

STUDY GUIDE

THE ANT AND THE ELEPHANT



Book by
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Lyrics by
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Music by
Anthony Afterwit

Based on the book and illustrations by **Bill Peet**

Greetings and welcome to *The Ant and the Elephant*.

This musical version of the story has been developed specifically for theaters wanting to produce the show for young audiences. TYA, or "Theater for Young Audiences," has a long and noble history. When you produce a musical for young audiences you are introducing them to the magic of theater and isn't that a great thing to do? You are also nurturing not only the next generation of writers, directors and performers, but also the next generation of audiences. Many think this is the single most important thing we can do in the theater, and I agree.

This study guide provides teachers with all the tools necessary to turn a day at the theatre into an interactive educational experience. It contains biographies of the show's creators, the history of the story, curriculum connections in a variety of content areas, and activities to do before and after the production.

Please take advantage of these resources and thank you in advance for making the world a better place!

Enjoy the show!

Timothy A. McDonald
iTheatrics.com

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Plot Synopsis

The musical begins with a writer, **BILL**, sitting at his desk brainstorming ideas for his next story (**Nothing Into Something**). He tries a few different ideas and finally settles on a story about **ANT**. Bill starts to narrate the story as Ant and the other characters begin to act out the adventures Bill describes.

Ant is having a great day (**Lots of Ants**) when, without much warning, she falls into the river and grabs onto a snag for safety. Unable to swim, she asks **MR. HARDSHELL**, the turtle, for help getting back to the shore. The turtle has no desire to help her as he just wants to be left alone (**Solitary Turtle**). Mr. Hardshell walks away without rescuing her, but soon finds himself in a mess of his own. He topples over backwards, lands flat on his back, and is stuck. Thankfully, he spies **MRS. BIGBILL**, a beautiful bird, sitting up in a tree. He asks her to help him, but she is too busy preening herself to be bothered. But when Mrs. Bigbill accidentally knocks her egg out of her nest, she discovers she herself needs help to carry it back up to the nest.

Mrs. Bigbill sees **MR. GREATNECK**, a giraffe, ambling by and asks for some assistance. He decides not to help Mrs. Bigbill for fear of looking silly and keeps on walking (**Bird on My Head**). Mr. Greatneck doesn't get too far before he runs into his own trouble when he gets caught in the tangle

dangle vines and can't get out. As he tries to free himself, the lions, **KING BIGPAW** and his **SIDEKICKS**, enter and begin to make fun of him for looking so silly (**Point and Laugh**) and then abandon him for the waterhole.

At the waterhole, a rock rolls over King Pigpaw's tail and traps him. He can't move, but hopes **MR. HORNYHEAD**, the rhinoceros who has come by, will be able to help. Mr. Hornyhead refuses and storms off. And because Mr. Hornyhead wasn't looking where he was going, he runs straight into a stump and gets his horn caught.

All the animals, except Ant, start to complain about how someone else is responsible for the mess they are in (**Blame Game**), but as they sing they hear another person's voice. They listen and realize that someone is still narrating the story—Bill. They all turn on Bill, blame him for their troubles, and force him to enter the story as the **ELEPHANT**. Bill decides that Elephant can help all of the other animals with its trunk (**To the Rescue**). Only Ant thanks Elephant, but he doesn't seem to mind since he helped the others out of the goodness of his heart. But when he falls into a ravine and gets trapped, Elephant realizes everyone needs help from time to time. Thankfully before too long though, Ant comes to the rescue him with all of her ant friends (**Finale**).

The Creator of the Book

Bill Peet

(Original Story Author and Illustrator)

Bill Peet was born in 1915 in a small town in Indiana. He discovered at an early age a love for drawing, and after high school continued his education at the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis. He studied drawing, painting and design for the next three years. During this time, he also met his future wife, Margaret. After school he moved to California where he soon began working for Walt Disney. Bill began work as a sketch artist and eventually became Walt's top illustrator on Disney's animated features. His responsibilities included storyboarding, illustrating, and producing many of the classic Disney films that are still treasured to this day including such titles as *Dumbo* and *101 Dalmatians*.

WALT DISNEY MOVIES WORKED ON BY BILL PEET

101 DALMATIANS	PETER PAN
ALICE IN WONDERLAND	PINOCCHIO
CINDERELLA	SLEEPING BEAUTY
DUMBO	SONG OF THE SOUTH
FANTASIA	THE SWORD AND THE STONE
JUNGLE BOOK	

While working at Disney, he married Margaret and they had two sons, Bill Jr. and Steve. Inspired by the bedtime stories he told his sons, Bill left Disney after 27 years to begin writing and illustrating his own storybooks fulltime. He eventually went on to write more than thirty books for children which are universally praised by students, teachers, parents and librarians. Bill passed away in 2002 but has left us a legacy of stories and drawings that continue to inspire, educate and entertain.

Visit www.billpeet.net for in-depth information about Bill Peet.

