

The Wild Dog Waits On The Concrete Path
by Nathan Howe

Study Guide

Embrace Theatre/Theatre Howl
2016

Section 1: About The Play

Dear Teachers

Play Overview

Characters

Central Messages in The Play

Section 2: Teaching Resources and Exercises

Curriculum Links

Questions for Discussion

Pre & Post-Show Activities & Discussion

Background Information

Teaching Resource Materials

Section 3: Theatre Resources

The Players: Cast & Crew

Preparing Your Students for This Live Theatre Performance

Teacher Feedback Form

Dear Teachers:

This study guide is a tool, to provide materials to make viewing the play more meaningful and create multiple opportunities to facilitate learning. Please feel free to adapt the ideas and activities to suit the needs and levels of your students. Also, please feel free to contact me with any of those adaptations or new ideas that you have. I would love to share new ideas with the teachers that we'll meet on the rest of the tour.

It is interesting to be sending this show to schools in Saskatchewan, as it is a show about a teacher in a school in Saskatchewan. I have never taught in a classroom; swimming pools and theatre studio spaces yes, but not in a school. My experience comes from attending school and talking to a few teachers, but I can only imagine what it is really like. So I may have got some of it wrong. Or a lot of it wrong. My hope is that we empathize with this young teacher no matter what the job is. To my friends who are young teachers finishing school and starting careers: the enthusiasm that Daisy shows throughout is straight from the real excitement that you have shown me.

Please feel free to contact me. I may not be able to take every note, as this is a 65-minute story, but I would love to hear from you and your class about your experience with the play.

Sincerely,

Nathan Howe
Playwright

Play Overview:

This scene-by-scene overview is for content checks before the play, and to jog the memory after. It is certainly not as entertaining as the show.

The play begins with Daisy singing the wrong words to Manfred Mann's Earth Band's "Blinded by The Light" on her tumultuous drive north. That drive includes almost getting run off the road by a logging truck and a temperamental/lost GPS. This scene is intersected with her job interview with a Superintendent that is desperate to hire someone for this empty post.

Daisy then takes a moment to illustrate the journey she has made from Regina to Grouse Bay (a fictional representation of Jans Bay) on a large chalkboard map of Saskatchewan.

When she finally finds the turn off from the only road, a log blocks the way into town and there's a warning growl coming from the bush. Once she drives over the log and into the town she cannot find the place she's supposed to meet at; the pink house she's supposed to live in. After a long journey that ended in frustration and terror she falls asleep in her Jeep.

She awakens to a knock on her window. This is Patty, the teacher she was supposed to meet last night. She quickly introduces Daisy to her house, which is in need of major repair, and the school, which is in a cage to prevent wild dogs from getting at the kids. The whole school is only three classrooms, her office/teacher's lounge/kitchen, and a small gymnasium. Daisy learns that her job includes making lunch, acting as guidance counselor, rotating maintenance duties, and being the town's fire chief.

On her way out of the school she comes face-to-face with a large wild dog inside the fence. After trying to intimidate it her instincts take over and she runs away, escaping the danger of the dog that never moved from its seated position on the concrete path.

The first day of school is very exciting for Daisy, she dresses up and puts on her new runners; tells us of her plan to get to know all sixty-six kids that attend the school; and that she will promise to give high fives to everyone walking in the door. The first kid flinches at the offer for a high five and Daisy soon realizes the kids at this school are different from the ones in Regina. Only twenty-seven show up for the first day and it is her job to phone the parents of the absent kids.

After a confusing, infuriating series of phone calls Daisy is on the lookout for a kid named Theodore who left his home, but did not make it to school. She hears a voice come from underneath the barely-standing community hall. When inspecting the noise she runs into the giant dog and a kid trapped underneath the hall. She scares the dog away and barrages the kid with questions before pulling him out. This is

Theodore, and he was on a mission, so school had to wait until after he was done tampering with the community hall.

We jump forward in time with Daisy erasing the leaves on the trees and giving us a list of times she has had to rescue Theodore during her first few weeks on the job.

