

# Pushcart Players

STUDY GUIDE



# Stone Soup

and  
other  
stories

**R**ooted in the belief that the arts are basic to education, Pushcart Players joins the literacy movement with a collection of folk tales brought to life through the magic of story-telling. Entitled "Stone Soup and Other Stories," this charming presentation drawn from international classics is an excellent springboard for subsequent reading and reading-related activities as well as discussion and projects on multi-cultural themes.

"Stone Soup and Other Stories" contains story favorites from Africa, India, Eastern Europe and our own United States. Filled with music, color, fantasy and fun, each tale gently raises value clarification issues while also introducing the spirit and customs of different cultures.

This study guide is designed to assist teachers, parents and group leaders in preparing students for the presentation. It also offers suggestions for discussion and reading tie-in activities following the program. It is our hope that the material suggested in this guide will be tailored to the age and interests of your students and presented in a nurturing and supportive classroom or home setting.

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National Tours arranged by SMG Artists • (717) 227-0060 • [www.smgartists.com](http://www.smgartists.com)



# Freddie Lee Fisher



## Pre-show:

This story has its origins in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia and speaks to all of us who sometimes have trouble “remembering” how or when to do things. It is also, in the end, about the unconditional love of a parent for a child.

The story features an eight-year-old girl named Freddie Lee Fisher who lives with her Papa and often goes to visit her Grandma who lives on the other side of a big hill, down along the creek. At the end of each visit, Grandma Otis gives Freddie Lee something special to take “carefully on home.” Her Papa gently instructs her on how best to carry each item, which Freddie Lee then mis-applies to the next gift from Grandma. No matter how hard she tries, Freddie Lee’s good intentions turn to near disaster with each return trip.

Items to watch or listen for: *a chocolate cake, a cup of butter, a puppy and three pies.*

## Post-show:

When Freddie Lee comes home from her Grandma’s house with the crumbled cake, her Papa says, “Freddie Lee Fisher, that is no way to carry cake,” and then describes the correct way to carry it. Freddie Lee then applies the cake-carrying method to the butter, the butter-carrying method to the puppy, and so on.

- How did you feel each time Freddie Lee was confused? Why?
- Why do you believe Freddie Lee remembered things as she did?
- How did you feel when Freddie Lee’s Papa told her she didn’t have the sense she was born with? Write a poem about that.
- When Papa told Freddie Lee he loved her just the same, Freddie Lee said she was going to remember that. Do you think she will? Talk about that.
- Try writing a story or a poem (or drawing a picture) about a girl or boy who’s having a “bad” day. A “good” day.
- Try writing a song about the best thing that happened to you in the last week. (Or year, or in your life!)

# The Greatest Being



## Pre-show:

“The Greatest Being” is a folk tale favorite from India. It is about a princess who is in love with the royal mouse-catcher. Her father, the king, is not happy about this and says that his daughter must marry “the greatest being in the world.” He takes her on a long journey, traveling far and wide, to offer her hand in marriage to the sun up in the sky. When the sun says he is not the greatest being because of the cloud that blocks his view, they travel on to the cloud. The cloud regrets that he is not the greatest being because of the wind that blows him from one end of the world to the other; the wind defers to the mountain that can’t be budged and the mountain defers to the mice that nibble at his sides and make his life miserable. In the end, they make the interesting discovery that often, -- what we are looking for might be found right in our own backyard!

Characters to watch and listen for: *the sun, a cloud, the wind, and a weary mountain.*

## Post-show:

When the King decides that Kashi the Mousecatcher isn’t good enough for his daughter to marry, they search for the greatest being in the world. The sun, the cloud, the wind and the mountain tell them they couldn’t possibly be the greatest because there is another who is greater. In the end, the daughter and father agree that Kashi the Mouse Catcher is the greatest being and the one that Kashi, the Princess, should marry after all.

