

Brigham Young University's Young Company presents

The Nightingale



Teacher's Resource Packet

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Introduction

Story Synopsis

The Nightingale is the story of an emperor in China and how he learns the meaning of true friendship. The Chinese emperor, upon hearing about the splendor of the nightingale in a book written by the Japanese emperor, seeks and finds the nightingale and has her stay and sing for him. The Japanese emperor sends the Chinese emperor a mechanical nightingale as a gift. The Chinese emperor is so impressed by the mechanical bird's singing that he forgets about the real nightingale, so she leaves the palace. The mechanical bird eventually breaks and the Chinese emperor becomes very ill. His dying wish was to hear the nightingale's song and, just before Death takes him, the nightingale returns and sings to save him from Death.

A website with a good translation of the full story by Hans Christian Andersen and beautiful illustrations by Edmund Dulac may be found at [ChildhoodReading.com](http://childhoodreading.com/?p=16) (<http://childhoodreading.com/?p=16>).

Our Adaptation

Our production of *The Nightingale* was written by Timothy Mason. Mason adapted Andersen's short story specifically for Theatre for Young Audiences. English and Mandarin will be spoken throughout the show. Brigham Young University's production blends American theatre with Chinese theatre and dance techniques. Julia Ashworth, professor of Theatre Education, blends the two acting techniques while Kori Wakamatsu, faculty member of the Modern Dance Division at BYU, choreographs movement and dance throughout the performance. Melanie Park, a student of music at BYU, is composing original music, under the supervision of Emmy Award winning and BYU music professor Ron Saltmarsh, for the production to make the show a truly unique experience.

About This Resource Packet

This Teachers' Resource Packet includes supplemental activities and handouts meant to enhance students' viewing experience. The suggested lesson ideas have been designed with the aim of being easily executed without necessitating extensive preparation, time, or materials. The activities also include connections with core curricular standards and can be expanded or adapted to better address your individual classroom goals.

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 Nightingale*.

- 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.

Hans Christian Andersen

The Nightingale is based on the short story written by Hans Christian Andersen.

About the Author

Born in Odense, Denmark, on April 2, 1805, Hans Christian Andersen was the only child of a poor cobbler, Hans, and his wife, Anne Marie. At the age of eleven, his father passed away. To help support his mother, he began working in factories, telling stories to his coworkers and making up songs to entertain them. At the age of fourteen, shortly after his mother remarried, Andersen set off for Copenhagen to become famous in the theatre.



After multiple attempts to join the Copenhagen's Royal Theatre, Andersen received help from Jonas Collin, the director of the Royal Theater, and was provided the opportunity to receive an education at the expense of the theater. After finishing his exams, Andersen decided to pursue his career instead of attending university. He began writing travelogues, poems, novels and plays as he traveled around Europe; documenting his experiences and capturing his imagination on paper.

Hans Christian Andersen is best known for his fairytales, which were often adapted from stories he heard as a child or based on his own personal experiences. Some of his popular fairytales include *The Little Mermaid*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Thumbelina*, *The Nightingale*, and *The Ugly Duckling*. The height of Andersen's life came on December 6, 1867, when he was made an honorary citizen of Odense, his birthplace. It was a major event with schools being closed, a torchlight procession through the streets and everyone in the city coming out to honor him. Andersen later moved in with his close friends, Moritz Melchior and his wife, and died August 4, 1875, of liver cancer.

About *The Nightingale*

The Nightingale (*Nattergalen* in Danish) was first published in 1844. The Chinese motif for the story came from Andersen's time in the Tivoli Gardens that were opened in Copenhagen in August 1843. Andersen had never traveled further than Istanbul and stayed mostly in Europe during his travels abroad; so, his knowledge of China came from the decorative styles that were popular in Europe at that time. Andersen visited Tivoli Gardens again in October and wrote in his datebook that night that he had begun writing his Chinese fairytale. He finished the story in two days.

Andersen's Inspiration for *The Nightingale*

Andersen fell in love with Jenny Lind, a Swedish opera singer, who is said to have been Andersen's model for the nightingale in his story. Andersen first met Lind in 1840 and developed an unrequited love for her. Andersen was very shy and found it difficult to propose



to Lind, but finally managed to propose through a letter he handed to her while she was boarding a train to an opera concert. Lind did not return his affections and often wrote to Andersen that she wished him well, as a sister to a brother.

