

Tomato Plant Girl

By Wesley Middleton

Directed by Patricia Snoyer Black

Scenic Design by Holly Windingstad

Costume Design by Rebecca Akins

Lighting Design by William Rios

Sound Design by Sarah Roberts

The Cast:

Tomato Plant Girl. Jodie L. Weiss
Little Girl. Yolanda London
Bossy Best Friend. Elizabeth Polen

School Tour, February– June, 2010
Tempe Center for the Arts Studio Theatre,
April 10-18, 2010

Appropriate for grades K-6

This production is supported in part by:

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**Welcome to Childsplay's
Resource Guide for
Teachers and Parents**

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



**WHERE EDUCATION AND IMAGINATION
TAKE FLIGHT**

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your children for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, resource materials and classroom activities that deal with curriculum connections and a full lesson plan.

The Story:

This powerful exploration of friendship delights young audiences with its sharp dialogue, physical action and playful, high-energy conflict. Little Girl is the new kid in Heretown. Good thing she's got her Bossy Best Friend! The girls share a garden where Bossy is in total control, until the day Little Girl can no longer obey. Bossy has forbidden Little Girl to touch her precious tomato plant. But if the plant doesn't get watered soon, it will die. When Bossy leaves to visit her grandma, Little Girl attempts a valiant rescue, and a messy girl-creature springs out of the earth, spitting up dirt and crying tomato juice tears. Soon, Little Girl is playing new games with Tomato Plant Girl and teaching her to say "please." Maybe Little Girl has found a new Best Friend. But what will they do when Bossy returns? When her friendships collide and Little Girl has to choose, she discovers the power of making up her own rules.



**TARGET.
STORYBOOK
SEASON**



Themes/Curricular Ties:

friendship • bullying • differences • nature •
gardening • peer pressure • knowing right from
wrong • children's games • 6 pillars of
character • fitting in



About Childsplay:

Childsplay is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood, which are the keys to the future.

What We Do:

In addition to our weekend public performances, we also offer three theatre experiences for our school audiences: Field Trips, School Tours and Artist in Residence Programs. Field trip performances, where students come to the theatre and see a production, can be booked by contacting Beth Olson at 480.921.5757. School Tour Performances, where we come to your school or other location and perform, can be booked by contacting Jaime Fox at 480.921.5751. Artist in Residence Programs, which can be individually designed to meet the needs of your school or can be based on one of our many existing formats (page to stage, creating original work, use of drama to teach curriculum), can be booked by contacting Patricia Black at 480.921.5750



Our Home:

The Sybil B. Harrington Campus of Imagination and Wonder at Mitchell Park (formerly Mitchell School) is where you'll find our administrative offices, costume shop, prop shop, rehearsal spaces, and Academy classrooms. We love to hear from our audiences. Send your letters and reviews to:

Address: 900 S. Mitchell, Tempe, AZ 85281

Phone: 480-921-5700

Email: info@childsplayaz.org **Web:** www.childsplayaz.org

We perform at the Tempe Center for the Arts
700 W. Rio Salado Parkway
Tempe, AZ 85281

Theater Etiquette:

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:

- Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our school performances.
- Stay seated during the performance.
- Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance. Remember, the actors can see and hear the audience just like the audience can see and hear them.
- Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.
- Food, candy, gum and beverages will not allowed in the theater/during the performance.
- Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device is not allowed in the theater/during the performance at any time.
- Following the performance (time permitting) there will be a brief question/answer session where audience members will have an opportunity to ask the actors questions about the production.



What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone does something to intentionally hurt another person and to have power over that person (a target). Bullying can include hitting, kicking, pushing, teasing, ruining someone's personal property, excluding someone from an activity or social situation, name calling and other horrible behaviors. No one deserves to be bullied and it is never an acceptable behavior. The typical bully wants to have power and control over another person. They might feel badly about themselves and feel better when they make someone else feel worse than they do. They might think very highly of themselves and think they are better than others and that it's alright to be mean. Bullies will often pick on people who are different than others, who appear helpless and who are isolated. If you are being bullied you can protect yourself by doing three things: don't react the way the bully wants you to (crying, getting mad, etc.), never let yourself be isolated or alone (think buddy system) and tell an adult (if the first adult doesn't help you, find an adult who will). It is NEVER alright to bully another.

