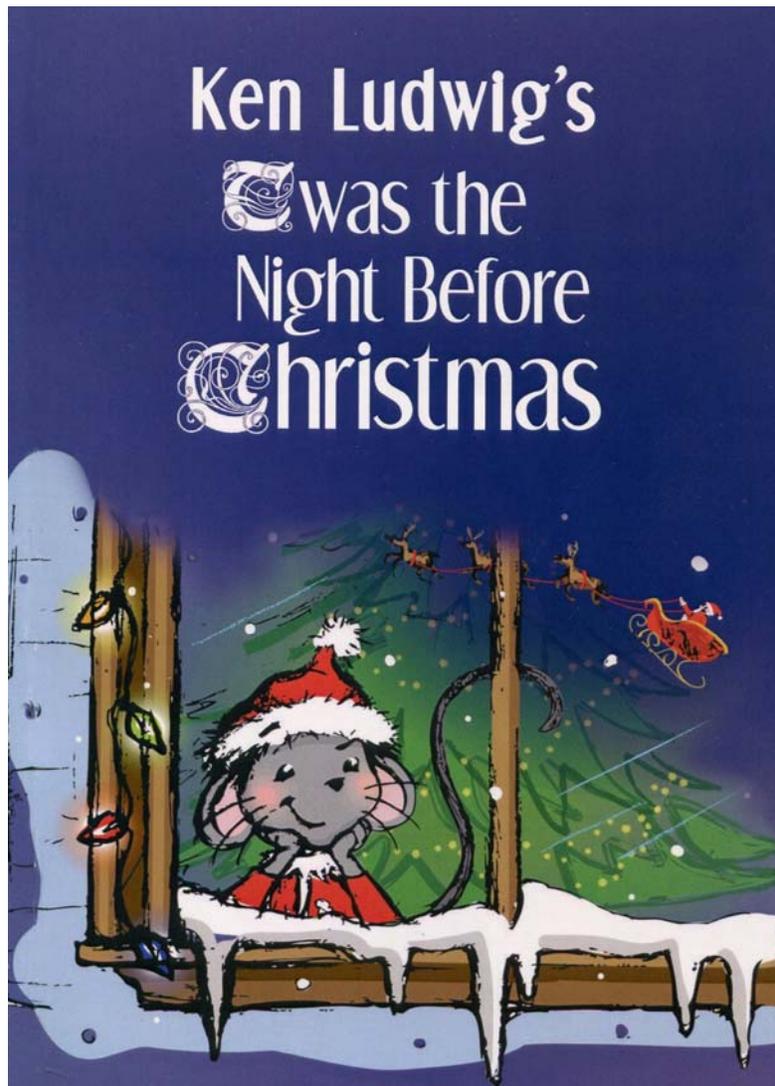


TEACHER'S GUIDE TO



Feel free to make as many copies as needed.

**A Production of PUPPET ARTS THEATRE
1927 Springridge Drive
Jackson, MS 39211
(601) 956 3414
www.mspuppetry.com
peter@mspuppetry.com**

“Twas The Night Before Christmas” is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Twas the Night Before Christmas

Curriculum Connections

Grades: K through 4

Reading Program, Drama, Communication, Language Arts, Relationships & Family,
Literature Based;

Dear Teacher:

We have created the following study guide to help make your students' theatre experience with Puppet Arts Theatre production of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" as meaningful as possible. For many, it will be their first time viewing a live theatrical production presented with puppets. We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more significant and long-lasting. Our study guide provides pre and post production discussion topics. These are just suggestions; please feel free to create your own activities and areas for discussion. We hope you and your class enjoy the show!

Summary of the Play

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."

But wait! A mouse is stirring - because Santa missed his house last year. Before you can say "Merry Christmas!", we're off on the wild adventures of a mouse, an elf, and a spunky little girl who just won't take no for an answer.

Mr. Ludwig, the playwright, says, "It's about a sweet neurotic mouse named Amos who is afraid of having an adventure and doesn't want to leave the house. His best friend is a girl named Emily. They find an elf at the window with an SOS from Santa and have to fly off to the North Pole to save Christmas." Mr. Ludwig also remarked about the experience of writing for the child audience, "I loved the innocence of it, and being able to write about things like adventure, honesty, and good nature."