- Why do you think the father wants his daughter to marry the greatest being in the world?
- Do you think there is such a person? What are things that would make a person “great” to another person? Discuss.
- How do you think the daughter was feeling about her father choosing her mate? Talk about that. Discuss different customs in different cultures.
- What do you believe happened when the daughter went to Kashi the Mouse Catcher, told him that he was the greatest being in the world and offered him her hand in marriage?
- Try writing a new ending for the story.

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# The Long One



## Pre-show:

This African folk tale is about a rabbit that is afraid to go into his house because “a bad animal is in there and won’t come out.” It is also about a small young monkey who wants to help Rabbit with his problem. Rabbit doesn’t listen to Monkey because he thinks that anyone as young as Monkey couldn’t possibly have good ideas. Rabbit’s house is almost ruined by some of his larger animal friends before he realizes that he has underestimated Monkey’s ideas and abilities.

Characters to watch and listen for: Rabbit, Monkey, Ostrich, Tiger, Rhino and Caterpillar.

Dialogue to learn (audience participation): “I am the Long One. Go away or I will trample on you-u-u-u!”

## Post-show:

Each time Monkey tries to tell Rabbit how to get The Long One out of his house, Monkey is ignored or told to go away because she’s too young. Finally, after unsuccessful attempts by other jungle friends, Monkey succeeds in getting the Long One out of Rabbit’s house and Rabbit realizes he misjudged Monkey. He thanks Monkey and says, “Your idea was the best idea.”

- Why do you believe Rabbit felt someone young couldn’t have good ideas?
- How do you think Monkey felt when she was being ignored? Talk about that.
- Can you think of other reasons some people might use to ignore other people? Discuss.
- Draw a picture of what you imagined the Long One to be before you discovered that it was really Caterpillar.



# Stone Soup



## Pre-show:

Typical of folk tales, there are many versions of this Eastern European story entitled, “Stone Soup.” In this version, Matushka, Petrushka and Babaganushka who live in the village of Pinsk, are annoyed because their friend, Setonka Supovitch, is late for the visit and meal they enjoy together each day. When Matushka tells Setonka that “the garden is empty, the wheat fields are barren, the chickens have run away and the cupboard is bare, so we have nothing to feed you today.” Setonka doesn’t believe her and playfully contrives a way to get his meal just the same.

Items to watch and listen for: *a stone, a kettle, a stirring spoon, a few onions, three carrots, and a plucked chicken.*  
Lyrics to learn before the show:

*Stone soup, stone soup,  
Soup from a sto-o-one –  
Stone Soup, stone soup,  
Soup from a stone. Hey!*

### **Post-show:**

After Matushka tells Setonka that there is no food, Setonka agrees to share his recipe for “stone soup.” He asks Matushka, Petrushka and Babaganushka to get a stone, then a kettle with water, and then a stirring spoon, a few onions, some carrots and, finally, a chicken. At first Matushka and the others are suspicious, but gradually they find themselves having fun in helping to make “stone soup.”

- What do you think might have happened if Matushka had told Setonka that they were annoyed with him for coming late and, therefore, did not want to prepare the meal?
- How did you feel when Setonka said he was going to play a joke on Matushka? What did you think the joke was going to be?
- Do you think Matushka, Petrushka and Babaganushka knew at some point that Setonka was playing a joke on them? If so, why do you think they didn't let on?
- Was it more fun for Matushka, Petrushka and Babaganushka to try to send Setonka to another village -- or to share what they had in their cupboard and garden with him? Discuss the joys and benefits of sharing. Draw a picture or write a poem about sharing with a friend.
- Do a creative drama / improvisation exercise (see page on Creative Drama) about “sharing.”

