and number of friends you have will depend on your own virtues. And there are, of course, purely unselfish

reasons. Virtues are the character traits that move us to help family, loved ones, and even perfect strangers. In every area of your life, you must constantly make choices about how to act, for your own sake and for others. Many of those choices involve matters of right and wrong, and you can't choose to do the right thing without possessing some virtues."

Like fables, each story in *A Show of Virtues* teaches a single, clear moral lesson. Each shows a virtue in action, sometimes by showing the consequences of its opposite a vice in action. The salesman learns that that virtues can't be bought; they must be earned. He enjoys showing them on stage, and everyone in the audience will enjoy seeing them as well. Their lessons will not be lost. As Bennett reminds us, "The more you witness virtues in action, the better you'll understand them... when virtues are a matter of habit for you, you're well equipped to face life."



THEMATIC VOCABULARY

Courage: being brave in the face of a difficult situation

Perseverance: not giving up, sticking with a task or duty until it is done

Politeness: remembering to be gentle and courteous to others

Tolerance: practicing acceptance of others who are different

Vice: moral corruption or wrong

Virtue: moral excellence or good

Other Words to Know

African thumb harp: a small, hand-held musical instrument in which metal strips are plucked to create different musical tones

Competition: contest

Custom: a regular habit of a group of people

Dike: a wall of earth erected to keep a body of water contained

Disaster: a sudden and harmful event

Drown: to die under water, where it is impossible to breathe

Friendship: a relationship with another person that is special because you like to be and play together

Frog: an amphibious creature that hops and croaks

Get along: to be in harmony and have fun with another person

Hare: rabbit

Molar: one of the big teeth in the back of your mouth

Pace: the rate of moving forward or making progress

Plight: difficult situation

Race: a contest to see who is the fastest

Rudeness: an unkind act that does not respect another person

Salesman: someone whose job it is to sell things

Snake: a reptilian creature that slides along on its belly

Tortoise: turtle

Tuck in bed: to put a child to bed, arranging the covers so he or she will be warm and snugly.

Themes to Discuss and Develop BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Before the performance, introduce your students to the theater experience and to theater etiquette.

LIVE THEATRE VERSUS TV AND THE MOVIES

Attending live theatre is very different from attending a movie or watching TV. Many people think nothing of eating or drinking or even talking while a movie or a TV show is playing. After all, the actors aren't really there in front of us. They're on film or tape, and even if they are "live," they are thousands of miles away. But in the theatre, the puppeteer is working very hard and they are only a few feet away. Eating or talking distracts the puppeteer and prevents other members of the audience from hearing and enjoying as well. And of course, such behavior is considered inappropriate and impolite for the theatre. Attending the theatre should be considered a very formal but fun occasion, like going to a wedding or a fancy restaurant. You may even want to wear something special that day.

AUDIENCE GUIDELINES

- Eating and drinking should not be permitted.
- Talking should not be permitted. Even whispering should be limited.
- Restroom trips should be limited to before and after the performance if at all possible.
- Taking photographs during the performance is extremely distracting to the puppeteer and to the rest of the audience. The puppeteer will be glad to pose for photos after the performance.
- Please turn off all cel phones and pagers during the performance.

Explain to your students that in *Bathtub Pirates* they will see stories performed by puppets. Describe the play the students will see as "puppet theatre." Explain that the puppeteer will tell stories using rod puppets.

A performance by Grey Seal Puppets provides an opportunity to explore first-hand the magic of the stage. For a short time we enter another world, a world of fantasy and exaggeration. We hope you enjoy taking this journey of the imagination with us.

After the Performance DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the various virtues that were covered in the performance.

COURAGE

Work toward a class definition of courage by starting with examples. Ask the students to describe events from stories or real life that show courage in action. Do you need to be big and powerful to be courageous? What does it take to show courage? How can you try to show courage every day in your own life?

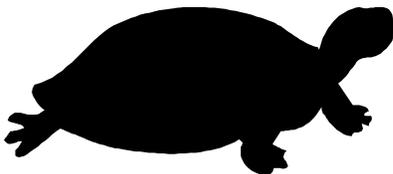
Recall "The Little Hero of Holland" as a story about courage. What did the little girl do for her family and her community? Why was her action courageous? Name other stories about young girls or boys who have been courageous. Describe their courageous actions. Read these stories, or stories and verses from the "Courage" section of Bennett's collection. Compare and contrast the kind of courage portrayed.