Detailed Summary of the Play

There is a Christmas Eve party going on at Uncle Brierly's. Among the guests are the dotty Britannia and Wendell Sneed, friends of Uncle Brierly; Emily, his niece; Amos, a mouse; and the entire audience. Uncle Brierly has just begun his annual reading of the Clement Moore Poem, "Twas the Night Before Christmas" with some interruptions by Emily's crazy mouse friend Amos. In fact these two youngsters say the poem is old-fashioned and turn it into a funny rap song. Soon they see and hear a strange elf, known as Calliope, knocking at the window. We soon learn that this Calliope is from the Elf-B-I because Santa Claus needs help at the North Pole. Emily and Amos want to talk to Santa anyway, because last year Santa Claus skipped their house!

Emily, the girl, and Amos, the talking mouse, fly off to the North Pole with the elf Calliope flying the airplane to meet with Santa Claus and help the plot to reach a happy ending! Mr. Ludwig also adds farcical elements that have made him famous: mistaken identity, elaborate chases, a duel with rapiers, playful schemes, confrontations, bravery, and all things naughty and nice. We meet other characters up at the North Pole: Sir Guy of Gisbourne and his sidekick Mulch. These two evil sillies were once Santa's elves, but they were fired because they tried to sell Santa's sleigh to Walmart. Now they are back at the North Pole and wanting revenge on Santa Claus. These two steal the list of who has been naughty and who has been nice as well as the list of what children want for Christmas. Emily, Calliope, and Amos see this happen. Emily and Calliope run to tell the elves. Amos runs off to tell Santa. Now Amos of Kansas makes his appearance. He is the twin brother of Amos the mouse, but he is from Kansas, who is looking for Amos the mouse. The play gets very exciting when Santa then comes on stage looking for his list. Nobody can find it. There is a lot of funny chasing as everyone is searching for either Amos the mouse, Amos of Kansas, or the Naughty-and-Nice-List for Santa!

Amos of Kansas says he can't take all this excitement and must head back to Kansas. Emily notices that Amos of Kansas has the Naughty-and-Nice-List. He gladly hands it over to her. Santa realizes that Sir Guy is back up at the North Pole. Santa calls him „Ralphie" and wants to know why he is back at the North Pole. Sir Guy “Ralphie" tells Santa what he has done and asks for forgiveness. Santa forgives him and gives him his old job back. Before he leaves to deliver the toys on his sleigh, Santa gives Amos and Emily medals for helping save Christmas. Emily, Amos, and Calliope begin that rap version of Twas the Night Before Christmas. The scene magically changes back to Uncle Brierly's house and they finish the poem as it was originally written. Then Amos the

mouse and Emily realize the adventure was a dream. The play closes with Santa Claus saying, “Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!”

The Music Used in the Play

Most of the music comes from traditional Christmas carols sung by many American and English people every year. Amos the Mouse chooses to sing a rap music version of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" poem with different words from the original version. Hip-hop and rap are often thought of as the same thing. Actually hip-hop encompasses the whole culture of fashion, music, and urban life. Rap is the style of music that is a part of the hip-hop culture. It can just be spoken instead of sung as long as it keeps to the steady rhythmic beat and rhymes. Amos uses that style to be funny and cool. At the close of the play the audience and the cast members are all asked to sing, "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

Vocabulary

Twas	Brierly (unusual name)	Wendell (unusual name)	Britannia (unusual name)
Robin Hood	villain	Mazel Tov (good luck)	Elfeterium (word play on auditorium)
mental picture	apprentice	Shakespeare	Milton
en garde			

Pre-Performance Discussion

BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Introduce the students to show by asking the children if they have ever heard the poem, “Twas the Night Before Christmas.”
What do they think, was it a week, two days or just on the day/night when who comes?
2. Discuss what vision the name brings to mind.
3. Introduce characters that they will be hearing and seeing in the puppet show - Emily, Uncle Brierly, Amos the Mouse, Calliope, Sir Guy, etc.
4. Remind students to listen carefully to the dialogue of the characters in the story. Explain “dialogue.” Think about how each character felt.
5. Remind students that stories have morals. Listen for the moral of this play.

