the cat in the hat
The Cat in the Hat is a book by acclaimed children’s author, Dr. Seuss. Dr. Seuss is a pseudonym for Theodor Seuss Geisel, who published his first children’s book, And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street, in 1937. Twenty years later, a book called Why Johnny Can’t Read and an article named “Why Do Students Bog Down on the First R?” claimed that most books and illustrations intended for children were boring and unimaginative. That’s when two publishing companies challenged Dr. Seuss to use 220 vocabulary words for new readers to write a children’s early reading primer. The result was The Cat in the Hat.

In the story, Sally and her brother are stuck inside their house on a rainy day, staring out the window with nothing to do. But in walks a mischievous cat wearing a red and white striped hat. He introduces them to several indoor games, creating a mess. The family’s pet fish is unhappy at the Cat’s antics and thinks the Cat should leave at once. The Cat says he does not wish to leave and decides to show the children a new game. Bringing in a big red box, he introduces Thing One and Thing Two to Sally and her brother. As things grow out of control, the children realize the Things must be stopped. They are finally able to catch the Things but the house is in complete disarray! Will their house ever be the same? Can the kids clean up before mom comes home? And when their mother returns, will they tell her the truth about what’s occurred that afternoon?

This staged adaptation helps introduce children to several important concepts:

- What trust is and who you can trust
- What it means to be responsible
- What is wrong and inappropriate behavior and how we should react to it
- The value of telling the truth

Childsplay is an Arizona-based professional non-profit theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families. Founded in 1977, Childsplay is a nationally and internationally respected professional theatre company whose chosen audience is children. The company subscribes to the philosophy that young people deserve challenging, thought-provoking theatre of the highest artistic quality. Their respect for children’s intelligence and creativity drives the company to produce new and innovative works by theatre’s finest artists.

Childsplay’s adaptation of The Cat in the Hat was adapted from Dr. Seuss’s book by Katie Mitchell. It was directed by David Barker, with the following individuals contributing to the creative team:

- John Emery, Scenic Design
- D. Daniel Hollingshead, Costume Design
- Jennifer Setlow, Lighting Design
- Chris Neumeyer, Sound Design
Of all of Dr. Seuss’s works, why did you choose *The Cat in the Hat* to put on stage? Dr. Seuss’ *The Cat in the Hat* is a beloved story that we knew would spark excitement across generations of families. It is one of those truly great titles that attracts the attention of audiences while presenting an exciting challenge for our creative team! There are many elements to the book that are hard to imagine coming to life on stage: The appearance of the Things, The Clean-Up Machine, The Balancing Act with The Cat and more! Bringing this book to life has been a rewarding experience for audiences and Childsplay alike!

Some of Dr. Seuss’s themes—for instance, disobeying the rules, letting a stranger into the house—are both exciting and potentially disastrous for young readers, if taken literally. What does your performance do to make sure the audience understands that they “should not try this at home?” Childsplay prefers to position young people as smart, savvy, and exceptionally moral human beings. Whenever possible we prefer not to preach at young people, but provide opportunities for young people to consider and weigh the consequences of their decisions, both big and small. We choose and create scripts that tell stories of young people in situations where something significant can be learned, even in humorous and fantastical situations like the Cat presents to Sally and her brother. When Sally, the Fish, and the Boy ask the audience “What would YOU do if your mother asked you?” the young people in the audience must consider what they would do in the same situation after having watched the disaster the Cat created.

How much work does it take to put on a production like this one? It takes a lot of work to put on this production! The touring company is made up of 6 actors and 2 production staff. Everyone in the company is participating in loading and unloading the van, driving from city to city and maintaining props and costumes. The stage manager and deck chief work together to set up sound and focus lights at every venue. The production also receives a lot of support from the Childsplay Production staff in Tempe, AZ. The associate production manager books all of the hotels and confirms with the venues in advance all of the company’s needs. The marketing department arranges press opportunities in advance of the cast arrival in each city. The production was designed and created by Childsplay’s production staff months before the first performance in Tempe. Every piece you will see on stage is carefully considered and thought out to make sure it could do everything the show requires it to do as well as be ready to stand up to the test of time of the tour.

How does your audience react to the performance? Audiences around the country are thoroughly enjoying the show. (In fact, this is Childsplay’s largest national tour to date!) We find that it is a special and unique experience for young people to watch a story they know come to life, and our audiences’ reactions are proving that to be true!

Can you tell us more about Childsplay? How do your performances deliver on the promise: “At Childsplay we believe that young people deserve to experience challenging, thought-provoking theatre of the highest artistic quality?” Childsplay is an Arizona-based theatre company comprised of professional artists who perform for and teach young audiences. We believe that young people deserve the BEST: the best actors, the best directors, the best set designs, costumes and more! As a company, we are also dedicated to producing stories that are relevant to the unique experiences of young people today. This means that we often write brand new plays for young people that speak to new, timely issues, as well as produce beloved stories that spark dialogue and creative play long after the curtain has closed.
The P.E.R.F.O.R.M. activities will enable students to get the most out of a SchoolTime performance.