Source: www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org (Pacer Center Kids Against Bullying, great resource for kids and teachers)

Questions to Ask Before Seeing the Production:

- 1) What kind of games do you like to play with your friends? Do you or any of your friends like to make up rules or change the rules? Does it ever cause problems? How do you solve problems when they arise?
- 2) What do you think of when you hear the word bullying? What does it mean? Give some examples of bullying. What are ways that you can hurt people with words?
- 3) What are some things that make people different from one another? Sometimes we make up ideas in our heads about a person because of where they're from, or how they dress or speak. Is it OK to think these things even though they might not be the truth? Have you ever had an idea about someone only to find out it wasn't true once you got to know that person? Is there a way you can help new people to understand rules while still being kind to them and accepting their differences? Give an example.
- 4) If you had a secret place that you could go to get away from the world, where would it be? Describe it in detail. What would you do there? How would you feel there?
- 5) Tomato Plant Girl is an original story, not based on an existing book. How do you think a playwright comes up with ideas for plays? How do they take a small idea and

turn it into a story with a beginning middle and end?

6) If someone very special to you was leaving forever, what item of yours would you give to them and why?

7) What are the things that a tomato plant needs to live? What do you need to do in order to maintain plants in a garden?

Questions to Ask After Seeing the Production:

- 1) All plays have three P's: People in a Place with a Problem. Where does the play take place (setting)? Who are the people (or characters)? What are the problems (conflicts)? What happens at the beginning of the play? The middle? The end?
- 2) If you could play any character in the play, which character would you want to play and why? Which character do you feel like you understand the most? Do you know any people who are like any of the characters in the play?
- 3) Bossy Best Friend is indeed "bossy." Do you have any friends who tend to be bossy? How do you or would you handle a friend who is bossy?
- 4) One of the characters speaks in a made up language. What tools does she use to communicate and make the other characters and the audience understand what she's saying? What else does the actress do to make you believe she is from a different world?
- 5) What makes a good friend? What do friends do for one another? Give examples of how the characters in the play are or are not good friends.
- 6) Peer pressure is when someone in your age group tries to get you to do something you don't want to do. Give examples of peer pressure from the play. Now give examples of peer pressure from your own life. Can peer pressure be considered bullying? Why or why not?
- 7) Which games do the characters play in the story? What kind of toys do they play with? What are the rules they play by? Who makes those rules? What kind of games do you like to play with your friends? Do you or any of your friends like to make up or change the rules? Does it ever cause problems?
- 8) The Tomato Plant Girl grows throughout the play. Which other character grows and in what way?

Classroom and Homework Activities Connected to Arizona Education Standards:

Minute Activities:

5

1) Sometimes even the best of friends don't get along. Even though there are unspoken rules of friendship (like being trustworthy and kind) it might be helpful for friends to set boundaries or rules for their friendship. In pairs, come up with a list of five or more rules that friends could follow in order to keep their relationship fair and free of problems. Share your list with the rest of the class. **Social Studies: G1: S3: C4: PO2: Treating others the way you'd like to be treated**

2) The actress playing the Tomato Plant Girl give a plant human qualities. This game give other objects human qualities. Guide the students through the following: Find a place where you can work on your own. Imagine that you are: a burning candle getting lit and slowly melting, bacon in a pan heating up and beginning to sizzle, a flower growing and opening up and then closing for the night, and popcorn that starts as a kernel and slowly begins popping. **Theatre: Beginning: S1: C1: PO101: Imagine, describe, and become characters**