- (It's embedded in Santa's speech at the end of the show. See appendix)
6. Remind the students that sequencing means putting things in order and that they will need to be able to sequence some parts of the show.
 7. If time permits, read the above-mentioned poem with your class. (See appendix)

After the Performance Activities

Attending a play is an entertainment experience unlike any other. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story "as it happens. Puppet Arts Theatre brings to life stories through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. Writers adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and onto the stage. Designers and technicians create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. Directors help actors/puppeteers to bring the story to life and make it happen before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs and tapes of stories.

1. As soon as possible after the performance, engage your students in conversation about the production. How did the play differ from the poem? Who was their favorite character and why?
2. Discuss the story together in class.
3. Have some of the children tell the story of the play in sequence.
4. Discuss some of the characters in the story. Have the students write a brief character sketch of their favorite character.
4. Discuss the moral of the play and some of the details that support it.
5. Have the students sequence the story in their own words by writing character descriptions, and details that would support the moral.
6. Have students draw their favorite part of the play.
7. Ask students what was the funniest part of the play? Why do they think that?
8. How did they like the rap "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" that Amos performed? Name some of the things you liked or did not like about that style of music in the play.

North Pole Activities

Amos and Emily must help Calliope and Santa at the North Pole. Locate this area on an atlas or world globe. You will see that it is the northern most point of the world. The only way one can travel from there is South. Where is it? What is on the opposite end of the world? What ocean surrounds the North Pole? Is there any land? Some people think Santa's home and workshop would be located on ice?

There are several websites about Santa's workshop and what people think it looks like. A favorite one is <http://www.northpole.com/>. This site has a lot of interesting things to do on it. It contains great animated graphics, holiday stories ,recipes, and much more. Be sure to take the Naughty or Nice Quiz and get your score. Enjoy playing with the dancing Santa. You can have Santa do three different dances to three different pieces of music and even make the trees dance.

Appendix

Twas the Night Before Christmas Poem by Clement Clarke Moore

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below.
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tinny reindeer.

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!

"Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, on Donner and Blitzen!

To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.

His eyes-how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly!

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself!
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk.
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, 'ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

Clement Clarke Moore (1779 - 1863) wrote the poem 'Twas the night before Christmas' also called "A Visit from St. Nicholas" in 1822. It is now the tradition in many American families to read the poem every Christmas Eve. The poem 'Twas the night before Christmas' has redefined our image of Christmas and Santa Claus. Prior to the creation of the story of 'Twas the night before Christmas' St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, had never been associated with a sleigh or reindeers!

Clement Moore, the author of the poem Twas the night before Christmas, was a reticent man and it is believed that a family friend, Miss H. Butler, sent a copy of the poem to the New York Sentinel who published the poem. The condition of publication was that the author of Twas the night before Christmas was to remain anonymous.

The first publication date was 23rd December 1823 and it was an immediate success. It was not until 1844 that Clement Clarke Moore claimed ownership when the work was included in a book of his poetry.

Santa's Speech, Moral of the Show

The best Christmas presents don't come in packages, Amos.
They involve the heart. They are things like courage and kindness,
honesty and love. You, my friend, have had an adventure.
And if you don't make life an adventure, what's the use?
You never change, you never grow.

Internet Connections

(Click on the link)

Who are people behind the play?

[**PRODUCTION STAFF**](#)

Who are the actors?

[**ACTORS**](#)

Who is the playwright?

[**PLAYWRIGHT**](#)

To play at the North Pole

[**NORTH POLE**](#)

If you have questions, please feel free to call for help:

601 956 3414

We would like to hear about your experiences related to our production. Please let us know what you did with your children to enjoy the play and what kind of inspiration we provided. Send us some drawings done by your children so we can share them with the Mississippi Arts Commission. Let us know how helpful this guide was. It is work in progress and you can help us make it better. Your comments are greatly appreciated. Thank you.