

**Brigham Young University  
Young Company  
Presents**

# *The Fisherman and His Wife*

*by Larry & Vivian Snipes*



## **Teacher's Resource Packet**

**Compiled by Haley Flanders, dramaturg**

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# Introduction

## Story Synopsis

*The Fisherman and His Wife* is a German tale adapted by the Brothers' Grimm in the early 19th century. It explores the true meaning of happiness, love and the powerful consequences behind wishes. A poor fisherman lived with his wife in a small and ragged hut. The fisherman was content with his simple life, yet his greedy wife, Isabel, always wanted bigger and better things. One day, while fishing by the shore, the fisherman caught a magical flounder, who spoke to him and claimed to be an enchanted prince. Hearing this remarkable news, Isabel requested that her husband return to the sea to catch this magical flounder and wish for a nice cottage. He does so, and the fish granted this wish. His seahorse assistant trotted away to deliver the gift of a newer, nicer house. Yet this was not enough to make Isabel happy. She then wished for a stone castle, then to be queen, then to be empress, and finally...to rule the entire universe! Each time, the wish is requested and granted in the same fashion. Meanwhile, the weather worsens, the fisherman feels tired and hopeless, and the flounder and seahorse grow more and more agitated. Thus before granting Isabel's last wish, the flounder encouraged the fisherman to make one wish for himself. The fisherman only had one true desire: for his wife to be happy with her life. Upon granting his wish, the flounder and his seahorse disappeared into the water, and the fisherman returned home to see his wife back in their original tiny hut. It turns out that none of the material things made her truly happy; all she needed was to count her blessings and to love her husband, as he loved her.

## Our Adaptation

BYU's production of *The Fisherman and His Wife* was written by a husband and wife team, Larry and Vivian Snipes. It was published by New Plays Incorporated in 1999. The director of this production is Nestor Bravo Goldsmith, a professional mime. Therefore our show incorporates a lot of dramatic movement that helps to make the characters and settings come to life. Some pantomime is also involved in the staging of this production, accompanied by simple set pieces, minimal props, colorful costumes, and extravagant masks and headpieces. While the original script only calls for the characters of a storyteller, fisherman, his wife, and a flounder, BYU has added a seahorse assistant for the flounder. We have also added two silent onstage helpers called "koken" that aide in our incorporation of audience participation throughout the entire show. The koken are two girls wearing all blue, and we encourage your students to watch and copy their actions when they are near the front of the stage.

## About This Resource Packet

This packet includes supplemental activities, games and handouts to enhance the students' viewing experience. The suggested lessons have been designed with the aim of being easily executed without necessitating extensive preparation, time, or materials. The games and activities also include connections with core curricular standards and can be expanded or adapted to better address your individual classroom goals. They also come with clear instructions, contextualization to the play, and discussion questions. **Games** are meant to be played by the entire class. **Activities** are meant to be solo or group assignments.

# Theatre Etiquette

Just like the performers, the audience also has an important role to play. Because some of the students may not have attended a play before, below are expectations to help them prepare for *The Fisherman and His Wife*.

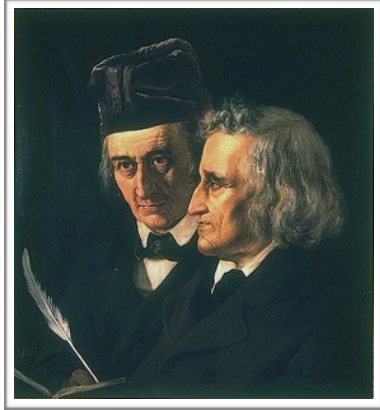
- Remember to use the restroom before the show.
- No photography, please, and be sure to turn off your cellphones.
- Before the play starts, quietly follow the actors' instructions when they are seating you.
- Remember to sit flat on the floor with your legs crossed. This allows everyone to see the actors better and prevents limbs from falling asleep during the show.
- During the show, follow the actors' instructions when you are asked to participate.
- Don't speak with your neighbors during the show. We want everyone to be able to hear the actors.
- Please enjoy the show and laugh when you think it's funny.
- You can clap at the end of the play. This is how you show the actors you enjoyed their performance.