Lind, after Andersen published *The Nightingale*, was given the title of "Swedish Nightingale." Her voice, like the nightingale, is said to sing so sweetly about good and evil that even death was affected by her voice. So, given the power of Lind's vocal ability, it has become a common belief that Andersen based the nightingale in his story on Lind and that the love of the emperor for the bird speaks of his feelings for Lind. While Lind did not romantically love Andersen, she did write to him throughout the years and maintained a close friendship with him.

About the Playwright

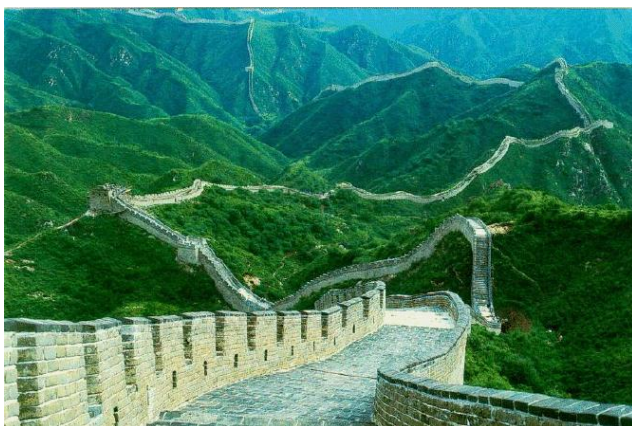
Timothy Mason is a playwright and a novelist. He is best known for his musical adaptation of Dr. Seuss' *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. His plays have been produced across the United States and in London. Mason originally adapted *The Nightingale*, based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, in partnership with Seattle Children's Theatre and Children's Theatre Company – Minneapolis for their 1975-76 season.



China Handout

China is an ancient country built on ceremony and tradition. It is home to the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City (the home of the Chinese emperor) and one of the oldest and largest imperial tombs with its army of Terracotta Warriors. It has been rocked by multiple wars and changes of power, beginning with the Xia dynasty around 2000 B.C. After World War II, the Japanese forces that occupied China were defeated, but civil war broke out among two political groups – the Kuomintang and Communist parties. In 1949, the Communist party had won control of China and the country became known as The People's Republic of China – what we know it as today. The borders of China were closed at that time and reopened to tourists around 1972. Because of its long period of isolation from the rest of the world, China became a place of wonder and mystery, one that many nations still desire to explore today.

The Great Wall of China



Terracotta Warriors from Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province

Significance of Color

You may have been taught that all colors have meaning, and they do. However, colors can mean different things in different countries. Here is a comparison of Chinese and American meanings of color. There are many different meanings for one color; these compare just one of the many meanings associated to the color.

America	Color	China
Passion	RED	Bravery
Peace	BLUE	Unyielding
Envy	GREEN	Chivalry
Joy	YELLOW	Ferocity
Wisdom	PURPLE	Wisdom
Death	BLACK	Loyalty
Purity	WHITE	Death

Did You Know...

- That Chinese Checkers was not invented in China? It was invented in Germany
- That the color yellow was reserved just for the emperor?
- That the Great Wall of China is not one long wall, but many different, unconnected segments of a wall?
- That the dragon is the symbol for the emperor and the phoenix is the symbol for the empress?
- That China was one of the first countries to play soccer? They played it as early as 3rd century B.C.
- China had 24 dynasties? A dynasty is a period of time where a certain family or group ruled the country. The first dynasty began with the Qin (pronounced like chin) Dynasty in 221 B.C. and ending with the fall of Yuan Shikai (yyahn shee-kahy) in 1916 A.D. There were a total of 557 emperors of China during this time period.
- That emperor was considered holy and very few people were allowed to touch him. Even the royal physician had to take his pulse at a distance with a member of the court attaching a thread to emperor's wrist and the physician grasping the thread.