3) Calling someone a name is an example of bullying. In 3 minutes, come up with a list of as many inappropriate names as you can think of (G rated, please). Write the names on the board. How many of you wrote down the same names? How would you feel if someone called you one of these names? **Writing: G1: S2: C4: PO 2: Use a variety of words.**

4) Bossy Best Friend and Little Girl have a "proper buddy" handshake. In pairs, come up with your own secret ritual handshake. Your handshake must have a least five steps and can include other parts of the body. Share with the class. As a class, create a secret classroom handshake based on ideas that you observed during the sharing. **Theatre: Beginning: S1: C1: PO 103: Collaborate and come to a consensus**

Minute Activities:

15

1) Tomato Plant Girl turns her stick into Barbie. This is an object transformation game.

You'll need several everyday objects like a cardboard box, an umbrella, a Frisbee or a plastic cup. Start with one object and say "*this is not a box*" (or whatever the object is). Then, ask for a volunteer to come up and make the object become something else by doing something with it (for example, sit on the box so we know it's a chair). See how many different ways you can use the object and then try it with a different object! **Theatre: Intermediate: S1: C2: PO 204: Communicate through movement, vocal, visual, or written expression**

2) Write a letter to someone with instructions on how to take care of something you care about (dog, cat, etc.). Make sure the instructions are clear and concise. Have a classmate read the instructions and ask them if they understand them. **Writing: G2: S1: C3: PO1: Reread original draft for clarity**

3) Bossy Best friend has many rituals when she plays games (things that are done over and over the same way). Remember Objects Where is a game where a location is chosen (ex. a kitchen) and one person gets up and pantomimes a simple activity in that space (opening a cabinet). The next person gets up and pantomimes the exact same activity and then adds on another step (pull a glass out and set it on the counter). Keep adding steps and see how many you can remember. When someone makes a mistake, it's time to start a new round. Make sure students are clear in pantomime and location of items. See how many actions you can remember! **Theatre: Intermediate: S1: C2: PO 204: Communicate sensory images through movement, vocal, visual, or written expression**

Minute Activities:

30

1) Imagine you are a character from the play. Write a journal entry from that character's point of view that describes how they feel about the other two characters in the play. Is the character confident about her relationship with the others? Does she have any concerns about the others? Has another character made her feel happy, angry or confident? Does she have opinions about the actions of the others? Write a journal entry from each character's point of view. **Writing: G4: S3: C1: PO1, Narratives**

2) Talk about examples of peer pressure in the play. In pairs, play out peer pressure scenarios. The first time through, play the scene with a negative outcome. Replay the scene with a positive solution.

Use examples from the play or try one of these:

- You are at school taking a test. The person sitting next to you is cheating and offers the test answers to you.
- Your friend is picking on someone who is different; they try to get you to pick on the kid, too. **Theatre: Beginning: S1: C1: PO101: Imagine, describe, and become characters**

3) Get in teams of three, two players speak different gibberish languages, and one ambassador is there to translate their conversation. The third player understands both languages and acts as the interpreter: the interpreter listens to one player and, turning to the other, translates what was communicated using English. The second player then responds to the first player's communication using gibberish, which the interpreter translates for the first player, again using English. Conversation continues back and forth between the two foreigners through the ambassador, who always speaks English.



Lesson Plan: Learning to Play the Game...Correctly

Target Grades: 2-6

Lesson Overview:

This lesson will allow students to explore the power dynamics between different roles seen in *Tomato Plant Girl* like being a leader, a follower, a teacher, a student and a friend.

Length of Lesson: 60 minutes

Instructional Objectives:

- Students will use their bodies to explore the power dynamics between leading and following.
- Students will create characters and respond to others according to a fictional status.
- Students will learn to communicate through sound and motion to teach activities to others who don't speak the same language.

Arizona State Standards:

Theatre-Intermediate: S1: C1: PO 103. Demonstrate the ability to collaborate while coming to consensus in the dramatic process.