Bennett begins his section on "Courage" by saying: "The most common misunderstanding about courage is the belief that courage means not feeling afraid. In truth, courage is not at all about emotions. It is not about how you feel. It's about how you act." Comment on Bennett's insight, using examples from literature, history, or your own life.

PERSEVERANCE

Work toward a class definition of perseverance by starting with examples. Ask the students to describe events from stories or real life that show perseverance in action. Do you need to be big and powerful to persevere? What does it take to show perseverance? How can you try to practice perseverance every day in your own life?



Bennett says in his section on "Perseverance:" "Life isn't just about winning. Much of life is about losing. It's something we all do, over and over again. That's where the virtue of perseverance comes in. We fail and we fail and we fail until, finally, we succeed." Comment on Bennett's insight, using examples from literature, history, or your own life.

Recall "The Tortoise and the Hare" as a story about perseverance. What did the Tortoise do to show this quality? Compare and contrast the actions of the Hare. Name other stories about young people or animals that have persevered. Describe their actions. Read these stories, or stories and verses from the "Perseverance" section of Bennett's collection. Compare and contrast the way perseverance is portrayed.

POLITENESS

Work toward a class definition of politeness by starting with examples. Ask the students to describe events from stories or real life that show politeness in action. What does it take to show politeness? How can you try to practice politeness every day in your own life?

Recall "Please" as a story about politeness. What does John do to show this quality? Compare and contrast his actions with those of Billy. Name other stories about young people or animals that have practiced politeness. Describe their actions. Do you know of any characters who have been rude? What are the consequences of their actions?

Sometimes it's easier to identify rudeness than politeness, because rudeness hurts. Think of a situation in which someone was rude to you. Write about it, and describe your reaction. Now pretend you can change the event. Write about it again. This time make the person who was rude to you into someone who is polite. What is your reaction this time?

Recall the rudeness that happened to you again. This time, try to come up with a way you could have changed that rude action into a polite one. What polite thing could you have said or done, at the time, to transform rudeness into politeness. Keep this idea in your mind for one week, and see if you get a chance, in a real situation, to practice it. What is the result?

TOLERANCE

Work toward a class definition of tolerance by starting with examples. Ask the students to describe events from stories or real life that show tolerance in action. Do you need to be big and powerful to be tolerant? What does it take to show tolerance? How can you try to practice tolerance every day in your own life?

Recall "Why Frog and Snake Never Play Together" as a story about tolerance. How did Frog and Snake meet? What did they enjoy about playing together? How did their mothers react to their friendship? What happened when they saw each other the next time? What do you think they thought about as each played separately? What do you think they would have liked to tell their mothers?



Name other stories about young people or animals who have been the victims of intolerance or who have been practicing tolerance. Describe their actions. Compare and contrast the consequences of their actions.

Discuss differences. How were Frog and Snake different? How were they the same? What did they learn from each other? Have you ever not liked some person because he or she was different? Think about that person: what do you think you could have learned from him or her? What could someone who is different from you learn from you?

VIRTUES AND MORALS

What are virtues? Why is it important to have them? Why is it important to practice them? List as many virtues as you can, including the four shown on stage in *A Show of Virtues*.

In some of the stories shown on stage in *A Show of Virtues*, the meaning of a virtue was made clear by showing its opposite. The opposite of a virtue is a vice. Which characters showed vices? What were the consequences of their actions? Compare and contrast the consequences of vice in action with virtue in action.

A Show of Virtues begins as the salesman comes on stage and tries to sell the audience the "virtues" that he has in his trunk. What did you think of that? Were you interested in "buying" virtues? Can virtues be bought and sold? If you can't buy them, how can you get them? Recall that at the end of the play the salesman confesses that virtues "must be earned, not bought." How can you "earn" virtues? Think of a way, today, that you can "earn" one virtue. What will it be? What will you do?

Each of the stories presented in *A Show of Virtues* has a moral. Say, in one sentence, what that moral is. Now think of a moral you might have heard that would apply. What story would be an example of "Slow but steady wins the race?" What story would be an example of "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again?" What story would be an example of "Never say never"? Select a favorite moral of yours, and write a story that demonstrates it.

Sometimes stories can have several morals. Try retelling "The Little Hero of Holland" as a story about perseverance instead of courage. How would "The Tortoise and the Hare" go if it were intended to show politeness? Or maybe "Why Frog and Snake Never Play Together" could show politeness. Mix up the stories and their morals and try retelling each one with a different lesson.

