THEATRE RESOURCE GUIDE

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm
adapted by Jaclyn Johnson

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Pam Fuchs, General Manager
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Peter Weber, Technical Director & Facilities Manager
Andrew Bradford Benson, Development Director
Barbie Luepke, Box Office/Patron Services
Darrell Jonston, Marketing
Abi Leveille, Marketing Assistant
Jennifer Seeley, Bookkeeping
Kimberly Braun, Arts Education Coordinator

St. Croix Festival Theatre, 210 N. Washington Street, St. Croix Falls, WI
Using this theatre resource guide

This theatre resource guide for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is designed to be used with students before and after attending the Festival Theatre production. The guide includes information and activities that will increase student understanding of this and other theatrical performances. You may reproduce any and all of the following pages to distribute to students or parents.

**The Authors and Story History**  
This page familiarizes students with the authors and history of the story.

**Story Themes**  
This page familiarizes students with the story themes of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

**Staging the Story**  
This page contains information about theater conventions and challenges presented in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and encourages students to engage in creative problem-solving in relation to staging the play.

**From Story to Stage: Interview with the Playwright**  
The information on this page explains the relationship of the play to the stories of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and features an interview with the playwright Jaclyn Johnson.

**Lines of Dialogue**  
This activity page provides dialogue from the script and involves students in experimenting with different ways to speak or “deliver” character’s lines.

**Vocabulary**  
This page defines vocabulary words that will help the students understand and enjoy the show.

**The Part YOU Play**  
This page reminds students of their role as audience members, stressing the importance of listening carefully and responding appropriately. Post-performance discussion questions are also included.
The Authors and Story History

The Brothers Grimm (or Die Brüder Grimm), Jakob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859), were German academics, linguists, cultural researchers, lexicographers and authors who together specialized in collecting and publishing folklore during the 19th century.

The brothers spent their formative years in the German town of Hanau. Their father’s death in 1796 caused great poverty for the family and affected the brothers for many years after. With the goal of researching a scholarly treatise on folk tales, they established a methodology for collecting and recording folk stories that became the basis for folklore studies. “Snow White” ("Schneewittchen") was based on a folk tale and was first published in 1812.

History of the Story

“Snow White” is a German fairy tale known across much of Europe and is today one of the most famous fairy tales worldwide. The Brothers Grimm published it in 1812 in the first edition of their collection Grimms’ Fairy Tales. It was titled in German: Sneewittchen and numbered as Tale 53.

The fairy tale features such elements as the magic mirror, the poisoned apple, the glass coffin, and the characters of the evil queen and the seven dwarfs. The dwarf’s were not named in the Grimm’s version of the story. They were first given names in the Broadway play Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1912). The names were Blick, Flick, Glick, Snick, Plick, Whick and Quee. They were given different names in Walt Disney’s 1937 film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The names were Bashful, Doc, Dopey, Happy, Sleepy, Sneezy and Grumpy and were meant to reflect characteristics of their personalities.
1) Wicked/Kind

The folk tales gathered by the brothers Grimm included very graphic examples of behavior. The wicked queen did some very mean things.

*Name 4 Mean acts the queen performed. Did they make her happier in the long run?*

2) Personalities of the Dwarf’s

In the Disney story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, each dwarf was given a name that highlighted the personality characteristics of the dwarf. Bashful was shy, Doc was the self-proclaimed leader, Dopey did lots of silly things that didn’t make sense, Happy was friendly and laughed a lot, Sleepy was always tired but noticed everything, Sneezy always sneezed, and Grumpy was always irritated by the other dwarfs. Archer, Dexter, Conner, Tanner, Bridget, Jasper, and Sawyer also have very individual strengths.

*Can you name one thing that stands out when you see the behavior of each during the show?*

3) Happy Endings????

The original story of Snow White had a very violent ending. This story offers several options for endings.

*Which is your favorite and why?*
Theatre Conventions

When you attend a play, you agree to pretend. You agree to “suspend disbelief,” to pretend that the stage action and characters are real. To present a story on stage, actors and other theatre artists often rely on theatre customs. These customs, or conventions, are accepted ways of acting or doing something on stage. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, watch for the following theatre conventions:

Pantomime is used to show action using gestures and movement without the use of actual props or words.

Even though other actors really can hear them, characters speak their inner thoughts aloud.

Solving Stage Problems

To present a story on stage, actors and other theatre artists often have problems to solve. Here are some problems that had to be solved for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. How might you solve them? You may use lights, sound effects, music, actors, costumes, and props (objects) in your solutions. (Hint: you may want to use some of the theatre conventions listed above.)

1. How can you create a forest on a bare stage?

2. How do you present animals and other nonhuman characters that need to speak onstage?

3. How do you stage multiple locations, such as mountains, a palace and a dwarfs’ house, in the same space?
The following is an interview with the playwright, Jaclyn Johnson, who adapted Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s story into the play produced at Festival Theatre.

**Reporter:** How do you approach adapting a story for the stage?

**Johnson:** I start by reading the original text. And then I read it again and again. After re-reading the original story, ideas about how to tell the story become clearer. From there I begin writing down ideas, words that come to my head, images, emotions. Even if I never use any of that writing in the final work, it helps me to sort about what is important about the story, what devises may be helpful to use (music, lighting, narration and the like), and where to begin. With “Snow-White,” I used much of the Brother’s Grimm narration, and built out the play from there.