NOTE: This production calls for audience participation. The seated students are meant to be the "sea" during the show. Your students should follow that actions and sounds made by the koken (the 2 girls dressed in all dark blue), who often sit near the front of the stage. One is seated on each side of the stage so that all students can clearly see the koken's actions. A few students seated closest to the stage will be chosen at random to participate briefly in the show, on the stage.

## About the Authors:

### The Brothers Grimm

#### Jacob (1785-1863) & Wilhelm (1786-1859)



Jacob Grimm (right) and his younger brother Wilhelm (left) grew up in Germany. They studied to become lawyers, just like their father. As children, the brothers were very interested in reading big collections of folk poetry. They took jobs as librarians and professors at the University of Göttingen, yet eventually left so that they could travel the world and record the myths, legends, fairytales and folklore that they heard along the way. Today, the Brothers Grimm receive the credit for many popular fairytales, although they were merely the scribes of the stories, not the original creators.

#### About *The Fisherman and His Wife*

**HISTORY:** *The Fisherman and His Wife* is the nineteenth tale recorded by the Brothers Grimm and was published in the *Grimm's Children's and Household Tales* collection in German in 1812. It first came from Philipp Otto Runge, a painter, who wrote it on a manuscript to be published in a collection of German folklore. The Grimms read it in 1809 and decided to include it as part of their collection of works. Similar versions of this tale can be found elsewhere such as the poem about a golden fish, published by Russian author Alexander Pushkin in 1835.



#### About the Playwrights

BYU's adaptation of *The Fisherman and His Wife* was written in 1998 by husband and wife, Larry and Vivian Snipes. Together, they run the Lexington Children's Theatre in Kentucky.

# Pre-Show Introduction and Discussion Questions

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**Read this to the students as an introduction to the themes and characters they will meet. Then use the questions at the end to spark a discussion:**

Welcome to a land of magic and miracles! A place where fish grant wishes and dreams come true. Or so it seems...

In this story, you will meet a storyteller who will guide you along a seaside adventure. Listen to her words very carefully and follow the sounds and actions of her two helpers, the koken. That way, you can be a part of the action and use your imagination to help create the changing weather and scenery surrounding our tale.

You will also meet a fisherman who is very happy with his simple life inside his tiny hut by the seashore. However, his wife Isabel would rather have bigger and better things. She wants to live like the queen of the universe!

Last but not least, you will soon meet a magical flounder and his trustworthy sidekick, a colorful seahorse! As you watch this tale unfold, ask yourself...

- If you found a fish that could grant wishes, what would YOU wish for?
- Would you wish for something that would benefit just you, or would you help others?
- What if you had no limit to your wishes? What then?

## Post-Show Discussion Questions

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### GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- What did you like about each of the characters? (storyteller, fisherman, Isabel, flounder, seahorse, koken)
- What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
- What was your favorite movement that you had to do? Why?
- What parts of the play were funny? Scary? Silly? Sad? Happy? Loud? Soft? Etc.
- What was your favorite part about seeing this play? Why?

### QUESTIONS ON SPECIFIC CHARACTERS:

- What did the **storyteller** add to the show?
- What did the **koken** (the 2 girls dressed in all blue) add to the show?
  - What was your favorite thing that the koken did during the show?
- What lesson(s) did the **fisherman** learn? How did he learn them?
- What would you have done if YOU were the fisherman and you found a magical fish?
  - What would you say to him?
  - What would you wish for?
- What would you have done if YOU were the fisherman and had a greedy wife?
  - What would you say to her?
- What lesson(s) did the wife, **Isabel** learn? How did she learn them?
  - How do you think Isabel's life will be different now, after learning this lesson?
- What lesson(s) did the **flounder and seahorse** learn? How did they learn them?
  - What did you like about these characters?





# COLOR THE COSTUMES

COSTUMES are an important aspect to this play. Notice how different the fisherman and his wife Isabel look from each other.

These are some costume renderings from our production. Color this drawing of the fisherman and his wife, Isabel.

## Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe the fisherman's personality, based on his clothing:?
- How would you describe Isabel's personality?
- Why do you think they dress like this in part of the story? What actions lead to this?
- How might their clothes resemble the wishes that they make?