One day, during recess, the dog walks into the school while Daisy is going around refilling her teachers' coffee mugs. Her gut reaction is to hurl the full coffee pot at the dog sending glass and coffee cascading onto the floor (chalk thrown at the chalkboard). Before she can think the door opens, Theodore walks in and starts taking off his shoes. Theodore tells Daisy that the dog's name is Poodle, and Daisy tries her hardest to get Theodore to go back outside so she can clean up the broken glass before the bell rings. The bell rings. Daisy yells for the after recess stampede to stop. Some kids cry. They are all sent back outside so she can clean up. For the rest of the week she is informed about every piece of glass that any kid finds, no matter what their location was.

As she is getting a handle on how the curriculum is taught Daisy learns some things about her location in the world and the history of it. She informs us of some of the major differences between this place and where she went to school in Regina.

On Halloween Daisy decorates the school, with decorations she brought from home, Regina, to surprise the students with a celebration. While decorating she finds fleas, many, many fleas. Her and Patty discuss a plan of action to get the kids to the community hall for the day so they can spray the school, but by the time they are ready to put their plan into action the kids come pouring out of the bus. As they near getting all of the kids back onto the bus to explain the plan the bell rings, emptying the bus once again, and bringing Poodle, the bear-dog, into the fence. Theodore catches the dog so they can put a flea collar on him. Theodore asks Daisy why she doesn't play anymore, and tries to understand why she won't play with him. Theodore decides Poodle doesn't want to wear the flea collar and lets him go, at the same time they hear a loud crash from the community hall. Before Daisy can react Theodore runs away.

When she gets to the community hall Daisy finds out that the floor in the middle of the hall gave out and the grade threes fell through. She gives Theodore detention for the month and chases the flea-infested Poodle away again. She props open the doors to the school because it is supposed to freeze overnight and that will kill the fleas.

But it doesn't just freeze overnight. It is Saskatchewan on November 1, so a blizzard hits, filling the school with snow. Daisy spends the morning shoveling snow out of the school. Only twelve kids show up because the bus didn't go out to pick them up. Patty informs Daisy that it can't go out until Wednesday when the plow comes through, but determined Daisy plans to create her own plow out of a big shovel

bungeed to the front of the bus. It doesn't work and the bus is stuck full of kids on the grid road.

On Daisy's walk back to town to get her Jeep she spots Theodore stuck in the snow. After pulling him out Theodore opts to walk with Daisy instead of joining his classmates on the bus. Daisy learns that Theodore has been skipping school because his Kokum (Grandmother) is sick so his responsibilities have increased making it harder to get to school on time, and that he doesn't like being with the other kids. Having not experienced this before, Daisy reacts in the only way she can, and that is to be Theodore's friend, and offer Theodore safety and permission to ask for help anytime he needs it.

After getting everyone back to school safely with multiple trips in her Jeep, Daisy gets a lesson from Patty about priorities in this part of the world, and that sometimes the curriculum has to wait for the kids' safety and comfort.

While Daisy is teaching the 4, 5, 6 class Poodle walks into the classroom chewing on bologna sandwich. Daisy starts to berate Poodle, and the dog poos on the floor. So Daisy marches the dog out of the school and takes him for a drive into the woods. Theodore sneaks his way into Daisy's Jeep and tries to rescue Poodle. While trying to push Poodle away, the dog rolls onto its back for Daisy to pet him. Then they hear Theodore's voice calling for help in the distance. Daisy and Poodle race to the voice and rescue Theodore from three wild dogs. Daisy thanks the dog before taking him back to town.

Daisy shares what she has learned in her first term as Principal in Grouse Bay, and how she has adapted her plans to fit the place. She feels more a part of the town as she drives away for her winter holiday, back to Regina, with a Tupperware container full of bannock from Theodore's Kokum.

Characters:

Daisy:

The central character of the play, an early 20's, holder of a fresh B. Ed from University of Regina, who gets a job as Principal in the northern town of Grouse Bay, SK. She's eager to put her training to the test, and eager to make a difference for the few students who actually attend school in Grouse Bay. She struggles with the steep curve from practice and exercises to actually running a school, especially in an environment that she has never experienced. Throughout the play she learns to stop fighting the town, the dog, the system, and adapt her ideas to suit the needs of the community, rather than trying to enforce her preconceived notions upon the town. She finds ways to do the job she came to do through alternative or creative means by listening, adapting, and combining her ideas with the ideas of the people (and animals) around her.