### **CLASSROOM PROJECTS FOR READING TIE-IN**

- Create a book jacket for your favorite story.
- Create a cartoon strip of one incident in “Freddie Lee Fisher.”
- Read a folk tale and write a short script based on the story.
- Construct a mobile using the jungle animals in “The Long One.”
- Ask your school or town librarian how to go about finding a book of folk tales from Africa (or other places around the world).
- If you could be any character in one of the stories in the play, who would it be? Write a magazine article about that.
- Take turns reading a folk tale aloud.
- Write a new ending for one of the stories.
- Write a poem about one of the elements in “The Greatest Being.”
- Read a book about a subject that interests you and then write a letter to a friend either recommending it or not, telling the reasons why.
- Read a story that you want to make into a movie. Make a poster describing your movie.
- Create a classroom library by having students “publish” books. Have them write and illustrate a story, bind it as a book and, when approved, have the principal stamp it as published. Students can then lend and borrow each other's work.

### **TEACHERS' GUIDE TO CREATIVE DRAMA**

#### **Introduction**

One of the most exciting ways to prepare students of all ages to view live theatre or bring an academic concept or lesson to life is to give them the experience of what it feels like to be an actor or in a given situation or circumstance. Creative Drama provides an excellent vehicle toward fulfilling this objective. There are many exercises that are easy to implement and encourage using the students' whole instrument, including imagination, voice, movement, senses and emotions. The entire class participates at the same time so there is little opportunity for self-consciousness to inhibit creativity.

Following are some simple exercises, suitable for all age groups. No prior drama experience is required of students (or teachers!) Exercises can be done in the classroom if desks can be moved to the side. This can be accomplished quietly and efficiently by making a game of it. A sample scenario might be to encourage students to imagine an earthquake fault line under the room. It is the students' responsibility to move the desks to the side of the room to reinforce the walls. This must be done silently so the fault line will not be disturbed. [Note: If it is not possible to move the desks, however, most exercises can be done with students standing behind or near their desks.]

## Warm-Up Exercises

### **Freeze and Move**

Using a percussion instrument (small drum or tambourine) or a piece of lively music, ask students to move while the music plays and freeze when it stops. Ask students to move isolated parts of their body (i.e. "now just move your leg, now your head, etc.") If you are using a drum, it can be exciting to vary the speed of the movement by changing the tempo of the beat.

### **Simple Stretches**

Lead students in stretching their bodies. The use of visual images or characters helps make stretching fun. For example, tell students to reach for a silver thread hanging from an imaginary cloud above their head. Tell them to hold on tight and imagine they are swinging high above the neighborhood. Sometimes the strings might disappear. Students should then drop, loosely. Repeat this several times. Students can then stretch out wide like a big tree, swivel like a snake, stretch their necks long like a giraffe's, make their bodies small like a tiny mouse, etc.

### **Grooming The Senses**

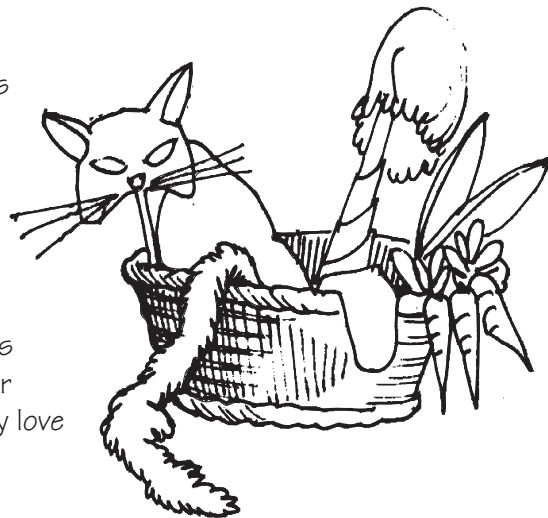
In place, encourage students to isolate each sense and focus on it. For example, tell them to close their eyes and listen attentively, first to sounds in the room, then sounds in the hallway. Finally have them send their hearing out as far as it will go. Ask them to share what they have heard. A similar exercise can be done with sight. Ask them to look around the room, noticing colors and shapes. Ask them to see each object and then have each object see them. Turn to a partner and see the partner and have each partner see them. Ask students if they can tell the difference between being the see-er and the seen and what each feels like. To practice heightening the sense of touch you can pass around a paper bag with an object in it. Have each student feel and describe it without the sense of sight. Students can be encouraged to experiment with smell and taste in the lunchroom and at home.