Activities

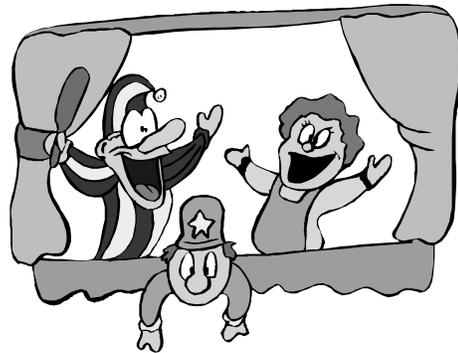
Puppetry

Puppetry is perhaps the most unique of all art forms. It incorporates aspects of both the visual and performing arts—from music and dance, to painting and sculpture, to theatre and mime—yet it remains a distinct art form unto itself. Making and using puppets is an excellent way to acquaint students with the medium and to provide them with tools to use in the post-performance discussions.

There are many different types of puppets. Explain to the classroom that when we say a “type” of puppet, we don’t mean a dog or a cat, or other character that a puppet can be. The type of puppet is determined by how the puppeteer controls, or manipulates, the puppet. Here are just a few of the types of puppets:

HAND PUPPETS

A hand puppet is a puppet that fits over the performer’s hand. The performer’s first finger goes into the head, while the performer’s thumb and little finger go into the arms to control the hands. Two of the most famous puppet characters in history, Punch and Judy, are hand puppets (pictured here).



ROD PUPPETS

A rod puppet is controlled by a stick (or rod) that is attached to the puppet. The rods are usually made of wood or metal. The puppet can be made of any kind of material, including fabric, wood, foam, or papier mache.

MARIONETTES

Marionettes are puppets that are controlled by strings from above. The strings are attached to the puppet’s head, hands, and feet, and are controlled by the puppeteer using a wooden control at the top called an “airplane control.”



CREATE A PUPPET

Language and dramatic arts objectives:

- To describe the good character traits depicted in the play
- To recognize puppetry as a way to illustrate good character traits to children
- To create a puppet that represents a good character trait, strength, or virtue
- To analyze the action of the character through a puppet

Grade level:

Two sets of instructions are included for making puppets. Finger puppets will have more appeal for kindergartners and children in lower grades. Bag puppets are fun for all levels. Both require little preparation and few materials. Time required: 3 class sessions of 45 minutes each.

Materials:

Parents are a valuable resource for puppet-making supplies. Felt scraps, buttons, sequins, yarn, cotton balls and sewing trim are transformed into features with the help of scissors and paste. You will notice that all of the characters in *A Show of Virtues* have distinct appearances and personalities. Stress to your students to be imaginative in creating unique and individual characters as they construct their puppets.

Procedure:

1. Discuss good character traits, virtues, and morals. Why is it important to practice them? How does it help others? How does it help you? Discuss the benefits of practicing good character traits.
2. Discuss the puppets in the performance. What types of puppets were used? (Hand puppets and rod puppets) How did each work? How did they display emotions? Was each puppet effective?
3. Have the students make finger puppets or bag puppets and use them act out scenes where good character traits are illustrated. You can use familiar fairy tales, or the students can write their own stories. These could be scenes that illustrate the benefits of practicing a good character trait, or the consequences of bad actions. Make these shows an ongoing class event to reinforce the importance of knowing and practicing good character traits.

FINGER PUPPET



To make little animal finger puppets, use pinking shears to cut off the top three inches from the fingers of old brown, black or tan gloves. Attach eyes and felt noses and mouths, and appropriate ears to make different types of animal finger puppets.

PAPER BAG PUPPET



For hand puppets, choose bags just large enough that the bottom fold can be easily moved up and down with fingers inserted. Indicate the tiny button placement of facial features on the bottom of the bag.

A LITTLE BOOK OF VIRTUES

Language arts objectives:

- To identify the virtues explored in A Show of Virtues
- To comprehend the many other virtues that could have been explored in A Show of virtues
- To compare a list of virtues explored with those not depicted
- To design and create A Little Book of Virtues

Visual arts objectives:

- To create drawings depicting virtues

Grade level: pre-K through grade 3

Time required: one hour

Materials: Virtue Cards; one piece of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper, scissors, markers, crayons, colored pencils

Procedure:

