

The Children's Theatre OF CINCINNATI

TEACHER CURRICULUM & ACTIVITY GUIDE



Like a classic comic book brought to vivid life onstage, this new version of the 1966 musical “It’s a Bird! It’s a Plane! It’s Superman!” will be sure to soar up, up, and away with the imaginations of all children, and the young at heart. The World’s Greatest Superhero must use his strength, intelligence, and heart, as he fights for truth and justice against the evil scientist supervillain, Dr. Abner Sedgewick, who seeks to destroy SUPERMAN, the world’s living symbol of good. “It’s a Bird! It’s a Plane! It’s Superman” is a musical with music by Charles Strouse (composer of the popular musical “Annie”), lyrics by Lee Adams, and a script by David Newman and Robert Benton (who also co-wrote the screenplay for the famous 1978 film “Superman the Movie”). The story is based on the DC Comics character Superman, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

CURRICULAR TIES

LANGUAGE ARTS

LITERATURE/WRITING/LANGUAGE

Students can read, comprehend, and analyze the construction of the story’s text, as well as its relation to the source material, DC Comics’ “Superman” stories, as well as the creators of the character (Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster), and other representations of Superman throughout popular culture. Additional opportunities exist to discover, and study, the cultural impact of the medium of comic books as literature.

COMIC BOOKS AS LITERATURE

From their beginnings in newspaper comic strips, to current day of graphic novels, the perception of comic books has shifted. In the current environment of popular culture, characters and stories from their pages break box office records, and provide huge revenues for publishers. The superhero comic book begins in 1938, with DC Comics “Action Comics #1,” created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, featuring Superman, a character that quickly captured the imaginations of readers of all ages, and has gone on to become one of the most popular characters in popular culture, appearing on radio, television, stage and screen.

MYTHOLOGY

Additional opportunities exist to discover, and study, the connections between superheroes in popular culture and heroes of mythology (Hercules, Theseus, Gilgamesh)

FINE ARTS

MUSIC is studied and sung to tell a story. Aural learners will connect with the rhythms and melodies inherent to this project-based learning. Additional opportunities exist to discover, and study, other notable works by composers Charles Strouse and Lee Adams.

DANCE is brought to life through the show’s choreography. Kinesthetic learners will embrace the movement of the show.

DRAMA is investigated through character work and storytelling. Linguistic and interpersonal learners will engage with the written word, and collaborative process.

VISUAL ARTS are explored through set and costume design. Visual learners will delight in the physical construction of the world of the play.



THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

ALTRUISM

In contrast to Dr. Sedgwick, Superman chooses to use his unique abilities and powers for the benefit of mankind. He embodies the value of altruism.

HUMILITY

With Superman's enormous powers, he could easily force his will on the world, but chooses, instead, to serve his fellow man, exhibiting the value of humility.

COURAGE

Though the odds are stacked against him, Superman never surrenders to his fears, illustrating the value of courage.

SUGGESTED READING

FOR GRADES K-2

- **SUPERMAN: AN ORIGIN STORY** by Matthew K. Manning
- **TEN RULES OF BEING A SUPERHERO** by Deb Pilutti

FOR GRADES 3-6

- **BOYS OF STEEL: THE CREATORS OF SUPERMAN** by Marc Tyler Nobleman
- **BRAVE** by Stacy McNulty

FOR GRADES 7-12

- **THE ESSENTIAL SUPERMAN ENCYCLOPEDIA** by Robert Greenberger & Martin Pasko
- **PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERHERO** by James Patterson & Chris Tebbetts

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

GRADES K-2

QUESTION: "What does 'BEING A HERO' mean to you?"

ACTIVITY: Draw a picture of your Superhero

Materials: Paper/Pencil; Coloring Utensils (Crayons, Colored Pencils, Markers)

- Ask students to imagine themselves as superheroes. What would their hero name be? What would their costume look like? What kind of superpowers would they have?
- Distribute paper and drawing materials. Have students draw themselves as the superhero from their imaginations.
- Ask students to share their drawings and superhero stories with the class.

GRADES 3-6

QUESTION: "Superheroes are fictional characters, but many of us have people who we consider to be heroes in our everyday lives. Do you have a personal hero? Who? And why are they YOUR hero?"

ACTIVITY: Create a "Superman" Symbol for your Personal Hero

Materials: Construction Paper (Red, Yellow, Blue); Scissors; Adhesive (Glue, Paste, Rubber Cement)

- Show students Superman's classic "S" symbol.
- Distribute materials.
- Instruct students to create a symbol for their personal hero, using the template of Superman's "S" symbol.
- Have students share their hero and hero symbols with the class.

GRADES 7-12

QUESTION: "In **SUPERMAN the Musical**, both Superman and Dr. Sedgwick possess extraordinary gifts, but they use them for opposite purposes. Dr. Sedgwick uses his intelligence for selfish purposes, while Superman uses his superpowers to help others. If you had superpowers, what would they be? And how would you use them to help other people?"

ACTIVITY: Students in teams research facts about Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster to share with the class in a fact collecting challenge.

Materials: Internet Access; Paper/Pencils

- Tell students that the character of Superman was created by two men: Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.
- Divide the class into two teams: Team Siegel and Team Shuster.
- Instruct students to compile as many facts as possible on their respective creators from researching the men on the internet. Give them a time limit (10-15 minutes)
- At the end of the allotted time, have the teams, in turn, share facts on their subject. The game ends when one team runs out of facts to share with the class. The team that has collected the most facts on their subject wins!