

Young Audiences of Atlanta, Inc

Study Guide for Teachers

Peter Hart / Atlanta Puppet
“Animalympics”

Grades: Pre-K - 4

Audience Limit: 230 (Adjustable)

Length: 30 – 50 min. (Adjustable)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

What would it be like if animals had their own Olympics? In “Animalympics”, audiences learn important values and character-building lessons as they cheer for kittens, squirrels, and orangutans competing in yarn-ball scrimmages, banana-toss finals, and nut-burying championships. This action packed production was originally developed for the Olympic Village of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

The animal characters portray examples of teamwork, self-determination, good sportsmanship, respect for others, good attitude, and conflict resolution as they compete in hilarious, original sports activities. Audience interaction is included.



Audience Etiquette

This program, like all Peter Hart / Atlanta Puppet programs, features a degree of audience interaction. Mr. Hart is adept at leading the audience through their interactive roles. There are some things you can do that will enhance and improve basic audience etiquette:

- Before the program, discuss with your students what makes a good audience.
- Compare appropriate behavior for different kinds of audience situations – e.g., rock concert, sporting event, ballet.
- Students will get more out the program if they come prepared. Use this guide to help students anticipate what to listen and look for.
- Set a good example. Catch up on paperwork after the performance and reframe from extraneous conversations with other teachers during the program.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Peter Hart has long been regarded as one of the finest and skillful professional puppeteers in the South. His exceptional talents have received praises from audiences at Walt Disney World / Epcot, the Georgia Governor's Mansion, Six Flags Over Georgia, Centennial Park, the 1996 Olympics, and in Europe. He has performed as Head Puppeteer in over 70 different professional puppetry productions that have won 4 International Awards from UNIMA.

Peter specializes in developing and presenting puppet performance programs that go beyond adaptations of traditional fables. His original scripts reflect his vast knowledge of puppetry as a valid performance art form; his 20+ year experience as a professional puppeteer; and his desire to introduce audiences to puppet forms not commonly seen on television.

The mission of Young Audiences is to improve the lives and learning of young people through the arts.

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Study Guides Available at:
www.yapuppet.com

Program Description

The program is presented in a classic puppet booth using hand, hand-and-rod, and rod puppets. The puppeteer performs character voices live and pre-recorded music is used as accompaniment to the different events portrayed.

The program is adjustable to appropriate grade levels. Moments of audience participation/interaction are present throughout the performance. Segments of the program can be edited to accommodate time restrictions.

The program includes 5 segments:

- ◆ Introduction – The puppeteer introduces himself to the audience and tells how the show to be presented relates to the values they learn when playing sports and in everyday life.
- ◆ Yarn Ball Scrimmage – Kitten puppets enact a scrimmage competition where the main character (Little Charlie) perseveres through determination and his personal motto of doing his best.
- ◆ Banana Toss Finals – An orangutan team jeopardizes its chance to win when its team members begin arguing amongst themselves. Through conflict resolution, they come to an agreement and go on to win the competition.
- ◆ Nut Bury Championships – Two squirrels compete against each other to bury nuts within a time limit. One squirrel tries a new technique with disastrous results. His opponent shows compassion and respect to him when he fails. The failed squirrel shows a high degree of good sportsmanship when his opponent is named the winner.
- ◆ Demonstration – The puppeteer shows the audience the different styles of puppets that were used in the show.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The characters in the puppet program "Animalympics" portray examples of character values in situations related to imaginary sports events. The themes of each segment can be used as a teacher led discussion with students:

- Doing one's best in any endeavor to gain satisfaction with one's self
- Squabbling with teammates or others in a group will not help to achieve goals
- Resolving conflicts peacefully can mean positive results
- It is not always how fast one completes a task, it is how well the task is performed
- Ridicule or mocking of others ("trash talk") is not a sign of good character.
- Respect for others is a sign of good character.
- Congratulating one's opponent for winning a fair contest is good sportsmanship and a sign of good character

Background Information About Art Form

Puppetry is a visual medium that is best at portraying characters in moments of action. The sports competitions in "Animalympics" demonstrate this effectiveness with characters in lively visual action.

Among cultures that practice puppetry (European, African, Asian, Indonesian, American), hand, hand-and-rod, and rod puppetry are all used. Examples include: Kasperel (hand puppets, Germany); Muppets (hand-and-rod, American); and Wayang Golek (rod puppets, Indonesia)

Vocabulary, Terms, Definitions

Character – How we act towards others and how others see us act towards them

Teamwork – Cooperation with others in a group to achieve goals

Respect – to be considerate and sensitive toward another person

Motto – A brief statement used to express a principle, goal, or ideal

Pre-Performance Learning Activities

- ◆ **Discuss** with students their favorite types of sports activities. What do they like most about the sport? What do they learn when they participate in the sport? What does it mean to be "a good sport"?
- ◆ **Discuss** with students the different kinds of animals in their lives. Do they own pets (i.e. dogs, cats, birds, fish, etc.)? What are some of the more unusual pets the students own? Besides pet animals, what are wild animals they see in everyday life (i.e., squirrels, pigeons, etc.)? What is their favorite type of wild animal?
- ◆ The Olympics are an important international event. The Summer Olympic games were held in Athens, Greece in August 2004. **Discuss** - Did any of the students see the Olympic Games on television?

