



THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

Based on "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" by Barbara Robinson

Classroom Guide Grades 4 - 5

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How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* is designed for Texas students in Grades 4 and 5. It offers activities to help you integrate a performance of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, social studies, music, art, and theatre curricula.

All activities in this guide are linked to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) content standards.

For students outside Texas, this guide’s ELA and math activities also are linked to Common Core standards. At the back of this guide, you will find a list of the guide activities and their related Texas and Common Core standards.

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1: Discussion Questions

Before the Performance

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is a stage play. What is a stage play?

- How is a play similar to a TV show or movie?
- How is it different?

Who performs the parts (roles) in a play?

- What kinds of skills do you think performers need to have to perform in plays?
- Who else works on plays? (Remember: you may not see them on stage!)

The play is based on a story called *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

- Have you read *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* as a class or by yourself?
 - Based on what you read, what do you think may happen in the play?

During the Performance

When you watch a play, you are a member of the audience. What kinds of things should you do as an audience member? Examples:

- Pay attention
- Laugh when something funny happens
- Clap if you enjoy something

What kinds of things should you *not* do as an audience member? Examples:

- Talk to your neighbor
- Use a cell phone during the performance
- Yell at the actors (unless they ask you to!)

After the Performance

What did you think of the play?

- If you read *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* beforehand, how was the play similar to the book?
- How was it different?

Describe the performers in the play.

- What did they do to make their characters special (different from the other characters)?
- How did they use their bodies to play their characters (using voice, movement, etc.)?
- Did you see anyone else who worked on the play besides the performers on stage?

Describe the characters' costumes.

- What did each character's costume tell you about that character?
- Did any of the performers change costumes?
 - If so, why do you think they needed to change costumes?

Describe the set of the play.

- Did it have a lot of locations?
- Did it look like a place you've been to before?
- How did different lighting change how the set looked for different scenes?

Did the play have music in it?

- If so, was it only in the background, or did it help tell the story?
- What instruments did you hear in the music?

If you were going to direct *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* how would your production be different than the play you saw by Magik?

2: Magik Must-Reads

For each of our main stage productions at The Magik Theatre, we choose a theme related to the show. Then we create a list of Magik Must-Reads on that theme.

The reading theme for *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* is Don't Judge a Book.

The Magik Must-Reads (Grade 4 - Grade 5) are:

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman

Alcatraz vs. the Evil Librarians by Brandon Sanderson

Daphne's Book by Mary Downing Hahn

Defining Dulcie by Paul Acampora

Read them as a class or let students choose two or more to read. Then use these questions for discussion or book reports:

Theme

How did the theme of Don't Judge a Book show in each book? Explain.

Setting

Describe the settings of each book.

- What details can you remember?
- Were the settings similar to a place you know or a place you've visited?

How were the settings similar to each other? How were they different?

How were the settings related to the theme of Don't Judge a Book? Explain.

Characters

Who were the main characters of each book?

Did any characters show up in more than one book?

Were the characters of one book similar another book's characters in any other ways?

Plot

What did the main characters of the books want most?

Did anyone or anything stand between the main characters and their goals?

Did the main characters get what they wanted? How?

How were the plots of the books similar? How were they different?

3: Write Your Own Adaptation

In *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, Beth retells the story of how the Herdman children changed the characters from the nativity scene. They put their own spin on the Christmas pageant, creating a dramatic spy plot instead of the traditional story of baby Jesus. Now it’s your turn to put a spin on a traditional holiday story or fairy tale. Take any traditional tale and adapt the characteristics of the protagonists and antagonists to create your very own characters. Make sure to keep the same plot points so that the story stays semi-consistent with the original. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What story are you starting with?
- Who are the protagonists and antagonists within both versions?
- What makes your story unique?
- Is the lesson learned the same way?
- How do the characters react to the problem of the story differently than the original?
- How is the narrative changed based on your additions to the story?