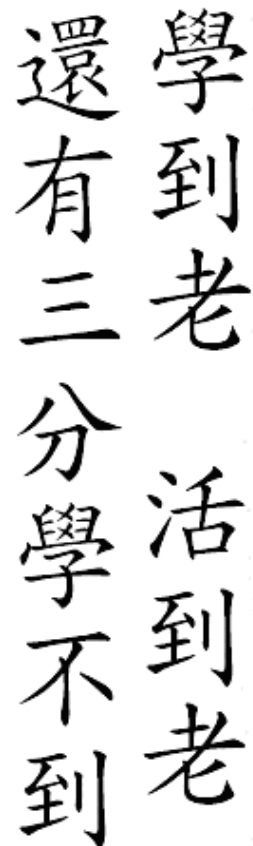
Chinese Proverbs

A proverb is a popular phrase that expresses truth through messages of common sense or reflections on humanity. It may also be referred to as the theme or moral of a story. *The Nightingale* uses American adaptations of proverbs so they are more familiar to us, like “Do not be deceived by glitter and show” and “Do not be in such a hurry to get there, that you forget why you went.” Here are a few examples of Chinese proverbs:

- A closed mind is like a closed book; just a block of wood.
- The longer the night lasts, the more our dreams will be.
- Of all the stratagems, to know when to quit is the best.
- Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without one.
- One joy scatters a hundred griefs.
- If you want happiness for a lifetime; help someone else.

Can you think of any proverbs you might know?

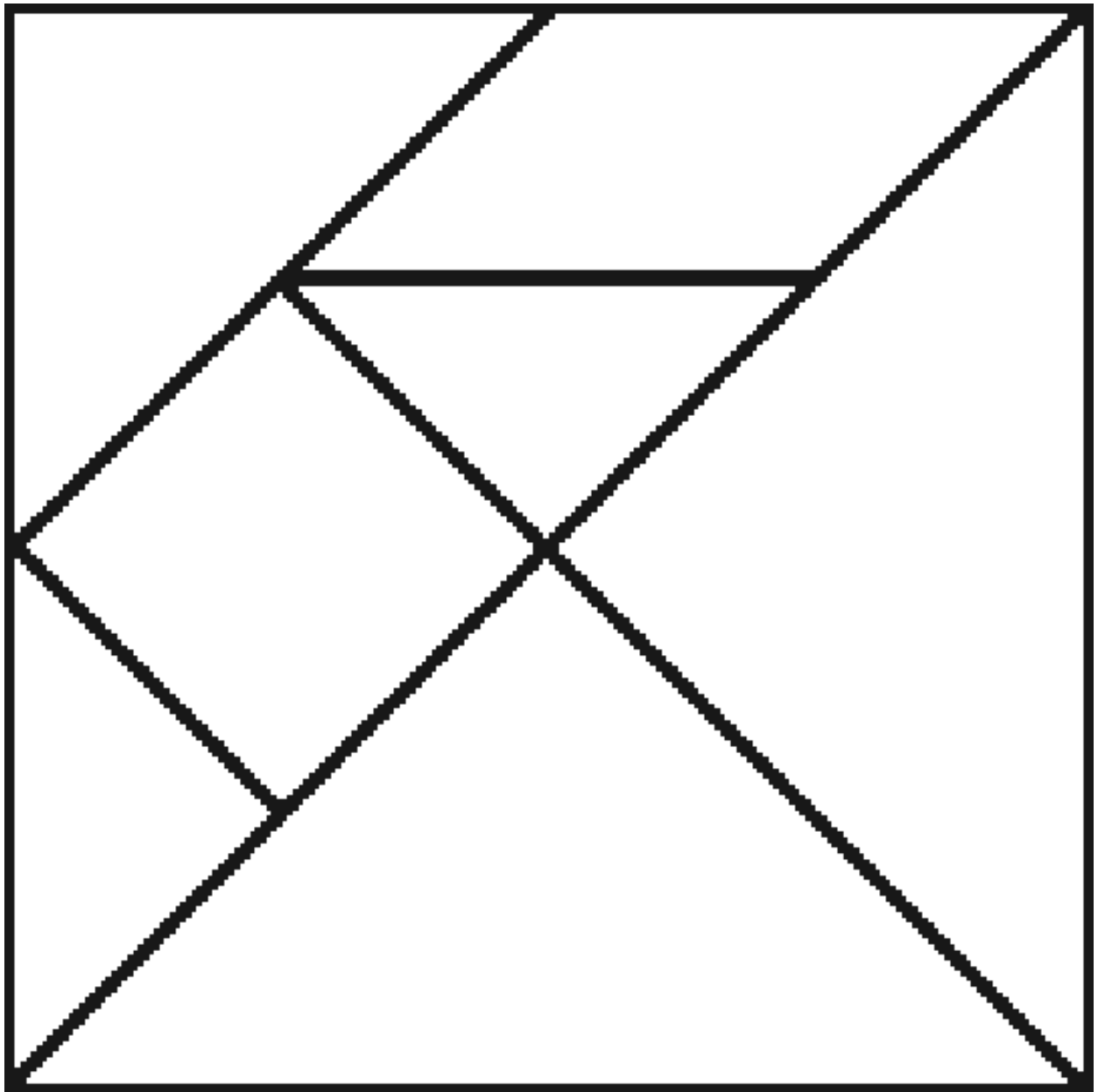
The Chinese writing to the right is a Chinese proverb. It says, “Learn till old, live till old, and there is still one-third not learned.” It means that no matter how old you are, there is still more learning or studying left to do.



