

The Train is Bound for Story

Jean Donatto

Grades: PK-6

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Embark on a story-filled journey with actress/storyteller Jean Donatto. Known for her interpretations of poetry and other literature, the acclaimed actress turns her talents to storytelling. This Train has meandered all over the universe picking up more and more stories as it rolls. Go and visit the Rascals; Kwaku Anansi in Africa as he tricks Brer' Lion; or Pedro Urdemales in Mexico as he figures out a way to keep his tummy full. And don't forget the lesson of Mr. Gudebrand on the Hill as he shows, in a tale from Sweden, that being kind and generous can actually make one very wealthy. This Train takes audience members on a highly participatory journey through an itinerary filled with tricksters, humor, high drama, and lessons in life. Stories will be grouped age appropriately for K-2 or 3-6.

TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills):

Grade	Theatre	ELAR	The Students Will: * Respond to and evaluate theatre and theatrical performances. * Interpret characters using the voice and body expressively and create dramatizations. * Use the elements of drama and the conventions of theatre to develop concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment. * Sequence and summarize the plot's main events and explain their influence on future events. * Write imaginative stories to express their ideas and feelings that include a beginning, middle, end, and details about character, setting and point of view.
PK		III.D1, IV.D.1	
K	K.1, K.2, K.5	K.8, K.14	
1	1.1, 1.2, 1.5	1.9, 1.18	
2	2.1, 2.2, 2.5	2.9, 2.18	
3	3.1, 3.2, 3.5	3.8, 3.18	
4	4.1, 4.2, 4.5	4.6, 4.16	
5	5.1, 5.2, 5.5	5.6, 5.16	
MS	1.1, 1.2, 1.5	6.6, 6.15	
	2.1, 2.2, 2.5		
	3.1, 3.2, 3.5		

STAAR Connections (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness):

Subject	Grades	Reporting Category	The Students Will: * Understand and analyze literary texts. * Compose a variety of written texts with a clear, central idea; coherent organization; sufficient development; and effective use of language and conventions,
Reading	3,4,5,6	2	
Writing	4, 7	1	

Academic Vocabulary:

Anansi	An African folktale character. He often takes the shape of a spider and is considered to be the spirit of all knowledge. He is also one of the most important characters of West African and Caribbean folklore.
Characters	The people or animals in a story.
Conflict	A struggle between two opposing forces - (the problem).
Folklore	The traditional stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth.
Main Character	A person, animal, or figure who has the greatest effect on the plot or who is most affected by what happens in the story.

Pedro Urdemales	A character in Latin American folklore that typifies the rogue, rascal or trickster.
Plot	The sequence of events that happens in a story – what happens in a story.
Problem	The struggle between two opposing forces in a story - (conflict).
Setting	Where and when the story happens.
Solution	The part of the story in which the problems are solved and the action comes to a satisfying end.
Theme	What you learn about life from the story; the moral of the story.
Train	A form of rail transport consisting of a series of vehicles that usually runs along a rail track to transport cargo or passengers.
Trickster	A person who cheats or deceives people.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

Before the performance

- Talk about your favorite stories from when you were little. Why did you like these stories?
- Talk about cities and countries that you have visited. What stories do you know about from these places?

After the performance:

- Tell, write, draw or act out your favorite part of the performance.
- Make postcards of the places that the story train visited and exchange them with your classmates.

Language Arts:

- Think about your favorite parts of the performance and write a thank you letter to storyteller Jean Donatto in which you share your feelings and impressions about what you saw. Use correct friendly letter format. You may also draw a picture on your letter related to the performance. Send your letters to Young Audiences of Houston.
- Working in small groups, write an original story with heroes, giants, and demons that illustrates the important moral message that “good can triumph over evil.” Read your story to the class.
- Pretend to be your favorite character in your favorite story. Write a letter to a friend about the story’s events from that character’s point of view.
- Create sequencing picture cards for a favorite story. Color the pictures, put them in chronological order and glue them in the correct place on a sheet of construction paper.
- Research one country from your heritage and take an imaginary trip to your family’s homeland. Write a story in which you describe what you see when you arrive, the kinds of folktales that you find, and the cultural experiences you have while you are there.

- Throughout history, spiders have been depicted in popular culture and mythology. The spider has symbolized patience and persistence due to its hunting technique of setting **webs** and waiting for its prey to become ensnared. It is also a symbol of mischief and malice for its toxic venom, which is often seen as a curse. Write a story in which a spider is your main character. Share your story with your classmates.
- Work with a partner to figure out the *theme* for the stories in this performance. Fill in the **Theme Chart** to help you figure out the theme:

Story	Plot – What happened in the story <i>Questions to Consider:</i>	Theme – What you learned about life from what happened in the story:
	Who was involved? What was the conflict? What was the end result? Why does this happen?	