Costumes were designed by Shannon McCurdy and Donnette Perkins. These two renderings were drawn by Shannon.



# Lesson #1: Be Careful What You Wish For

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## Game: Word Wishing with Mad Libs

### CORE CURRICULUM:

- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners with peers and adults in small and larger groups. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1)
- Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.2)
- Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1)

### PLAY CONTEXTUALIZATION:

Isabel's wishes have a dramatic effect on the events of the entire story. Her simple choice of words changes her whole world over and over again, and her personality and relationship with the fisherman is greatly altered due to her greedy wishes. This game emphasizes the importance of choices within a story, and how words can lead to great consequences. It also encourages the students to wish for certain events to happen, and to make it so. Yet much like the fisherman and Isabel, who were never instantly aware of the consequences of their choices, the students will not know the result of their word wishes until the entire story is read aloud. Then much like the fisherman returning home from the seashore to see how crazy his life has become, the students will see how crazy their story has become by their many choices!

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Define "Mad Lib" to the class: a story that is missing a lot of words. The person with the story asks the people *not* looking at the story to suggest words to fill in the blanks. Then the story is read aloud.
- Print out the Mad Lib sheet on the next page, and pick one to complete. You can tell the students the titles of the Mad Libs at this point, or save it until the words are collected. As a class, ask the students to either write down or say words that fit the descriptions of the missing words. Tell them the type of word you are looking for (i.e.: adjective), then choose one of their suggestions and write it in the appropriate blank. Then read the story aloud to the class. Complete the other story if you have enough time, or redo the same story, but ask for the words in a different order to still keep the end result a surprise!

### OPTIONAL ALTERATIONS:

- For **older** classes, this could be a small group activity with one student writing the words down and 2-3 more giving the words as suggestions, then reading them all aloud as a class.
- For **younger** classes, write out the entire mad lib on the board and read the story to them and fill in the words as you go, making it easier for them to pay attention and to learn to read.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How did your word choices effect the story?
- What word(s) caused the story to become the most ridiculous?
- Did any of the choices seem to make sense to the story? Which ones?
- Were there any surprises, for how the story ended up fitting together (or not)?
- What can we learn from this in relation to making wishes?



### **MAD LIB #1: SUPERHERO TELEVISION SHOW!**

One of my favorite shows on TV is “Super (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_.” It’s about 3 (same plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ who all have (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ superpowers. One of them can (verb) \_\_\_\_\_, another one can shoot (thing) \_\_\_\_\_ and the third one can (verb) \_\_\_\_\_. These characters use their powers to protect the (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ of (place) \_\_\_\_\_ and defeat the powers of (name) \_\_\_\_\_. My favorite episode is when their (thing) \_\_\_\_\_ was kidnapped by the (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. (name) \_\_\_\_\_ and they had to fly to (place) \_\_\_\_\_ to rescue them. In another episode, they had to (verb) \_\_\_\_\_ a villain who was made out of (thing) \_\_\_\_\_. The show is so cool that I even bought a(n) (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ t-shirt with their faces on it, and underneath it, it says, (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_ to the rescue!” which is the show’s famous slogan. The end.