Post-Performance Learning Activities

For Grades Pre-K – 2

- For younger grades, **discuss** their favorite parts of the show while they **color** in the picture of Little Charlie that is provided.
- What are other sports that could be in an "Animal Olympics"? **Discuss** or **draw** pictures. A simple storyboard can be drawn to show the progression of a sporting event from beginning to end. Include important "upsets" in the competition, such as when the kitten tackled Little Charlie in the show.

For Grades 3 – 4

- **Write** a short "play by play" narration of an Animal Olympic event. A "play by play" narration is what the audience hears from a sportscaster when a sporting event is broadcast on the radio. Include as many "action words" to give a mental picture of what is happening in the event.
Share: Read the "play-by-plays" aloud to see if the audience can follow the action.
- The quality of "good sportsmanship" was portrayed in the show. Good sportsmanship can mean many things. In the show "Animalympics" it was portrayed when one squirrel congratulated the other for winning the contest. What is another example of good sportsmanship? What are bad examples?
Write: Have students compose a list of examples.

Relevant Curriculum Standards

Grade 1, 3 - Character Education

11. **Topic:** Respect for Others
Standard: Altruism: concern for and motivation to act for the welfare of others.
11.3 – Courtesy and Cooperation

12. **Topic:** Respect for Others
Standard: Integrity
12.4 Fairness and good sportsmanship

13 **Topic:** Respect for Self
Standard: Accountability
13.1 Commitment
13.2 Perseverance and diligence
13.3 Self control and virtue

Grade K, 1, 2, 3, 4 - Self Knowledge

1. **Topic:** Knowledge of the importance of self-concept

Standard: Describe positive characteristics about self as seen by self and others. Demonstrate a positive attitude about self. Describe how behavior influences the feelings and actions of others.

2. **Topic:** Skills to interact with others.

Standard: Identify how people are unique. Demonstrate effective skills for interacting with others.

Demonstrate skills in managing conflicts with peers and adults.

Demonstrate group membership skills

Resources

Read about puppets and puppetry at the web sites provided at:
www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/index.html

Animals were the feature characters in the program. There is a book list at:
www.yapuppet.com/yabooks2.htm that gives titles about the different animals

Web links for animals seen in the show:

Kittens: www.kittencare.com

Squirrels: www.squirrels.org/textonly.html

Orangutans: www.orangutan.org

Curriculum Connections

The "Animalympics" program centers on character education themes as outlined in the Georgia QCC.

The activities listed in the **Post-Performance Learning Activities** will enhance your students' appreciation of the performance and can be used to tie-in with other classroom subjects such as Language Arts.

Additional Language Arts activities for Grades 2 - 4:

❖ In the show, there was a big dispute when one of the orangutans (KlikKlak) arrived late for the contest causing his teammate (KeeKee) great distress. We saw how they resolved their conflict, but because they were speaking in "orangutan", we could not understand what they were saying. What do you think they said to each other?

Write: Have students write a dialogue that may have been said between the two characters. Emphasize use of proper placement of quotation marks and punctuation.

❖ In the show, one of the squirrels made a bad decision and "went nuts" and lost the contest. He realized his mistake and felt very bad. His opponent came out and, instead of mocking him, spoke to him quietly. They were speaking in squirrel language, so we don't know what was said. What do you think the squirrel said? Would this be an example of respecting others? What would be a bad example?

Write: Have students write a dialogue that may have been said between the two characters. Emphasize use of proper placement of quotation marks and punctuation.

*All Grades: **Make A Show!***

By combining a simple storyboard and "play-by-play" narration as described in the **Post-Performance Activities**, you have the start of your own Animalympics. For puppet characters you can use simple store bought animal hand puppets, stuffed animal toys, or you can make your own simple puppets.

For making quick, simple puppets, have the class cut out pictures of their favorite animals from discarded magazines. Paste a piece of lightweight posterboard on the back to make it stiff, then glue it onto a Popsicle stick or craft stick. This can be a simple "rod puppet". Puppeteers can crouch behind a table draped with fabric for a stage. Another student can be the "color commentator" and narrate the description of the action taking place. This will free the puppeteers' attention to focus on the movements of their puppet characters. Music can be added to give the presentation a rhythm and pace.

Stuffed animal toys may also be used as puppets. The only requirement is that the stuffed toys be able to move easily. An old teddy bear or favorite stuffed dog toy that has been lovingly played with to the point of being very pliable and "loose" are good examples. When using stuffed toys, the puppeteers can stand in view behind the stuffed toy puppets they are manipulating.

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