TITLE: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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4: Word Problems

- 1) Within the entire cast of the Christmas Pageant, there were 35 kids. Mrs. Bradley wanted to order pizzas for the whole cast after their performance. If every kid wanted 2 slices of pizza, and each pizza was cut into 8 pieces, how many pizzas would Mrs. Bradley have to order? (Must buy full pizzas)

- 2) Mrs. Bradley divided the cast into pairs on the first day of practice, in order to keep track of who was absent and who was present for rehearsal. If there was one group of three and the rest were in pairs, and there were 35 kids, how many groups were there in total?

- 3) For the dress rehearsal, 23 kids in the cast brought in bedsheets for their costumes and 12 kids brought in robes. After the fire happened in the kitchen, 15 costumes were left too close to the kitchen and caught on fire. How many costumes were left unharmed? If 17 bedsheets were unharmed, how many robes were unharmed?

- 4) To get into the holiday spirit, each child in the pageant is supposed to bring in two ornaments to hang on a tree. If three children forgot to bring theirs in, but everyone else brought their two, how many ornaments are on the tree total?

5: Candy Cane Creation

In *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, the cast celebrated after their performance with many different dishes and candies. One of them were candy canes, which are shaped like the shepherds' wooden canes. In this experiment, you will be able to re-shape the traditional treat and make your very own shaped cane.

Materials

- Hot Plate or Bunsen Burner
- Aluminum foil
- Candy canes
- Tongs

Steps (Prepared by Teacher)

- 1) Before class, pre-heat Hot Plate or Bunsen Burner to Medium High heat.
- 2) Shape aluminum foil so that the candy cane does not drip over the edges.
- 3) Ask the students to try to bend the candy canes with their own hands. Ask the students if they think the heat will help in any way.
- 4) Place an unwrapped candy cane on top of aluminum foil
- 5) After 4–5 minutes, have some of the kids try to bend the candy cane with a pair of tongs.
- 6) Divide the students into groups, and hand them one piece of aluminum foil per group. Have them make their own contraption in order for the candy cane to melt into their desired shape.
- 7) Students should write a hypothesis explaining what they think the candy cane will do after heat is applied to it.



Follow-Up Questions

- 1) What does the word malleable mean?
- 2) How long did it take for the candy cane to completely melt?
- 3) Did the different candy canes in the other groups reacted differently than their own?
- 4) Did your hypothesis prove to be true?

Activity borrowed from preschoolpowolpackets.blogspot.com.

6: Christmas Around the World

In *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, the Herdman children took a traditional U.S. holiday and turned it into their own celebration. Around the world, Christmas is celebrated very differently from culture to culture. While in the United States, we have a certain image of Christmas, other countries view Christmas in their own ways.

Procedure

- In small groups, research the ways that people celebrate Christmas all over the world. Feel free to also include other winter holidays, like Hanukkah, Kwanza, and the Winter Solstice. Each group should receive their own country/culture to research. For example, Mexico, Australia, or Germany.
- While researching, be sure to answer the following questions: What does the country/culture call their holiday? How do they celebrate? Do they eat, do, or wear anything special?
- Share your findings with the rest of the class!

Example

The United States:

In the United States, Christmas is celebrated in many ways due to America's extremely diverse communities. Many families celebrate the holiday as a non-religious celebration of family. Christmas day is typically spent with family. A few weeks before Christmas, the house is decorated with a fir tree decorated with both lights and ornaments. Children may write a letter to Santa Claus asking for gifts to be received on Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve, children put out a both cookies and a glass of milk for Santa and then they go to bed. Overnight Santa Claus comes in and leaves gifts under the Christmas Tree and (if left out) in stockings that are hung. On Christmas morning, children open presents and then families spend the day together. Families that celebrate the religious origins of the holiday may go to their church, decorate their home with a manger scene, and discuss their religious beliefs on this day.

Follow-Up Questions

- 1) How do you celebrate the holidays at home?
- 2) What are three of your family traditions?
- 3) How do your traditions compare with those from around the world? Are they very similar? Are they vastly different?