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<tr>
<th>PREPARE for the performance</th>
<th>STUDENT ACTIVITY</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prepare for the performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learn More About Dr. Seuss</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Read <em>The Cat In the Hat</em> with your students and ask them some of these questions:</td>
<td>Bring in other Dr. Seuss books and have them talk about the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What do you know about <em>The Cat in the Hat</em>?</td>
<td>• Which Dr. Seuss book is your favorite? Why?</td>
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<td>• What are some pictures you remember seeing in the book?</td>
<td>• Do you think Dr. Seuss is a real doctor?</td>
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<td>• How do you think the play will be like the book?</td>
<td>• Do you like books that rhyme?</td>
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<td>• How will it be different than the book?</td>
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<th>EXPERIENCE the performance</th>
<th>Observation</th>
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<td><strong>How to experience the performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pay special attention to the costumes. Do they make you remember the pictures from the book?</strong></td>
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<td>As you are waiting for the performance to begin, ask your students to experience the performance with all of their senses.</td>
<td>Think about how different it is to have real actors playing the roles of the Cat, Sally and her brother, Thing One and Thing Two than reading about them. Were the pictures in your head similar to how the actors spoke and acted?</td>
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<td>• How does the performance make them feel?</td>
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<td>• What parts of the performance speak to them most strongly?</td>
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<th>REFLECT, RESPOND and READ</th>
<th>Compare and Contrast</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reflect and respond to the performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Think about your favorite Dr. Seuss book. How do you think the theater company that presented <em>The Cat in the Hat</em> would present your chosen book?</strong></td>
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<td>Reread <em>The Cat In the Hat</em> to the class and ask them to reflect on the performance they’ve just seen. Ask these questions:</td>
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<td>• What was your favorite part of the play?</td>
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<td>• Which character did you like the best and why?</td>
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<td>• If you were an actor and could play any of the characters, which would you want to play and why?</td>
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<tr>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>Word Rhyme</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focus on Words</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cat rhymes with hat and what else? Make a list of the words cat rhymes with, as quickly as you can. See who has the most words.</strong></td>
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<td>As a class, make a list of words that you remember from the play. Find at least three words that rhyme with each word on your list. You can do this as a class or individually and have a contest to see who can finish first.</td>
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<tr>
<th>ORIGINATE</th>
<th>Cleaning Machine</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Create an original work of art</strong></td>
<td><strong>Using bodies, create a cleaning machine like the one the Cat used. One person starts by choosing a movement and a sound for their part of the machine. Then others add on one at a time becoming a different part of the machine. Place some objects around the room and work together to clean them up. See if you can start the machine up and then slow it down and stop.</strong></td>
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<td>Prepare the students to perform in your classroom. Talk to them about using their imagination to create a new artistic expression inspired by the art form they’ve just experienced. Break the students into small groups and create the cleaning machine.</td>
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<th>REHEARSE</th>
<th>Practice your performance</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rehearsal</strong></td>
<td><strong>It’s time to practice. You might have improvised at first, but now it’s time to prepare to share with an audience.</strong></td>
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<td>Introduce the concept of rehearsal which allows students to build confidence and grow as an artist.</td>
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<th>MAKE magic</th>
<th>Share your art</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td><strong>It’s time to share your creation. After you’re done, be sure to talk with your audience to hear what they thought. Listen to their reactions. Were they inspired by your creation?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a stage area and an audience area. Introduce and reinforce positive response and constructive critiquing.</td>
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NJ ARTS STANDARDS
NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

NJ Arts Standards
1.1 The Creative Process
1.2 History of Arts & Culture
1.3 Performance
1.4 Aesthetic Response & Critique

National Arts Standards
1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
7: Perceive and analyze artistic work
8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

NJ Preschool Standards (2014)
Standard 0.3: Children identify and express feelings.
Standard 0.5: Children exhibit pro-social behaviors.
Standard 1.3: Children express themselves and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

FIND THE STANDARDS – For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:
COMMON CORE STANDARDS - www.corestandards.org/
NJ ARTS STANDARDS - www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2009/1.pdf
NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS - www.nationalartsstandards.org

RESOURCES

VIDEO
www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jK6IWJKUU

BOOKS
Fox in Socks
Green Eggs and Ham
One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish
The Lorax
The Sneetches
Yertle the Turtle

On Children’s Early Reading Literacy:
Why Johnny Can’t Read and What You Can Do About It by Rudolf Flesch

