

Yankee Doodle Poetry

Enrichment Works

Our Mission

Enrichment Works creates and presents theater to inspire learning.

Classroom Connections

Synopsis

In the assembly program “Yankee Doodle Poetry” David Prather uses his Yankee ingenuity to bring to life such American icons as Uncle Sam, Lady Liberty, Francis Scott Key, and Paul Revere. No dry history lesson—Lady Liberty is a kind of French Mrs. Doubtfire!—the show engages students while covering an array of language and social science standards. Students witness the creation of the Star Spangled Banner, learn of the immigrants sailing past the Statue of Liberty, and participate in Paul Revere’s famous ride as they help to enact Longfellow’s immortal poem, “Listen my children, and you shall here...” Students will not only hear, but see, imagine, laugh and be inspired in this patriotic parade of poetry.



David Prather in
Yankee Doodle Poetry

About the Artist

David Prather (Playwright/Actor) is well known for his work as host and narrator at LA Phil events including the annual Holiday Sing-Along at Walt Disney Concert Hall appearing with Julie Andrews. For eleven years he entertained family audiences at the Phil's "Summer Sounds at the Hollywood Bowl" as Cap'n Dave. He has appeared in Shakespeare at the Mark Taper Forum and Gilbert and Sullivan at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. He has written, performed and taught theater programs at hundreds of schools throughout the Southland. Prather has written and performed in original shows for the Getty (*Imagining the Orient*); the Alley Theatre of Houston (*When Harlem Was in Vogue*); the San Francisco Symphony, where he adapted and performed Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat*; and an original work in which he portrayed composer Charles Ives, *Under the Concord Sky*. As a boy, Prather was the treble soloist at the National Cathedral and sang in the world premiere for the opera *Bommarzo* by Ginastera, as well as *Amahl and the Night Visitors* by Menotti. Alas, his voice changed and now he only sings in the shower. A graduate of Princeton University and American Conservatory Theatre, Prather lives in Burbank with his lovely wife and two talented children.

Discussion and Writing Questions

- What are the symbols that we learned about in Yankee Doodle Poetry? What is the importance of each symbol to American history?
- Why are these poems still discussed today? Are they timeless? Why or why not? Is poetry still relevant to us?
- What are some qualities or characteristics that come to mind when you think about each symbol? How do these traits align with American values?

Vocabulary Words

colonies
independence
lantern
musket
occupy
pedestal
revolution
spangled

Project Ideas

- Think about some of the American symbols you learned about today: the Statue of Liberty, the Flag, and Baseball. What are some modern-day symbols that represent America? Make a graphic organizer with drawings and descriptions of your symbols.
- Uncle Sam is generally seen wearing the colors of the flag with a big top hat. Draw a costume of Uncle Sam if he were an American today.
- Brainstorm some important American historical events. Have the entire class or group fill out a graphic organizer of some examples of rhyming words. Each student can then write a short poem or song about one event.
- Work with a partner. Each student should take turns being one of the characters or poets featured in the play or a journalist who is writing a story. Each student should come up with unique interview questions for their partner. Pairs can volunteer to give a “live TV interview” in front of the class.

Resources

Websites

- <http://www.firstladies.org/curriculum/curriculum.aspx?Curriculum=969> – First Ladies National Library: What’s a Yankee Doodle Dandy?
- <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/statueofliberty/educators/> - PBS, Ken Burns – American Stories: The Statue of Liberty
- <https://www.paulreverehouse.org/ride/virtual.html> - Interactive Map of Paul Revere’s Ride
- <http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/oh-say-can-you-see-what-star-spangled-banner-means> - EDSITEMent! – Oh, Say, Can You See What the Star-Spangled Banner Means?
- http://www.teacherplanet.com/links/redirect.php?url=http://www.education-world.com/a_tsl/archives/00-2/lesson0003.shtml - Teacher Planet -History of Baseball lesson, with True or False learning activity

Booklist

- Paul Revere’s Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, illustrated by Ted Rand
- Lady Liberty: A Biography by Doreen Rappaport
- The Star Spangled Banner Illustrated by Peter Spier
- By the Dawn’s Early Light by Steven Kroll
- Baseball Is... by Louise Borden
- Casey at the Bat by Ernest Lawrence Thayer, illustrated by Patricia Polacco
- Uncle Sam & Old Glory: Symbols of America by Delno C. West and Jean M. West

Contact Us

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Standards and Learning

Enrichment Works is a theater company whose productions are designed to inspire children to learn by creating an emotional connection to educational subjects. “Yankee Doodle Poetry” uses the Theater Content Standards of California to provide a positive theatrical experience. The performer interacts directly with students and asks them questions about the topic of the play, inviting students onstage to act out specific roles and events in the story.

Visual and Performing Arts Connections

1.0 Artistic Perception

Students process, analyze and respond to sensory information through language and skills unique to theatre. They learn theatrical vocabulary such as playwright, conflict, setting, script, etc. They analyze the elements of Yankee Doodle Poetry by identifying the who, what, when, where and why of the story. Students are engaged through direct address by the actor, scenery, costumes, and stylized movement.

2.0 Creative Expression

In Yankee Doodle Poetry, students learn about important American symbols, and the history surrounding them, through popular poetry. Their creativity is engaged as they encounter different characters that represent various periods in American History such as the Revolutionary War, immigration, and America’s pastime: baseball. Students help create, perform and participate in the performance through interaction with the actor. The entire audience participates at key points during the play to create different moods.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Yankee Doodle Poetry helps students understand the role of theater. They take part as both spectator and participant as the story unfolds. They learn about different American symbols and popular tales, and develop an understanding of different time periods throughout American history. The theatre tradition of improvisation is utilized, allowing students to witness and respond to the actor’s guidance as he directs them to participate in the play with dialogue and action.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Valuing Audience interaction throughout the play allows students to maintain a high level of emotional connection to the characterized American symbols. Following the play, students participate in a Question and Answer session where they can criticize and query the actors/characters about the content of the play or the artistic choices made in this production. Students are given the opportunity to express how they felt as a participating impromptu actor during the performance. Post-performance activities provided through study guides are available to help students understand the character’s journey and events in the play.

5.0 Connections, Relationship, Applications

Activities will be provided through Classroom Connection guides in order to help them encourage students to connect what is learned in Yankee Doodle Poetry to other subject areas. Through hands-on approaches, including improvisation and dramatization, students can explore concepts in other subject areas (e.g. United States history and its symbols) to learn how theatre can communicate content from other sources. Activities encourage students to learn more about the role of an actor, director and writer, and to use their imaginations and creativity to create their own tales.