Patty:

A teacher who has been in secluded Grouse Bay for a really long time. She spends her time with kids going through puberty teaching Grades 7, 8, and 9 simultaneously. She is working to keep the school running, and would love for a principal to stay longer than a year. She is challenged and sometimes excited by Daisy's enthusiasm.

Theodore:

Theodore is an eleven year old who always seems to be in trouble, missing class, and stuck in various places around town. He is a "Dennis The Menace" type, who finds difficulty in sitting in class all day, and may just need a friend.

Poodle (The Dog):

Named after a gross moment of its life, Poodle is a dog that resembles a bear who seems somehow responsible for all of Daisy's misery. At times a trickster, and at others an extension of the town, this dog is a never-ending hurdle that Daisy feels she has to leap over to get control of the school.

Central Messages In The Play:

This play deals with many themes in a short amount of time relating to empathy, openness to the world, growth through listening, over-coming fear, the fault of stubbornness, colonialism, and more.

This list is not exhaustive, and we encourage an exercise that includes the students creating their own lists of the themes from the play after viewing it.

- To grow as a person it is important to new ways of thinking and understanding.
- We, as humans, never stop learning even when we become the teachers.
- Struggles with our own self-esteem can influence how we treat others.
- Even those who have authority, or are seen as power figures, still need help.
- It explores Canada's history of outsiders trying to impose upon those who were already here, and proposes an alternative.
- Growing older, and what it means to be the adult.
- Embracing our faults.
- Embracing our environment.

Curriculum Links:

Saskatchewan Curriculum

SOCIAL STUDIES

<https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp?view=goals&lang=en&subj=social&level=9>

K-12 Goals:

- Examine the local, indigenous, and global interactions and interdependence of individuals, societies, cultures, and nations (IN)
- Analyze the dynamic relationships of people with land, environments, events, and ideas as they have affected the past, shape the present, and influence the future (DR)
- Investigate the processes and structures of power and authority, and the implications for individuals, communities, and nations (PA)
- Examine various worldviews about the use and distribution of resources and wealth in relation to the needs of individuals, communities, nations, and the natural environment, and contribute to sustainable development (RW).

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/webapps/moe-curriculum-BBLEARN/index.jsp?view=goals&lang=en&subj=english_language_arts&level=9

CR = Comprehend & Respond

- What is this text saying? Explicitly? Implicitly?
- How was the text created?
- What forms and conventions are used?
- In what context and for what purpose was the text created?
- How can I interpret the text?
- What evidence do I have to support this interpretation?
- What does this text have to say about identity, social responsibility, and efficacy (making a difference)?
- Whose voices are heard and whose are not?
- Why are viewing, listening, and reading important?

Compose and Create (CC). Students will extend their abilities to represent, speak, and write to explore and present thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences. (Refer to sidebar.)

Assess and Reflect (AR). Students will assess their own language skills; discuss the skills of effective viewers, representers, listeners, speakers, readers, and writers; and set goals for future improvement.

DRAMA

https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/curricula/English/Arts_education/Drama_10_20_30_1993.pdf

The Arts Education program has one major aim: to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life. This one aim describes the main outcome for students and the primary reason for including Arts Education in the Core Curriculum for all students.

The aim of the program can be achieved through meeting the following goals. By participating in the Arts Education program, students will:

- Respect the uniqueness and creativity of themselves and others
- Increase their ability to express themselves through languages other than spoken or written language
- Understand the contributions of the arts and artists to societies and cultures, past and present
- Gain a lasting appreciation of art forms experienced as participant and as audience
- Recognize the many connections between the arts and daily life.

CREATIVE WRITING

https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/curricula/English/English_Language_Arts/Creative_Writing_20_1998.pdf

- To develop students' language abilities as a function of their thinking abilities
- To encourage enjoyment of and develop proficiency in writing, reading, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing
- To develop appreciation of, and responses to, literature in all forms
- To promote personal growth and social development through developing students' knowledge and use of language, and their understanding of the human condition.