**Reporter:** What is the greatest challenge in adapting a story for the stage?

**Johnson:** Deciding what plot holes need to be filled in is the hardest part for me. For instance, I worked on a much more detailed scene that explained how the Snow-white’s father ended up in the Prince’s kingdom, but after working on it more and more, I realized that we really didn’t need it. I also find balancing the historical part of the story with our modern sense of humor and sensibilities to be a challenge. When working on a story that may have some different values than our current society, I like to try to find ways to make my modern adaptation reflect our current values, as well as expose audiences to the historical perspective of the story. Trying to do both is a challenge, and one that I enjoy exploring.

**Reporter:** You’ve worked in many areas of theatre. How is it working on a script different from working as an actor or director on a play? How is it similar?

**Johnson:** Being a playwright means working really hard and being as specific as you can about what is important to you, and then letting go. It’s truly a gift to give your work to others, and then watch them turn your ideas into a complete story. As a playwright you create your vision, but they a director and actors and designers, they all come in and add their visions. It’s like I drew a picture, and they all color it in. Of course, I love to color too, but sometimes it’s nice to put the ideas on paper and watch other people make it come to life.

**Reporter:** How is adapting a story different then writing your own story or play from scratch?

**Johnson:** I love adapting stories into plays. Especially if the narration is in such a specific style as The Brother’s Grimm work tends to be. Many of the lines in the play are taken directly form the Grimm text. I used the story as a skeleton, and built my scenes on top of them. When writing a play from scratch, you have to identify the story arch. What is the story? What changes from the beginning of the play to the end of the play? Why is that important to me? To the characters? To the audience? Generally identifying these answers is a lot harder when the idea came out of your head.

**Reporter:** What is the most fun part of making a story into a script for the stage?

**Johnson:** I enjoy finding the voice of the different characters. As an actor and improviser, I love getting into the heads of 18 different and distinct voices. Each with wants and needs and histories and each deserves to sound different and specific. I enjoy that process of almost talking to myself in my head, finding the voices of each role, and exploring how they play together. It is just a bonus that I will get to see 18 amazing actors help to make these characters come alive.
The playwright write lines of dialogue for the actors to speak. The dialogue gives information about the story and the characters.

Read the lines of dialogue from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* printed here. What do they tell you about the story and characters?

Actors experiment with different ways to say or “deliver” their lines. Work with a partner. Try deliver these characters’ lines in different ways (boldly, fearfully, proudly, sadly, etc.) Which line deliveries do you like best? Why? When you attend *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, listen for these lines and for how the actors deliver them.

**Group One:**

1. *Snow White*: It is beautiful. Still I have no money to buy such a thing.

2. *Wicked Queen*: Perhaps a trade? Surely you have some small trinket, of little use to you. Something that you wouldn’t miss. See now? What is that? A useless charm.

3. *Snow White*: It was my mother’s. I never knew her. I’m sorry. I couldn’t.

**Group Two:**

1. *Conner*: Yeah. Well you know what they say about curiosity.

2. *Brutus*: Curiosity took the life of the feline because curiosity almost always manifests within dangerous circumstances for cats and other mammals.

3. *Conner*: That was so long winded.

4. *Brutus*: Well how would you put it?

5. *Conner*: Curiosity killed the cat.

**Group Three:**

1. *Prince*: I couldn’t sleep.

2. *Snow White*: Neither could I. I just thought maybe that was my brain’s way of telling me that I wanted to see the stars.

3. *Prince*: Well then, I wanted to see the stars too, I guess.

4. *Snow White*: I suppose, though, that it could have been my brain’s way of telling me that I wanted to see you.
avail  help or benefit
betrothal  a formal agreement to marry
compatriot  a fellow citizen of a country
cunning  having or showing skill in achieving one's ends by deceit or evasion
cutlass  a short sword with a slightly curved blade
fair  beautiful: attractive
fledgling  baby bird
fulcrum  the point on which a lever rests and on which it pivots
glen  a narrow valley
lilting  a characteristic rising and falling
naive  showing a lack of experience, wisdom, or judgment
pomp  ceremony and splendid display, especially at a public event
prerogative  a right or privilege exclusive to a particular individual
rhetorical  a question to which no answer is expected
rue  bitterly regret
saccharin  too sweet or too polite
sullied  damage the purity or integrity of; defile
vanity  excessive pride in or admiration of one's own appearance or achievements
visage  a person's face, with reference to the form or proportions of the features
wary  feeling or showing caution about possible dangers or problems
Theatre Etiquette

To prepare for presenting *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, eighteen actors memorized their lines, practiced their movements and learned the show’s songs. They worked with director Andrew Bradford Benson who helped them move about the stage and play their parts well. The costume and set were also planned with the director and created a look that was historically correct. The stage manager is ready to make sure everyone on stage and backstage is safe and does the right things at the right time. All Festival Theatre needs now is YOU!

YOU have a part to play in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. You are the audience. Your part requires you to listen carefully and watch closely.

It’s okay to laugh or applaud if you enjoy a play, but remember that you and the actors are in the same room. Talking or whispering to friends during the performance will distract actors. Help them play their parts well by playing YOUR part well.

Reacting to the Performance

After the performance, share your experience of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* with your class, family and friends:

- Who was the most memorable character and why?
- What did you learn about life in 17th century Germany? In what ways was this time different than now? How was it the same?
- What were the lessons and themes of the play?
- How did Snow White handle her hardships?
- What was your favorite part of the play and why?

Get Involved

For information about Arts Education opportunities at Festival Theatre, visit [www.festivaltheatre.org](http://www.festivaltheatre.org) or call 715.483.3387.