1. Ahead of time, prepare Virtue Cards by putting the virtues from the Thematic Vocabulary of this guide (see page 2) on index cards. Add cards for the following virtues: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, honesty, loyalty, and faith. Discuss the virtues explored in *A Show of Virtues*. Use the Virtue Cards to encourage the students to describe or define each one.
2. Share the remaining Virtue Cards with the children so that they can recognize some of the many other virtues that could have been explored in *A Show of Virtues*. Use the Virtue Cards to encourage the students to describe or define these virtues.
3. Compare the two lists of virtues. Why do you think courage, perseverance, politeness, and tolerance were chosen for this production? What virtues would you have chosen?
4. Tell the students they are to design and create *A Little Book of Virtues*. They will have to select four virtues to describe and teach. They will make a little book for others to read so that everyone can learn about these virtues.
5. Give each student several pieces of paper. Follow the directions on page 7 for making a book.
6. The cover will be *A Little Book of Virtues* by [student's name]. The inside will be pictures of the best way to present the virtues the student wants to teach. Write the name of the virtue on the page, and then draw a picture about it. Some pictures may go on the facing pages, too.
7. When the books are completed ask for volunteers to share them with the class. Then put them in the class library for reference. Don't forget to refer to them or bring them out whenever the occasion calls for a virtue!

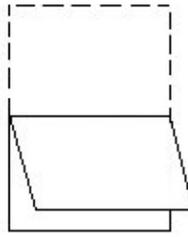
Make a book:

Material needed:

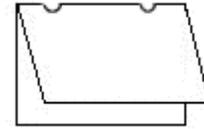
1 piece of construction paper
several pieces plain 8 1/2" x 11" paper
yarn
hole punch

Directions:

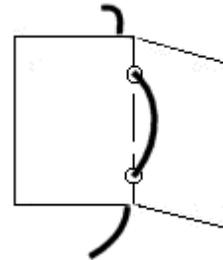
1. Fold construction paper in half



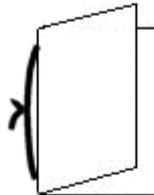
2. Using a hole punch, punch two half holes along the crease of the paper. Unfold the paper to see two holes in the center of the paper.



3. Repeat this procedure with the plain 8 1/2" x 11" papers, taking special care to make sure that the holes are in the same places on each piece of paper.
4. When all the papers have been punched, stack them with the piece of construction paper on the bottom and the plain papers on top so that the holes all line up. Using a piece of yarn, tie the papers together through the holes.



5. Fold the book together. You're done!



References and Resources

STORIES WITH MORALS FOR STUDENTS

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Greer, Colin, and Herbert Kohn, eds..*A Call to Character: A Family Treasury*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.

McClintock, Barbara. *Animal Fables from Aesop*. Boston: David Godine, 1991.

BOOKS OF PUPPETRY FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Baird, Bil. *The Art of the Puppet*. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

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Engler, Larry, and Carol Fijan. *Making Puppets Come Alive: A Method of Learning and Teaching Hand Puppetry*. New York: Taplinger, 1973.

Flower, Cedric, and Alan Fortney *Puppets: Methods and Materials*. Worcester, Mass.: Davis Publications, 1983.

Henson, Cheryl. *The Muppets Make Puppets*. New York: Workman Publishing, 1995.

Meet Grey Seal Puppets

Founded in 1976, Grey Seal Puppets is well known nationwide. The company performs over 250 shows a year from New York to Hawaii, from Canada to Mexico. Their repertoire consists of familiar fairy tales (*The Emperor's New Clothes*), classic folk tales (*Tangle of Tales*) and original stories (*Bathtub Pirates*). Grey Seal travels to theatres such as The Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, The Detroit Museum of Art and The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In addition to live performing, Grey Seal also performs regularly on television, with clients such as The Reimler Agency (Bojangles), WTVI-Channel 42 (local PBS affiliate), the Muppets, Silver Burdett Ginn, and the International Mission Board. Grey Seal Puppets also custom designs and creates mascot characters for sports teams and corporations such as Blimpie Subs and Salads, New Orleans Hornets, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, and Lowe's Motor Speedway.

The company has garnered a number of awards including a "Citation of Excellence" for their adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and their original story called *Bathtub Pirates*. They were also awarded the North Carolina Theatre Conference's Award for leadership in theatre arts and The Puppeteers of America President's Award for outstanding accomplishment in the art of puppetry. Their television work also has been honored with several awards in the industrial and broadcast categories including a prestigious Beacon Award and the ITVA Silver Reel of Excellence.

Grey Seal puppeteer Drew Allison has co-authored two books on polyfoam puppet construction, *The Wit and Wisdom of Polyfoam Puppet Construction* and *The Foam Book*.

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