學到老
活到老
還有三分學不到

Tangram Handout

Tangram was a Chinese puzzle game children played to help them learn how to think outside the box and learn strategy and critical thinking. They would use shapes, usually made out of wood, to make a picture. To use your tangram, cut out the square and then follow the lines to cut it into the other shapes. Use these shapes to create different images. Look at the images on the next page – can you copy the pictures? Now try making your own picture!



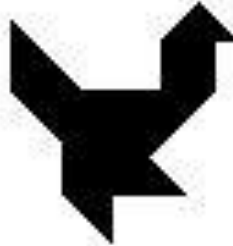
Tangram Puzzles



Apple



Bear



Bird



Boat



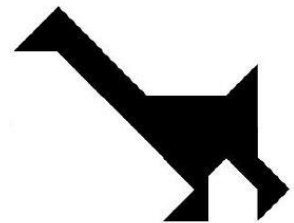
Bunny



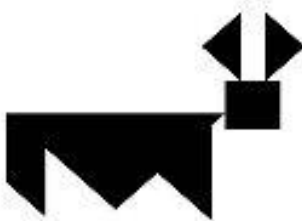
Candle



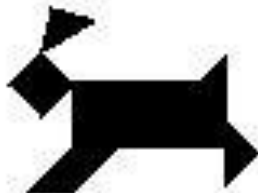
Cat



Chicken



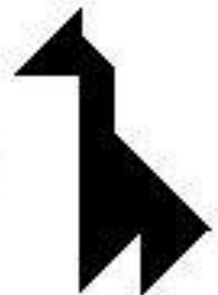
Cow



Dog



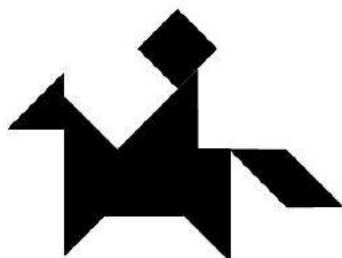
Fish



Giraffe



Horse



Person Riding Horse



Person Running



Woman In Kimono

Lesson Idea 1

Our show tells the story of *The Nightingale* through storytelling and movement. This Lesson Idea allows students to experience storytelling through movement, just like our actors do.

Lesson Title: Storytelling through Movement

Content Standard:

- Speaking and Listening Standards: Comprehension and Collaboration and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas.
- National Theater 2: Acting by assuming roles and interacting in improvisations.
- National Dance 3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.
- National Dance 7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines.

Materials Needed: an instrument (tambourine, drum or just your hands)

Activity:

Have the students warm-up by moving through the space. Use an instrument (tambourine, drum, or just your hands) to create a beat for the students to move to. Adjust the tempo (fast, medium, slow) and instruct the students to follow the tempo of the music. Now give the students ways to move through the space (i.e. heavily, happily, lazily, purposefully, energetically). Instruct the students to listen to the music and adjust their movement accordingly.

Discussion:

Have the children sit down and discuss:

- How did the students feel as they moved about the space?
- How did the different tempos affect their movement?
- How did the different ways of moving through the space feel? How did they need to change their body to adjust to the tempo and the movement?

Discuss how movement can tell a story. Explain that *The Nightingale* is acted through movement and not words - just the narrator tells the story.

Activity:

Have the children get back on their feet. You have two options: instruct them to recreate something from their own life OR enact the lifecycle of a bird, like the nightingale. Be sure to instruct them to make clear choices, like they did as they moved through the space. Are they heavy or light? Strong or weak? What are they doing? Make it clear through the movement. Provide a steady beat for the students to move to and encourage them to keep moving until you stop the beat. To lead them through a unified story, use the lifecycle of a bird. Lead them by having them imagine they are in the egg, then breaking out of the shell, learning how to eat, and learning to fly. Be sure to give them time between each part of the cycle to fully develop and explore their movement for telling their story.