Theatre-Intermediate: S2: C1: PO 202. Discuss and implement the skills that address social issues in the collaborative process (e.g., accept leader/follower roles, how to negotiate differences of ideas) in an informal production and other school-related projects.

Grade 5-Writing: S2: C1: PO 2. Identify the theme (moral, lesson, meaning, message, view or comment on life) of a literary selection.

Supplies:

Deck of playing cards, Paper, Pencils

Instructional Plan:

Warm Up (Option 1): Mirroring: Ask students to get into pairs or assign pairs. Have the pairs of students turn to face one another with about 2-3 feet between them. Let them choose who will be A and who will be B. The A partner will begin by doing a small movement with their body which the B partner will try to mirror exactly. Remind students that when mirroring it will be the opposite side of the body that moves i.e. when A moves her right hand B will move his left. Encourage students to move slowly and deliberately to make the movement easier to follow. After A gets the hang of being the leader, switch making B the leader and A the follower. As students are performing this activity, make observations about their work commenting on their synchronicity.

Warm Up (Option 2): Status Cards: Talk briefly with students about status referencing a deck of playing cards; which cards are the ones with highest (Ace, King, Queen)? The ones with lowest (2, 3, 4)? How would these different levels of society be treated differently? Hand out one card from a regular deck of playing cards to each student explaining that they are not to look at their own card. Once each student has a card, ask everyone to place their card face side out on their foreheads and hold them there so others can see their status, but they themselves can not. Ask students to start milling about the room

treating everyone differently according to their status level on their card. Students should be reacting to others, but also noticing how others are reacting to them. After a few minutes, ask everyone to freeze and line up highest to lowest in status, placing themselves along the line where they think they fit. Once in a line have them look at their own card and see if they placed themselves correctly.

Target Activity: After warm-up, ask students to return to their desks and think of one activity they really like doing. Students will write down this activity on a piece of paper which they will keep hidden from other people in class. Tell students that they will be teaching other members of the class how to do the activity they have written down, but the catch is they will not be allowed to use regular language to teach it. Instead students will have to use any kind of gibberish, a made up language or sounds, to help them describe and teach the correct way to accomplish this activity. Students may also use their bodies to act out the activity, but must use gibberish in some way. Now place students in groups of 4-5. In these groups each student will have to teach their activity to the other members of their group using the gibberish language. The members of the group who are learning the activity must understand and be able to perform the activity correctly before moving on to the next student who will then teach their activity in gibberish. Even if this takes a little while, remind groups not to give away their activity by telling what it is, perhaps just try another way of saying it. Continue until all students in each group have taught their activity. Ask each group to pick their favorite activity they have just learned. Each group will be performing this activity for the class while the person who taught it narrates the action in gibberish. As activities are performed students in the audience will raise their hands to guess the activity.

Assessment:

After groups perform, ask students about their experiences with power both in the warm-up activity and target activity. In the warm-up activity was it easier to be the leader or the follower? Which one did you enjoy more and why? What was challenging in the main activity about having to teach people something when you didn't speak each other's language? What made learning the activity challenging? Were you ever frustrated as the leader or follower and why?

Extensions:

1) During or after the lesson teach and implement a system to both praise and critique the work of peers in class. Ask the students in each group to provide other group members with one thing about the way they taught their activity that you enjoyed and another thing that might make it better if they were going to do it again. This can be done in writing or verbally in each group. Remember that all feedback must be given in the affirmative. No negative comments, i.e. "I didn't like..." or "This was bad..."

2) Have students write a letter to one of their friends explaining what makes them a good friend and why they are glad to have a great friendship. Letters do not have to be given to the person they are intended for, but might be a nice thing to do!