### **Movement: A Mirror Exercise**

To help students focus, lead the class in a simple "follow the movement" exercise to slow, pleasant music. Make simple movements with your arms, head, face and legs. Encourage students to mirror these movements at the same time you are making them. Then, if you can arrange students in a circle, choose one student to leave the room and one student to lead the class in simple slow movements. The student chosen to leave is now invited back to try to guess who is the leader. A more advanced version of this exercise involves grouping students in pairs and having them mirror each other in turn. Music is helpful here. Remind students that the face moves too and that laughter and giggling can be mirrored also.

### **Sound**

**Sound Effects Story:** Pick a simple story that has many opportunities for added sound effects (i.e. stories in cities, bad weather, haunted houses, etc.). This story can be made up in advance, improvised on-the-spot or read from a book. Practice with the group, encouraging students to make the sound of the wind using their voices, doors slamming using their feet, etc. Then control the volume of the sound using a wand, a pencil or any conductor like object. When your hand is high, the sound is loud, when your hand is lowered the sound diminishes and then stops. Use this volume control tool throughout the story. For added excitement, tape the story and play it back for students – they love to hear their voices. And knowing that they will be taped will heighten motivation and focus.



## CREATIVE DRAMA RESOURCE LIST

### Development through Drama

By Brian Way, Humanities Press 1967

### Games for Actors & Non-Actors

By Augusto Boal, Routledge, 1992

### 200 + Ideas for Drama

By Anna Scher/ Charles Verall, Heinemann, 1992

### Improvisation for the Theater - a Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques

By Viola Spolin, Northwestern University Press, 1963

### Playmaking-Children Writing and Performing their own Plays

By Daniel Juda Sklar, Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1991

### Creative Dramatics in the Library

By Nancy Pereira, New Plays for Children, 1976

### Impro

By Keith Johnstone, Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1981

### Structuring Drama Works: A Handbook of Available Forms in Theater and Drama

By Jonathan Neelands, Cambridge University Press, 1990

### Multiple Intelligences

By Howard Gardner, Harper Collins, 1993

### Creative Drama Resource Book (Grades K-3 & 4-6)

By Ruth Beall Heinig, Prentice-Hall, 1987

### Drama Anytime

By Jill Charters and Anne Gately  
Primary English Teaching Association, 1986

### Teaching Drama to Young Children

By Mem Fox, Heinemann, 1987



## STONE SOUP & OTHER STORIES

By Pushcart Players

Core Curriculum Standards

On the following pages you will find a list (and website resources) of many folk tales from around the world -- beyond the four that Pushcart selected to present in our musical production, "Stone Soup & Other Stories."

Our presentation, "Stone Soup & Other Stories," supported by our study guide and other activities by the classroom teacher, meets the following Core Curriculum Content Standards:

### **Visual and Performing Arts**

Standard 1.1, (Aesthetics)  
Standard 1.3, (Elements and Principals of dance, music, theatre and visual art)  
Standard 1.5, (History/Culture)

### **Language Arts Literacy**

Standard 3.4, (Listening)  
Standard 3.5, (Viewing and Media Literacy)

### **Social Studies**

Standard 6.3 (World History)

### **World Languages**

Standard 7.2 (Culture)

## FOLK TALES & STORY TELLING

Folk Tales, as those two words suggest, have stood the test of time in their universal appeal, and relevance to all ages, cultures and generations. The oral tradition of telling stories is an ancient art that remains well suited for growth, development and academic success of students. Here are some of the benefits of incorporating folk tales and storytelling in your classroom:

- Storytelling grooms the imagination
- Storytelling develops expressiveness and communication skills
- Storytelling nurtures listening and communication skills
- Storytelling nurtures self-esteem and confidence
- Storytelling offers gentle guidance toward constructive personal values and good character development

May the wind sing to you and the sun rise in your heart!\* as you embark on many great adventures with us in our presentation of "Stone Soup & Other Stories" and continue those exciting journeys with more folk tales and story telling in your classroom!