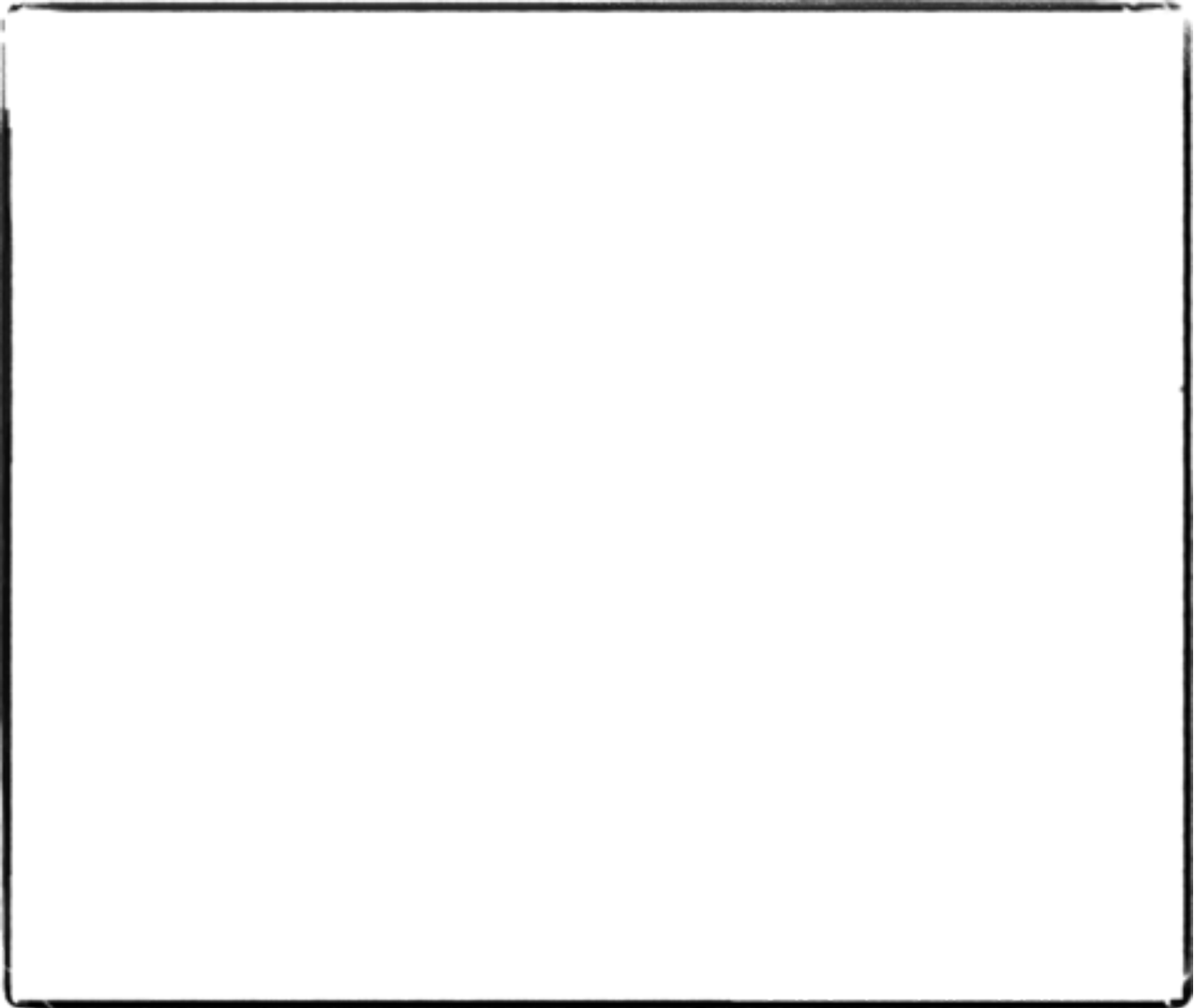
### **MAD LIB #2: TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME!**

Baseball is so much fun! I play in the local (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ league, on a team that’s called the (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_. We practice (number) \_\_\_\_\_ times a week. Last Saturday, we had our first game against the (plural noun) \_\_\_\_\_ who are from (place) \_\_\_\_\_. It was awesome! I played (number) \_\_\_\_\_ base, and when (name) \_\_\_\_\_ came to bat, I caught the (thing) \_\_\_\_\_ and tagged him/her out! Everyone was cheering, (phrase) “\_\_\_\_\_!” Then it was our turn at bat. I got up and stood at the (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ home plate, swung the (thing) \_\_\_\_\_ and (exclamation) “\_\_\_\_\_!” A home run! I (past tense verb) \_\_\_\_\_ around the bases as fast as I could. And then I slid right into the (thing) \_\_\_\_\_! It was the most (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ game I ever played! I am so glad (person) \_\_\_\_\_ was there to see it and that (song) \_\_\_\_\_ could be played over the loud speaker as I ran the (number) \_\_\_\_\_ bases. The end.