Author: Rachel Hamilton, Teaching Artist

Books to Check Out:

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham,
Member, National Board, Association for Library Service to Children



Friendship

Best Friends and Drama Queens by Meg Cabot
Best Friends for Frances by Russell Hoban
A Birthday for Bear by Bonny Becker
Elephant's Cannot Dance by Mo Willems
Harry and Horsie by Katie Van Camp

Bullying

Golden and Grey: The Nightmares that Ghosts Have by Louise Arnold
Beany and the Meany by Susan Wojciechowski
Freckleface Strawberry and the Dodgeball Bully by Juilanne Moore
Calvin Coconut: Trouble Magnet by Graham Salisbury

Differences

Poodle and Hound by Kathryn Lasky
Elvis and Olive by Stephanie Elaine Watson
I Love Saturdays y Domingos by Alma Flor Ada
People by Peter Spier

Nature

A Closer Look by Mary McCarthy
Fiona Loves the Night by Patricia MacLachlan
In My World by Lois Ehlert
Henry Hikes to Fitchburg by D. B. Johnson
Out of the Ocean by Debra Frasier

Gardening

The Gardener by Sarah Stewart
Uno's Garden by Graeme Base
The Whole Green World by Tony Johnston
The Curious Garden by Peter Brown
Strega Nona's Harvest by Tomie DePaola

Peer Pressure

Pretty Is by Elizabeth Ann Holmes

Fitting In

Bid Bad Wolves at School by Stephen Krensky
Superhero Max by Lawrence David
Joshua T. Bates Takes Charge by Susan Shreve Richards

All materials are available through your local library. Check it out!

Interesting Internet Links:

www.kidsgardening.org, lots of resources on all things related to gardening for kids and teachers alike

www.biology4kids.com/files/plants_main.html, all about biology and how plants grow

www.gameskidsplay.net, a wonderful catalog of children's games

www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids, bullying resource page for children and adults

www.mbgnet.net/bioplants/grow.html, link to lesson plan on how plants grow

www.ncpc.org, National Crime Prevention Council, link to bullying prevention

For Parents and Teachers:

Go to www.wamu.org and click on Diane Rehm, archives, to check out two great broadcasts related to bullying:

January 11, 2010: Carl Pickhardt, author of *Why Good Kids Act Cruel* and *The Everything Parent's Guide to Positive Discipline*

December 30, 2009: Jodee Blanco, author, of *Please Stop Laughing at Us* and *Please Stop Laughing at Me*



Plant tomato seeds and track their progress. Draw a picture of the seed as it grows and record the size of it. Here's how to get started:

~Buy tomato (or other) seeds and planting soil.

~Plant seeds about 1/4 deep in egg cartons or small cups (poke a small hole in the bottom so water can drain).

~Water daily and make sure you keep seedling near a source of light.

~Record changes in your seedling every day (or every other day). Write down the date, the height of the seedling a draw a picture of what it looks like.

Date: _____

Inches Tall: _____

This is what my plant looks like:

Date: _____

Inches Tall: _____

This is what my plant looks like:

Date: _____

Inches Tall: _____

This is what my plant looks like:

Date: _____

Inches Tall: _____

This is what my plant looks like:

Date: _____

Inches Tall: _____

This is what my plant looks like:

Date: _____

Inches Tall: _____

This is what my plant looks like:



Design a tomato plant (or other kind of vegetable) seed packet. Search the internet for seed packets and click on images to find examples (vintage seed packets are the best). Sketch out your design with a pencil first and then fill in with color (colored pencils, paints or crayons). Cut it out, put a popsicle stick between the two pieces, paste front to back, and display the packets in a pot of dirt in the classroom.

Some ideas to help you:

- ~Create a name for the company that sells the seeds.
- ~What kind of seed is it? If it's a tomato, what variety of tomato is it (you can make up your own if you want)?
- ~Add other information to the back of the packet (how many seeds, instructions on how to plant, which state or country the seeds are from, which region of the country they grow best in, etc.)

Front of packet

Blank area for drawing the front of the seed packet.

Back of packet

Blank area for drawing the back of the seed packet.