7: Original Ornaments

In *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, the Herdman children put their own spin on the Christmas nativity scene. The best example of this is Gladys' role as the Angel of the Lord and her use of phrases such as "it's Jesus" and "He's over there." Taking this idea, make an angel ornament with a unique spin!

Materials

- Clothes pins
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Feather boa
- Paint (black, yellow, brown, red, gold, etc)
- Sharpies
- Pipe cleaners
- Wooden balls with hole drilled in (big enough to fit over clothes pin)
- Hot glue and glue gun
- String



Activity

- 1) Paint shoes on the edge of the clothes pins and hair onto the wooden balls.
- 2) Take a sharpie and draw on the face of your angel.
- 3) Leave the angel to dry and pick a color of construction paper. Cut out your angel's wings. Then pick out which color you want the angel's arms (pipe cleaner), halo (pipe cleaner), and dress (boa) to be.
- 4) After the clothes pin and wooden ball are dry, with teacher assistance, glue them together with hot glue.
- 5) Create a halo with a pipe cleaner (just make a circle, with a line coming down from it. Then take the halo and attach it to the back of the clothes pin using hot glue with teacher assistance.
- 6) Take the arms and wrapping them around the body. Then, with teacher assistance, glue the skirt (boa) onto the angel.
- 7) With teacher assistance, glue the wings onto the clothespin with a loop of string (to make the angel into an ornament) in between the wings and the clothespin.

Follow-Up Questions

- 1) What makes your angel different?
- 2) Does your angel have a name?
- 3) Do any of the angels look the same? What makes them the same? What makes them different?
- 4) What is good about having a different angel as opposed to them all being the same? How does this relate to you as a person?

8: Carol Creation

In *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, there are various Christmas carols used in the play. One of the more well-known Christmas carols is “The Twelve Days of Christmas”. In this activity, you are going to write your own version of this carol. Here is the original text and an example of a customized version side by side.

The Twelve Days of Christmas
by Frederic Austin

On the First day of Christmas my true love
sent to me
a Partridge in a Pear Tree.

On the Second day of Christmas my true love
sent to me
Two Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree.

On the Third day of Christmas my true love
sent to me
Three French Hens,
Two Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree.

The Twelve Days of Christmas
(customized)

On the Fifth day of christmas my true love
gave to me
Five onion rings!
Four frito pies
Three tacos
Two cherry pies
and a basket for all of these things!

Divide into groups of 3 or 4 and each come up with different lines. Make sure to make it all the way to twelve and share it with your whole class.

TEXAS

Grade 4

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Standard(s)</u>
1	Fine Arts 117.16.b.5
2	ELA 110.15.b.2
3	ELA 110.15.b.15-16
4	Math 111.16.b.3-4
5	Science 112.15.a.4.B; 112.15.b.11-4; 112.15.b.9.A; 112.15.b.10.A
6	Soc Studies 113.15.b.15.C; 113.15.b.17; 113.15.b.21. B,D; 113.15.b.22.B-E
7	Fine Arts 117.14.b.1-2, 4
8	Fine Arts 117.15.b.1-2, 4

Grade 5

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Standard(s)</u>
1	Fine Arts 117.19.b.5
2	ELA 110.16.b.2
3	ELA 110.16.b.15-16
4	Math 111.17.b.3
5	Science 112.16.b.1-4; 112.16.b.9.A,B,D; 112.16.b.10.B
6	Soc Studies 113.16.b.18.A; 113.16.b.20.A; 113.16.b.24-26
7	Fine Arts 117.17.b.1-2, 4
8	Fine Arts 117.18.b.1-2, 4

COMMON CORE

Grade 4

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Standard(s)</u>
2	ELA L.4.5
3	ELA W.4.3, 5
5	Math 4.OA.3

Grade 5

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Standard(s)</u>
2	ELA L.5.5
3	ELA W.5.3, 5
5	Math 5.OA.1-2