About The Ant and the Elephant

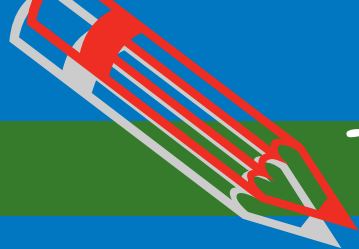
The Ant in the Elephant was written in 1972 and was inspired by the Aesop fable The Ant and the Dove. In that story, an ant is caught in a stream when a dove flies by and drops a leaf in the water to allow the ant to get to shore. Then when a hunter tries to capture the dove, the ant stings him causing him to make enough noise to warn the dove and allow time for the dove to fly away to safety. Peet's book captures this idea of one good turn deserves another while also taking on the Aesop's fables' tradition of personifying animals with human characteristic.

OTHER BOOKS BY BILL PEET

<i>The Ant and the Elephant</i>	<i>Hubert's Hair-Raising Adventure</i>
<i>Big Bad Bruce</i>	<i>Huge Harold</i>
<i>Bill Peet: An Autobiography</i>	<i>Jennifer and Josephine</i>
<i>Buford the Little Bighorn</i>	<i>Jethro and Joel Were a Troll</i>
<i>The Caboose Who Got Loose</i>	<i>Kermit the Hermit</i>
<i>Capyboppy</i>	<i>The Kweeks of Kookatumdee</i>
<i>Chester the Worldly Pig</i>	<i>The Luckiest One of All</i>
<i>Cock-a-Doodle Dudley</i>	<i>Merle the High Flying Squirrel</i>
<i>Countdown to Christmas</i>	<i>No Such Things</i>
<i>Cowardly Clyde</i>	<i>Pamela Camel</i>
<i>Cyrus the Unsinkable Sea Serpent</i>	<i>The Pinkish, Purplish, Bluish Egg</i>
<i>Eli</i>	<i>Randy's Dandy Lions</i>
<i>Ella</i>	<i>Smokey</i>
<i>Encore for Eleanor</i>	<i>The Spooky Tail of Prewitt Peacock</i>
<i>Farewell to Shady Glade</i>	<i>The Whingdingilly</i>
<i>Fly, Homer, Fly</i>	<i>The Wump World</i>
<i>The Gnats of Knotty Pine</i>	<i>Zella, Zack, and Zodiac</i>
<i>How Droofus the Dragon Lost His Head</i>	

"I drew for hours at a time just for the fun of it, and yet I was hoping to find some practical reason to draw for the rest of my life. But when I entered grade school, my drawing habit suddenly became a problem."

—Bill Peet



The Creators of the Musical



Timothy McDonald

(Book, Lyric, Music) was the founding director of Music Theatre International's Education Division, and during his tenure developed the Broadway Junior Collection, KIDS Collection, School Edition Musicals and Theatre for Young Audiences Collection, introducing millions of young people to the life-enhancing experience of theater. Tim co-wrote the musical Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka*, which opened at the Kennedy Center, toured for two years, and was performed at the White House for the President and First Lady. In addition, Tim supervised creative development of eight musicals in association with Disney Theatrical Productions. Tim recently founded his own company, called iTheatrics, which is dedicated to making the world safe for children and theater everywhere. Tim is collaborating with Academy Award winning songwriter Paul Williams and the Jim Henson Company on *Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas*, and he is adapting Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* for the musical stage, working with dance sensation Pilobolus. For the latest on Tim, check out www.timothyamcdonald.com.

Lisa Lambert

(Lyrics) received 2006 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for her work on *The Drowsy Chaperone*. U.S. credits: *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Center Theatre Group: Ahmanson, NAMT's 2004 Festival of New Musicals). Canadian credits: *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Fringe of Toronto Festival, Theatre Passe Muraille, Mirvish Productions: Winter Garden Theatre); *Honest Ed: The Bargain Musical* and *Mirth* (Poor Alex Theatre); *Ouch My Toe* (Fringe of Toronto Festival); *The Irish Musical* and *People Park* (Rivoli); *All Hams on Deck* (Summer Works); *An American in Harris* (Second City); *An Awkward Evening With Martin & Johnson* (Tarragon, Tim Sims Playhouse). TV: "Slings and Arrows" (Rhombus Media, Showcase and the Sundance Network), "Getting Along Famously" (CBC), "Skippy's Rangers: The Show They Never Gave" and "The Joe Blow Show" (Comedy Network). Film: *Pippi Longstocking*, Highway 61, Blue.

Anthony Afterwit

(Music) is a native of Boston, student of Philadelphia, and citizen of the world. Musical influences include Mozart, Beethoven, Green Day, and Bach. Previous work includes *Frankly Ben* and his music can be heard regularly around the dinner table wherever a half-empty wine glass can be found. Many thanks to the 'Founding Fathers' for their foresight, inspiration, and courage to 'buck the system'. We couldn't have done it without you! Props to TJ, JA, GW and all the gang from the 'Market Street' crew.