\*From Native American folklore

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Note: Clearly, there are an infinite number of folk tales that could be listed in this bibliography – all wonderful! We have picked a few to get you started, but don't stop here! As in "Stone Soup..." there's a magic ingredient in each story that makes it as pertinent today as centuries ago when it was first told!

**Best Loved Folktales of the World** By Joanna Cole

**Favorite Folktales From Around the World** By Jane Yolen

**Anansi Tales (African Folk Tales)** By Eric Kimmel (and others)

**Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears** By Verna Aardema

**What's So Funny, Ketu?** By Verna Aardema

**Beat The Story Drum, Pum-Pum** By Bryan Ashley

**A Story, A Story** By Gail E. Haley

**Ashanti to Zulu, African Traditions** By Margaret Musgrove

**Ragtime Tumpie** By Alan Schroeder

**North Wind and the Sun** An Aesop Fable

**Aesop's ABC...Twenty Six Fables** By Aesop

**Gigantic Turnip** By Aleksei Tolstoy  
(Check out many other wonderful stories that Tolstoy wrote for children!)

**Soldier and Tsar in the Forest** By Uri Shulevitz

**The Firebird & Other Russian Fairy Tales** By Arthur Ransome

**Russian Folk Tales** By James Riordan

**The Mitten** By Tresselt/yaroslava

**Baba Yaga: A Russian Folktale** By Eric Kimmel

**Stone Soup** By Heather Forest

**Abuela's Weave** (Guatemalan Tales) By Omar S. Castaneda

**Four Brothers Who Were Both Wise and Foolish**  
Tales Told in Spain

**Golden Tales, Myths, Legends and Folktales from Latin America** retold and illustrated by Lulu Delacre, published by Scholastic, Inc., NY 1996

**Great Kapok Tree, A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest**  
By Lynne Cherry

**John, The Silly Boy (or Juan Bobo)** Origins in Mexico and Puerto Rico; from *Read Aloud Latino Myths and Legends Tales Told in Spain* By Juan Cigarron

**The Magic Bean Tree, A Legend From Argentina**  
By Nancy Van Laan

**Sing, Little Sack! Canta, Saquito!** By Nina Jaffe

**Senor Cat's Romance and Other Favorite Stories from Latin America** retold by Lucia M. Gonzalez

**The Sheepherder and the Philosopher, Fables and Riddles** from *Read Aloud Latino Myths and Legends*

**Pepito's Story** By Eugene Fern

**Spanish-American Folktales**, By Teresa Pijoan DeVan Etten

**Three Golden Oranges and Other Spanish Folk Tales**  
By Ralph Steel Boggs and Mary Gould Davis

**Corn Is Maize, The Gift of the Indians** By Aliko

**Brother Eagle, Sister Sky** By Susan Jeffers

## USEFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES

Here are a few websites with excellent suggestions and lists of folk tales, stories and story telling information. There are even some story telling lesson plans and activities for teachers that may be helpful.

[www.racematters.org/favoriteafricanfolktales.html](http://www.racematters.org/favoriteafricanfolktales.html)

[www.storyarts.org/classroom/index.html](http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/index.html)

[www.augusthouse.com/storytelling/storytelling\\_links](http://www.augusthouse.com/storytelling/storytelling_links)

[www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)

These are a few to get you started. A Google search for Folk Tale Information will help you find the site just right for your needs. We wish you many wonderful voyages into the world of folk tales and story telling!

Pushcart Players  
[www.pushcartplayers.org](http://www.pushcartplayers.org)