## ART ACTIVITY: WHAT WOULD *YOU* WISH FOR?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

In *The Fisherman and His Wife*, the fisherman is very happy with his simple life in a hut by the seashore, while his greedy wife Isabel keeps wanting bigger and better things. Even though her wishes come true, she still never seems happy with what she is given. Now pretend that YOU found a magical fish that could grant wishes. What would you wish for? How many things would you wish for? Draw some of your wishes below, then share it with your class.



### Discussion Questions:

- Was it hard or easy to think of something to wish for? Why or why not?
- If you had to pick a number, how many wishes would you want? Why?
- How does your wish change you or others around you?
- What other events might happen if your wish comes true?

## LESSON #2: The Power of Storytelling & Adaptation

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### Game: *Fisherman Phrase Telephone*

#### CORE CURRICULUM:

- Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.2)
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.A)

#### PLAY CONTEXTUALIZATION:

Since *The Fisherman and His Wife* is a fairytale collected and written down by the Brothers Grimm, it is possible that these brothers changed it from the way they first heard it on their travels. This game represents how stories are heard, adapted, and passed down throughout time, often experiencing changes as different people hear and tell the story to fit their own interpretation in that time and place.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

- To give them some context about the game, read the play contextualization (above) to the students, or read them the information about the Brothers Grimm and the history of the tale, found on page 5 of this packet.
- Have the students sit in a circle. Then whisper a phrase from the play (list below) in one of the students' ears. Then tell them to simply whisper that phrase to the person sitting next to them. The whispered phrase gets passed all the way around the circle until the last person in the circle tells the rest of the class what he/she heard as the phrase. Hopefully the phrase has slightly changed. Do this game a few times with different phrases, or make up your own (or have the students make up some; approve them beforehand).

#### Lines from the script that can be used as the whispered phrase:

- "Oh my husband, husband dear. Look what the fish has made appear." -Isabel
- "The sea is as dark as midnight...and Isabel my wife is unhappy with our life." -fisherman
- "Flounder, flounder, come to me. Rise to the surface of the sea." -fisherman
- "That is the way it will be! You will get this wish for me!" -Isabel
- "The fisherman was content with his life in this unchanging corner of the world." -storyteller

#### OPTIONAL ALTERATIONS:

- For younger classes, shorten the phrases.
- You can also use rhythms, and create a 3-5 step rhythm or set of gestures, and have the students sit in a line, and tap the person in front of him/her to pass the rhythm along.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What was this experience like? Was it hard or easy? Why?
- How did the phrase change from beginning to end? (Students discuss what they thought was being said.) How did the phrase stay the same (if at all)?
- Did any of you purposely say something different than what you heard?
- Can you guess which character might say this line? (list the characters: storyteller, fisherman, Isabel, flounder, seahorse, koken)
- What can we learn from this game about story adaptation?

# Activity: Adapting a Fairytale

## CORE CURRICULUM:

- Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3)
- Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1)
- Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2)

## PLAY CONTEXTUALIZATION:

The basic plot of *The Fisherman and His Wife*—a magical fish granting wishes to a poor married couple— can be found in folklore from other countries throughout history. Moreover, the Brothers Grimm did not come up with any of their fairytales on their own. Sometimes they read it in other formats, such as poems, then wrote their own version for their collection. Sometimes they heard a story and scribed what they remembered, or what they understood. Today, tons of fairytales are *still* adapted and altered for books, television, movies, and cartoons, in order to fit today's setting. This activity is a fun way to challenge your students' creativity and imagination, and see how they choose to adapt these fairytales for today's audiences, just like Vivian and Larry Snipes (the playwrights of BYU's production). This also helps the students learn other popular tales accredited to the Brothers Grimm.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Have the students choose a popular Grimm Brothers Fairytale from the list below (or any other tale they know) and challenge them to write their OWN version of the tale using the handout on the following page. The key words are suggestions for iconic symbols or characters they could change. Have the students share them with a partner, a group, or the class. This can be given as homework if students need more time.