Pre-Show Activities

- 1) Find a copy of *The Ant and the Elephant* to read to your students or if they are old enough, have them read the book themselves.
- 2) Discuss adaptations and how your students are going to see a musical adaptation of the book *The Ant and the Elephant*. Encourage your students to draw their own picture of a scene that they think might be in the musical they are going to see.
- 3) Go over the plot synopsis found in this study guide with your students. .
- 4) Review the following vocabulary words with your students to help them better understand the musical.

Narrator - someone who tells a story

Adaptation - a written work that has been changed to be told in another form

Magnify - to increase the size of something

Snag - a part of a tree that is stuck in the bottom of a river

Hornbill - a type of bird with a large beak

Poachers - hunters who look for animals to capture and sell

- 5) During the show, the actors will portray the different animals in the show. Ask your students to come up with a list of ways an actor can portray an animal. (For example, using their voice or their body, adding a costume or a mask, etc.) Encourage your students to use some of these same things to temporarily turn themselves and your classroom into a zoo or a jungle.
- 6) Discuss with your students the etiquette of being an audience member at a live theatrical performance. Items for discussion: appropriate responses, no chewing gum, no talking, going to the bathroom before the performance, etc.

Post-Show Curriculum Connections



ENGLISH

WHO'S THIS AESOP GUY?

The Ant and the Elephant is inspired by the popular Aesop fable *The Ant and the Dove*. (<http://www.aesopfables.com/aesopsel.html>)

Discuss what a fable is with your students and have them research the origins of Aesop's Fables. Assign each student another of Aesop's Fables to read and see if they can determine the moral of their specific story.

IS THAT THE SAME STORY?

Divide your classroom into groups and have each group make a list of the ways the musical was the same or was different from the book *The Ant and the Elephant*. Once they are done, each group should compare and contrast their lists with rest of the class.

HE SURE DID WRITE A LOT OF BOOKS

Each student should go to their school or town library and check out another book to read written by Bill Peet. If they are not old enough to read it by themselves, they should find a member of their family to read it to them. Have students share a short oral report on the book for the book they read for the rest of the class.

I LIKE MY VERSION BETTER

In the musical, the narrator quickly changes the story several different times. Assign each of your students a familiar nursery rhyme. Encourage them to do just what the narrator did in the musical and change up the plot or characters. Students can then write out their new story and share it with their classmates.



THEATRE

I'M READY FOR MY CLOSE UP

Clear a space in your classroom where students can act out a scene from *The Ant and the Elephant* for their fellow students. Begin by divide your students into pairs or small groups to select and rehearse the scene they would like to perform. These scenes could be one they saw in the musical or they can make up their own scene based on the original Bill Peet book. Encourage them to use their voices and bodies to help portray the animal characters for the rest of the class.

IS THAT PIECE OF PAPER TALKING?

Throughout the musical, the characters are introduced through the use of shadow puppets. You can create your own shadow puppet theatre in your classroom by simply hanging a thin white sheet and putting a bright white light behind it. Give each student a piece of thick black construction paper and ask them to draw and create their own shadow puppet. Divide the classroom into groups and have each group create a story based on their puppets.



Post-Show Curriculum Connections (Continued)



SCIENCE

WHERE DO I BELONG?

Animals are divided into a number of different groups and classes by scientists. Have your students identify all of the animals in the story using the most basic of classifications (insects, mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians). Students should now create a list of the specific animal's characteristics that make it a part of its designated group.

DINNER'S READY

In the world of *The Ant and the Elephant*, all of the animals co-exist without physical threat in the same environment. But in the real animal kingdom, there are definitely predators and prey that make up a food chain. Discuss with your students which animals from the show would co-habitat and which ones would keep away from each other for the sake of their lives.



SOCIAL SCIENCES

WOULD THE GOOD GUY PLEASE STAND UP

Each of the characters in this story ends up needing help from another of the character. Some ask nicely, some don't. Some give reasons why they can't help, some don't. Start a discussion with your students on what make someone a "good guy." Discuss if any of the characters in the show are good guys. Are there any that are worse the others? Students should discuss the times they were asked for help. Did they help? Were they happy to help? What about helping with chores around the house?

1+2 MATH

OKAY, EVERYONE GET IN A LINE

There are a number of different animals in *The Ant and the Elephant*; all of them played by humans. Of course the animals are often much different from each other in size and shape than humans. Have your students create a list of the animals from the show (ant, turtle, bird, giraffe, lion, rhino, elephant, warthog, and horse) and then list them from the lightest to the heaviest. Next have them create a list that shows the animals from shortest to the tallest. Finally they should research the average size and shape of each animal and determine the accuracy of their lists.

I CAN'T WAIT 'TIL I GROW UP

At the beginning of the show, Bill is able to magnify the Ant in order to see her better. Older students should calculate how many times they would need to magnify an ant in order for the ant to be the size of a human.