- Choose one of the stories from the performance and retell it by changing a part of it:
 - ✓ Change the main character.
 - ✓ Have the story take place somewhere else.
 - ✓ Have the story take place in another time.
 - ✓ Tell the story from a different character's point of view.
 - ✓ Make the problem of the story different.
 - ✓ Change the end of the story.
- Sit in a circle with a ball of yarn to create a story together. Brainstorm ideas about how to start the story and choose one idea. Holding the ball of yarn, tell the story's beginning and add a line of what happens next. Roll the ball to someone across the circle. Each person adds an additional line to the story. If someone "gets stuck," ask questions like: How could he help? Who could help her? How did he feel? Where could she go? What did he want to do? Record your story as you create it and play it back in the class.
- Create a Folktale Story Board on a piece of construction paper (see below). Draw pictures of the main events and then write the theme of the folktale.

Title:

First:	Second:	Next:
Then:	Last:	Theme:

- Track the theme of a story by creating a T-chart, with one side dedicated to identifying the theme and the other side for recording supporting details that "prove it."

Math:

- Create original word problems using characters from the performance.
- Revise a familiar story to include numerical information. Use the added numerical information to write six math questions about the story that someone else could answer. (*Sample: Once upon a time there was a family of bears. Brother Bear was the oldest. He was 10 years old. Next came Sister Bear, who was 8 years old, and Baby Bear who was 3 years old, etc.*)
- On a map or globe, use the legend to measure the distance across the ocean from the east coast of Texas to the west coast of Africa. How far is it? If a journey to Africa by boat took ten weeks, how fast would the ship travel? Explain your conclusions by clearly describing your mathematical reasoning.
- Each student will draw and cut out 5-10 spiders of various sizes. Working in small groups, put all of the spiders together and then sort them from smallest to largest and largest to smallest. Then put the spiders into groups of tens. Create problems of addition and subtraction and use the spiders to work out the problems.

Social Studies:

- Make a cultural map of your classroom. Where do members of your class come from? What are the storytelling and folklore traditions in these countries?
- The Anansi "spider" tales originated from the Ashanti people of present day Ghana. During the time of the Atlantic slave trade, the Anansi tales crossed the ocean with the kidnapped Africans and came with them to the New World where they were enslaved. In the Caribbean, Anansi is often celebrated as a symbol of slave resistance and survival. Anansi is able to turn the table on his powerful oppressors by using his cunning and trickery, a model of behavior utilized by slaves to gain the upper-hand within the plantation power structure. In small groups, discuss how these Anansi tales enabled slaves to establish a sense of continuity with their African past and offered them the means to transform and assert their identity within the boundaries of captivity.
- The storytelling train travelled the universe to collect stories for this performance. Create a PowerPoint or poster on the history of trains and their impact on American society.
- Use Role Play Masks made from paper plates to re-enact important moments in history.
- Make and label a continent map. Use blue as the background to represent the oceans. Pick different colored paper for each continent.
- Use your imagination to travel around the world to collect folktales. Pick 5 countries on a world map and begin your adventure.
 - ✓ Create an itinerary for your trip.

- ✓ Make a map of each country you visit.
 - ✓ Make a travel trunk to collect your souvenirs.
 - ✓ As you visit each country, keep a travel log of what you did and the stories you found.
 - ✓ Draw a picture that represents your trip and write a caption.
- Learn about World Cultures – Explore the World without leaving home! Pick your favorite country and work with a partner to select one or several of the following activities to do about your country:

Make a Country Kit	
<i>Possible Topics</i>	<i>Examples of Activities</i>
Physical Map & Landforms	Salt dough map, landform paper craft
Flag	Decorate a flag
Famous People	Biography Book Report
Popular Food	Cooking Activity or Restaurant Visit
Stories	Read a folktale
Music	Listen to traditional music
Animals	Learn about habitats
Famous Places	Make a travel brochure, learn about famous architecture in the world

Science:

- Energy makes trains run. Create a PowerPoint, Prezi, or poster to identify different forms of energy and their uses. Share your project with your class.
- Use your voice and body expressively to explain the scientific process.
- Read about spiders and their life cycle. Draw and label the external anatomy of the spider. Also draw and label pictures to represent each phase of the life cycle. Use your facts about spiders to make a class book about spiders.

Resources:

Related Websites:

- <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/global-trek-teachers-guide>
- http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/top_teaching/2011/02/helping-students-grasp-themes-in-literature
- <http://www.dltk-teach.com/minibooks/littlered/index.htm>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anansi>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandinavian_folklore
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Train>

Related SmartBoard Sites:

<http://exchange.smarttech.com/details.html?id=c1deafab-cc88-4866-aa88-f2dfdab0e049>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/fractured-fairy-tales-30062.html>

<http://exchange.smarttech.com/search.html?q=%22energy%22>

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ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Actress, storyteller, playwright, director, radio personality, teacher and mentor Jean Donatto brings years of varied experience to each performance and workshop. As a seasoned professional actress, Jean appeared in such popular films as *Home Fries*, and was featured in the KHOU production of *Gumby's Playhouse*. Trained by the American Conservatory Theater, Jean also performs frequently with Houston's Ensemble Theater, Stages Repertory Theatre and The Presidio in San Francisco. Jean's commitment to children is evident in her numerous and influential roles in many educational organizations. She has worked with the Children's Prison Art Project, the Texas Institute for the Arts in Education, the Texas Trunk Theater, Houston Grand Opera S.T.A.R.S. program, Houston International Theatre, and Young Audiences of Houston.