Note: You can also use the tangram images here. Let them reconstruct the images through their bodies.

Discussion:

Split into two groups and have them watch each other. Discuss after each group what they saw. What could they see that helped them know that it was a bird? How did you know it was in a shell? Etc.

Lesson Idea 2

Hans Christian Andersen created fairytales based on his own life. This lesson is designed to help students write their own story from experiences in their lives as well.

Lesson Title: Writing Your Own Story

Content Standard:

- Reading Standard: Determine the central theme/message of a story and summarize the text.
- Reading Standard: Determine the meaning of words/phrases as they are used in a text.
- Writing Standard: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using technique, descriptive details and clear event sequences.

Materials Needed: Students will need paper and a writing utensil, if you choose to have them write their stories.

Activity:

Read the synopsis for *The Nightingale* or read one of Andersen's short stories.

Discussion:

Ask the students:

- What does the story teach them? Is there a theme to the story? A message?
 - The China Handout discusses proverbs and how they are used in the show. This would be a good place to discuss cultural influences, if you desire to do so.
- What stood out to you? What was your favorite part?

Discuss who Hans Christian Andersen was and what he wrote. View the information pages about Hans Christian Andersen in the Teacher's Resource Packet for his life story. Be sure that the children know that Andersen based a lot of his fairytales on tales he heard as a child or on his own life.

- Now that you know it is based on his life, does that change the meaning of the story?
- Think of your favorite part. Have what you learned about Hans Christian Andersen changed what you think about it?

Activity:

Instruct the students to create their own story based on something that has happened to them or a story they've heard. Encourage them to make something different, something they have not heard before - make it their own. Based on their age, have them write it down or give them time to think of a unique short story they can tell in one to two minutes. Give them as much time as you think is necessary – 5-10 minutes should be plenty of time.

Discussion:

Split the students into groups to tell their stories to each other (groups of 3-4 to take less time) or have volunteers share with the whole class based on time.

- Have them discuss what they think the story means. Do you think it is based on their real life or a story they've heard?

Lesson Idea 3

Chinese culture is different than what we see in America; the same goes for their art and theatre. For this lesson, students are exposed to Chinese-style art and asked to contrast and compare Chinese art to what they are familiar with in American art.

Lesson Title: Visual Interpretations

Content Standard:

- Language Arts: Make connections between the text of a story and a visual or oral presentation of the text.
- National Visual Arts 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
- National Visual Arts 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Materials Needed: Copies of the pictures or a way to project the images in the classroom.

Preshow Activity:

Find an image of *The Nightingale* (painting or picture). Discuss how it looks different - what makes it different from what we see in America? Is there anything about the picture that makes it distinctly Chinese to you? What story do you think the picture is telling?



An artistic rendering of *The Nightingale* by John Patience, an illustrator for many of Hans Christian Andersen's stories. The web address for the image is:

http://www.johnpatience.co/hans-andersen/p7ssm_img_1/fullsize/The_Nightingale.jpg

Discuss how a story can be told through a picture, not just through words and movement. Give the synopsis for *The Nightingale* and fill in any gaps in the story the picture is showing. The China Handout provides some insight some cultural markers that they will see in the show that can add to the discussion about how Chinese culture is different from what we may see in America.

Show another picture from the story and let the students discuss it (see example on the next page). After you have finished discussing the picture, ask them if they can think of any pictures or paintings that tell a story? What story are they telling?

Have the students draw a story using some of the elements they have just talked about. After they are done drawing have them share with each other and discuss what elements they see. What story do they

tell with the picture? Where is it? What elements in the picture help you know where it is? Is it in the past, present or future?



This is Edmund Dulac's illustration of the journey to find the nightingale. Hans Christian Andersen's story with Dulac's illustrations may be found at: <http://childhoodreading.com/?p=16>

Post-show Activity:

Discuss what they saw in BYU's production of *The Nightingale*. What influences did they see based on what they learned about China from looking at the pictures? From the handout? Did they see moments in the play that looked similar to the pictures they looked at before? How were they the same? How were they different?

Use the tangram handout and have the students use the example sheet to recreate the images. Discuss how the different images relate to what they say in the play. Students may also want to create their own pictures from things they saw in the play.

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