Questions For Discussion:

1. Describe the characters of Daisy, Patty, Theodore, and Poodle. What is their relationship to Daisy? What similarities do they share?
2. Why does Daisy have so much trouble during her first day of school? How could she have prepared for better results?
3. Do you have any suggestions for ways Daisy could have helped Theodore earlier in the play? Any ideas on how she can help Theodore going forward?
4. Discuss the themes of the play and what can be learned from them.
5. How did the play being presented by a single actor affect your experience of the story? What might have been different if multiple performers had performed the play?
6. Does Daisy remind you of your teacher in any way?
7. What did the dog represent?
8. How can I make my teacher's life easier?

Pre and Post-Show Activities & Discussion:

Pre-Viewing:

Journal experience:

Have the students discuss experiences in other towns in our province. What are similarities or differences in experience? What are similarities or differences with their own town?

Post-Viewing:

Have the students explore the term stereotype. Identify commonly held stereotypes about teachers, teachers relationships with students, and about northern communities. What are the dangers of those stereotypes? How might those stereotypes be dismantled?

Additional Activities:

Journaling – Have the students write a journal response to the play: ie) impressions, how they felt watching it, what questions were raised.

Creative Writing – Encourage the students to write their own fish-out-of-water story. A character has a certain expectation and perspective of the situation they will be cast in, and their response to the actual situation.

Background Information:

I was on a tour with Persephone Theatre all over the province for two months performing two shows, one for high school and one for elementary school. We arrived in Jans Bay, and met a principal who was younger than I was (23 years old). This fellow was much more prepared for the job than the character in the play is. His description of his roles in the community shocked my city-boy ears and the story never left me. Using my first impressions of the town, the school, and his job I began writing the play. From there I researched, asked questions, and continued to make things up. The play came from curiosity, and that informed the characters, which all have their own levels of curiosity throughout the play. There is not a large bridge between teaching and learning.

Nathan Howe
Playwright

The Players: Cast & Crew

Nathan Howe | Playwright, Set Construction, Co-Set Design

Nathan is a theatre-maker from Saskatoon, SK. He has his BFA in Acting from The University of Saskatchewan (2011) and is a Graduate of The Globe Theatre Actors' Conservatory in Regina (2012). Since graduating he has worked in theatre as an actor, playwright, director, producer, dramaturg, sound designer, composer, band leader, production assistant, and musician on major stages in Saskatchewan, receiving a SATAward for performance in 2014 for his role in *Equivocation* (Persephone Theatre) and for Supporting Performance [male] in 2015 for his role in *Salt Baby*, and across the country from Gwaandaak Theatre in Yukon to Mirvish Productions in Toronto. He has eleven years of Fringe Festival experience, has produced three shows with Live Five in Saskatoon, multiple Fringe Tours, and several Festivals in places as big as Montreal to as small as Wells, BC. His written work has been seen across Canada on the Fringe circuit, at Live Five, Persephone Theatre, and GCTC in Ottawa.

Charlie Peters | Director, Dramaturge, Co-Set Design

Charlie Peters is a Saskatoon-based director, actor, lighting designer, playwright, dramaturge, and poet. He is the recipient of the Saskatoon and Area Theatre Award for Outstanding Emerging Artist in 2013 and Outstanding Lighting Design in 2015. His work has been seen on stages across Saskatchewan and across Canada. He has worked with a diverse range of companies including Embrace Theatre (which he founded in 2013), Saskatoon Opera in Schools, Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company/Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre, and Live Five. He also works as a theatre educator with at-risk youth, using drama skills to build community and self-confidence through active, imaginative learning.

Danielle Roy | Performer

Danielle is thrilled to dive into the adventure of *The Wild Dog Waits on the Concrete Path* and once again have the opportunity of working with Theatre Howl. Danielle is known from select theatre productions such as *Dr. Frightful presents: Dead Air* (Live Five), *Look//See* (Saskatoon Fringe Festival) *Two Corpses Go Dancing* (Live Five) which won "Best Ensemble" at the Saskatoon and Area Theatre Awards, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Globe Theatre), *Run for Your Wife* (Magdeline Theatre), *Don't Panic* (Saskatoon Fringe Festival), *Money Don't Grow on Trees* (Saskatoon Fringe Festival) and *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress* (Live Five). Danielle studied acting at the University of Saskatchewan completing her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2012. She then completed the Globe Theatre Conservatory Program in 2014 and has been pursuing new artistic challenges ever since. Danielle is also the playwright, producer, director and stage manager of the five-star production *Peach*, which recently completed its Canadian Fringe Festival Tour. Currently, Danielle is working on her latest script *Seed* and enjoying being newly married as of Summer 2017.