ONLINE RESOURCES
Seussville
www.seussville.com/

Links to great lessons and activities and even a video of the book read by Mrs. Obama and her daughters: www.mpmschoolsupplies.com/ideas/3227/the-cat-in-the-hat/

Learn more about any Dr. Seuss character:
www.seussville.com/#!/characters

A biography of Dr. Seuss:
www.biography.com/people/dr-seuss-9479638

Online activities connected to The Cat in the Hat:
pbskids.org/catinthehat/printables/

Some Cat in the Hat printables:
www.earlymoments.com/Fun-Activities/The-Cat-in-the-Hat-Fun-Activities/

On Children’s Early Reading Literacy:
Why Johnny Can’t Read and What You Can Do About It by Rudolf Flesch
To pronounce the name Dr. Seuss the way Geisel’s family did, you would say Zoice, not Soose. Seuss, a Bavarian name, was Geisel’s mother’s maiden name. Theodor Seuss Geisel would claim that he adopted the name “Dr. Seuss” so he could save his actual name for his Great American Novel. He was never more than an honorary doctor, either. He had considered a career as an English professor, but realized he loved drawing more. Eventually, his alma mater, Dartmouth, would give him the first of many honorary doctorates. But “Dr. Seuss” was always a fiction. Childless himself, he wrote in the tradition of many children’s authors who never had children of their own, including Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, Beatrix Potter, Margaret Wise Brown, Crockett Johnson, and Maurice Sendak. The Cat in the Hat, published in 1957, was Seuss’s 13th children’s book. He wrote the book because of his concern that reading primers, such as Dick and Jane, were boring and not engaging. Contemporary writers, Rudolf Flesch, who wrote Why Johnny Can’t Read – and What You Can Do About It (1955), and John Hersey’s article “Why Do Students Bog Down on the First R?” (Life, 1954), alerted him to the issue. Geisel, asked to attempt a more entertaining book with a limited vocabulary list, nearly gave up. Scanning the list for the third time, he said he’d title the book with the first two words on the word list he was given that rhymed: cat and hat.

One of the reasons Seuss’s books are so enduring—and have appealed to generations of children—is their emphasis on rhyme. Of the 44 books written and illustrated by Dr. Seuss, only four are in prose. If we add books illustrated by others, or written under another name, or co-authored, or published posthumously, then the total number of books is 66, with only five in prose. They are also memorable because he depends on the meter of the limerick, which may not be considered high poetry, but is easily understood and recalled.

Seuss had a lot of fun responding to questions about his work. Once, when asked where he got his ideas from, he created this elaborate answer on the spot: “This is the most asked question of any successful author. Most authors will not disclose their source for fear that other, less successful authors will chisel in on their territory. However, I am willing to take that chance. I get all my ideas in Switzerland, near the Forka Pass. There is a little town called Gletch, and two thousand feet up above Gletch there is a smaller hamlet called Uber Gletch. I go there on the fourth of August every summer to get my cuckoo clock repaired. While the cuckoo is in the hospital, I wander around and talk to the people in the streets. They are very strange people, and I get my ideas from them.” The Cat in the Hat sold nearly a million copies by the end of 1960, delighting educators and children alike. The book’s success inspired Seuss, his wife Helen, and Phyllis Cerf to found Beginner Books, a division of Random House that published books to help children learn to read. In the fall of 1958, The Cat in the Hat Comes Back and four other titles launched the Beginner Books series, which would soon include P. D. Eastman’s Go, Dog. Go! (1961), Stan and Jan Berenstain’s The Big Honey Hunt (the first Berenstain Bears book, 1962), and Seuss’s own Green Eggs and Ham (1960).
**vocabulary**

**Costume** – the clothes that are worn by someone (such as an actor) who is trying to look like a different person or thing.

**Dick-and-Jane** – relating to a book for beginning readers using a small set of basic words that are frequently repeated.

**Limerick** – a kind of humorous verse of five lines, in which the first, second, and fifth lines rhyme with each other, and the third and fourth lines, which are shorter, form a rhymed couplet.

**Literacy** – the quality or state of being literate, especially the ability to read and write.

**Play** – the stage representation of an action or story.

**Primer** – an elementary book for teaching children to read.

**Rehearsal** – an event at which a person or group practices an activity (such as singing, dancing, or acting) in order to prepare for a public performance.

**Responsibility** – the state or fact of being responsible, answerable, or accountable for something within one’s power, control, or management.

**Rhyme** – verse or poetry having correspondence in the terminal sounds of the lines.

**Rules** – a principle or regulation governing conduct, action, procedure, arrangement, etc.

**Stranger Danger** – the danger to children and adults, presented by strangers. The phrase stranger danger is intended to sum up the danger associated with adults whom adults/children do not know.
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