- *The Frog Prince*: frog prince, princess, kiss
- *Rapunzel*: long hair, tower, flower, prince
- *Hansel and Gretel*: house, candy, gingerbread
- *Cinderella*: shoe/slipper, stepsister, pumpkin, midnight, fairy godmother
- *Little Red Riding Hood*: wolf, grandmother, teeth, basket
- *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*: prince, magic mirror, apple, sleep, dwarves
- *Rumpelstiltskin*: name, riddle, golden straw
- *Sleeping Beauty*: Aurora, dragon, Maleficent, spindle, needle

## OPTIONAL ALTERATIONS

For younger classes, read an age-appropriate book version of one of these tales, then ask the students to think of things they could change about the tale. (i.e.: Snow White could have seven giants instead of dwarves.) Then ask them to draw a picture of the new adaptation.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What was hard about this activity? What was easy? Why?
- Why did you make the changes you made?
- How did that change the story as a whole?
- What other changes did you consider making? Why didn't you make them?
- What does this activity teach us about storytelling and adaptation?
- What adaptations of these stories do you like and why? (Ex: Disney's *Tangled*)

## WRITING ACTIVITY: ADAPTING A FAIRYTALE

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ORIGINAL TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADAPTED TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

STORY:

[illegible]

## LESSON #3: The Magic of Movement

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### Game: I wish for you to...

#### CORE CURRICULUM:

- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.A)

#### PLAY CONTEXTUALIZATION:

When Isabel, the fisherman's wife, learns about the magical fish that can grant wishes, she commands the fisherman to return and ask for certain things to make their life better. As Isabel gets greedier, the flounder gets more worried about granting her wishes, but does so anyway. Thus in this game, the students learn what it is like to be Isabel AND the flounder.

Some of the suggestions below are gestures that the students will have to perform during the play by following the koken characters. So this is also good practice for the physicality they will both do and see.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

The class forms 2 single-file lines facing each other, like this: A -----> <----- B

The person at the front of the line should be facing the person in the front of the other line. For clarity, you can make one line A and the other line B. Person A says to person B "What do you wish for?" Person B says "I wish for you to..." (ie: go swimming). Then Person A, still in their spot in line, begins doing what person B wished, while Person B goes to the back of their line. Then the "new" Person B says to Person A, "What do you wish for?" and Person A, while still doing the motion, says, "I wish for you to..." and says a different motion. Person A then stops doing their motion and runs to the back of their line. The game continues from there until everyone has had at least one turn doing an action and giving a command. Encourage them to make suggestions that allow for a lot of distinct physicality. (Note: This game is also known in theatre as "What are you doing?")

#### Suggested actions from the play:

- Be a chicken / duck / frog / horse / fish jumping out of the sea
- Act like the ocean's waves
- Be wind / rain / thunder / lightning
- Go fishing (and catch a fish)
- Walk up some steep stairs
- Clean the dishes

#### OPTIONAL ALTERATIONS & OTHER MOVEMENT GAMES:

- For younger classes, pick one student and whisper an action (possibly from the list above). The student acts it out in front of the class and everyone guesses what you asked him/her to do.
- "Mirror Game": Students face their partner, standing up. One is the leader, while the other is the follower. The leader begins moving slowly (usually starting with the hands) and the follower must copy him/her, as if they were the leader's reflection. Do this for a few minutes. Then the leader and follower switch roles. Challenge them to make it difficult and to really connect through eye contact.



- “Wish Granted”: Students stand in a circle and each take turns telling the class to do something (i.e.: “I wish...for us all to be chickens!”) The class responds, “Wish granted!” Then everyone does the action together.
- “Charades Story” (15 minute rehearsal): Students act out a recognizable story/movie/book entirely through mime in front of the class. 1-4 people in a group, with scenes about 1-2 minutes long. Then the class guesses what story they are telling.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

(pick the ones that relate to the games you played)

- What was it like to communicate without dialogue? Hard? Easy? Why?
- What was it like to copy someone’s motions / obey someone’s wishes, even if you didn’t want to?
- How important is movement in telling a story on stage?
- After the show: How was the story enhanced by the movement elements?

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- FOR POPULAR BOOK VERSIONS OF THIS TALE, VISIT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY. YOU CAN ALSO VISIT THE SITE BELOW.

<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/fishermanwife/notes.html#TWO>