Jillian Borrowman | Stage Manager
Bio TBA

Preparing Your Students for a Live Theatre Experience:

Before the Performance

Some students have never attended a live theatrical performance before, and may need some guidance as to what standards of behaviour apply and how best to enjoy the experience. Others may simply need a quick refresher. The important point to emphasize is that when they are watching the play they are in a partnership. They contribute as much to the overall enjoyment and power of the performance as the performers do. The performers appreciate audience response. Laughter, sighs, thoughtful silence and listening, and applause all let us know we're reaching you. The unspoken back-and-forth communication of thought and feeling is what theatre is all about.

In-class preparation is very important!

Ask any actor –if the students are thinking about the issues when they walk into the auditorium, they are the most intelligent, responsive, engaged audiences a performer can wish for. By talking about the play beforehand and asking them some key questions to watch for, you can help prepare your students to take away the most benefit from what the play has to offer.

In the Performance Space

Even though the play may be performed in your school's gym, classroom or drama room, the set and performers have transformed it into a theatre.

Some things to remind the students of:

Please respect the performance space and equipment.

Sound carries. Speaking aloud to friends during the performance is not only disturbing for the other audience members it also distracts the performers. They can see and hear you from the stage.

They really rely on your focus, attention and respect to do what they do best.

There is no photography or recording permitted during the performance.

This is because of our agreements with our unions. The cast and crew would be happy to pose for a photo on our set after the show for students or for your school to include in a newsletter etc.

No use of cell phones, pagers, music players and headphones (iPods, MP3 players) allowed during the performance.

Please remember to ask students to turn off watch alarms as well. You can imagine why!

Texting during a performance is absolutely not allowed.

This one is so important we've given it, its own paragraph. Texting is extremely distracting for both the students and the performers. We ask that teachers supervising the performance also refrain from texting. Thanks so much for your help on this one!

Leaving the space.

In the case of needing to use the washroom or other urgent need, we ask that the students leave and return as quietly as possible. Teachers can assist by opening and closing doors quietly.

Behavior Issues.

We rely on you as teachers to manage your students' behaviour, in the highly unlikely event that they are disruptive. You know them best and how to deal with them. Should any students be continuously disruptive, the Stage Manager may ask that they be removed from the audience. We ask for your cooperation in helping to remove them from the performance so that the rest of the students may enjoy the full performance.

Post Performance Wrap-up:

Like a good meal, theatre should be digested. Create a time and a comfortable environment to review the production with your class. Follow up on the issues raised in the pre-show prep. Take advantage of the activities and discussion points suggested in the study guide and feel free to use them as a jumping off point to create your own customized follow-up.

We'd Love to Hear From You:

We love to get feedback from both the students and yourselves. We encourage you to send us the results of your post show discussions or activities and invite you and your students to share their thoughts about the play and the experience of having us in your school.

If you have any suggestions for us, as to how to improve service to the schools, on the content of the show, or any comments or suggestions for this teacher's guide, please let us know. We are always looking for ways to make the experience of having live theatre into your school enjoyable and we are still learning every day. This is both Theatre Howl and Embrace Theater's first school tour. Any suggestions can help both our companies in the long term.

Teacher Feedback Form:

Comments about the show and how students received it:

Did the play support curriculum objectives and student learning?

Did your students find the play...

Enjoyable? Y N

Engaging? Y N

Age Appropriate? Y N

Was the Study Guide useful for...

Personal prep? Y N

Student prep Y N

Discussion/Activities? Y N

Which resources or exercises did you use?

Any suggestions to make the Study Guide more useful:

Was the post show Question and Answer session valuable?

Informative?

Are there any issues that you are dealing with in your school that you would like to see explored as a play?