salt lake acting company

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Study & Play Resource Guide
For Students



A flexible guide for K–3 classrooms

December 4–29, 2026
About 60 minutes

Elephant, Piggie, and the Unlimited Squirrels are getting ready for a holiday celebration. The Pigeon has a plan of his own. He sets out to find the greatest gift ever.

NOTICE → IMAGINE → MAKE → REFLECT



This guide gives teachers a short path into the show and a set of optional activities.

Use the teacher pages to plan and lead activities. The student handouts are grouped at the back and can be printed separately.

A PARTY, A WISH, AND A BIG QUESTION

Elephant, Piggie, and the Unlimited Squirrels are preparing for a holiday celebration. Pigeon sets out to find the greatest gift ever. Gerald and Piggie worry about perfect presents, while the Squirrels plan a celebration that grows too big to manage. In-Between Squirrel helps them consider another possibility. Near the end, Pigeon learns that being cared for can be a gift, too.

SLIDE 2
A party. A big wish

CHARACTERS

- **Pigeon** - A big thinker with a big idea about gifts.
- **Gerald (Elephant)** - Piggie's careful, caring best friend.
- **Piggie** - Gerald's energetic and resourceful best friend.
- **Zoomy and the Squirrels** - A lively group working to plan a celebration.
- **In-Between Squirrel** - A visitor who helps the group consider a middle path.

IDEAS TO LISTEN FOR

- Generosity: What can people give besides an object?
- Curiosity: What clues help a character decide what to do?
- Balance and togetherness: What helps a celebration work for more people?

WHO MAKES THE SHOW?

THEATRE ARTIST	WHAT THEY DO
Playwrights and lyricists	Write the script and song words. Mo Willems and Adam Tobin wrote the play and lyrics.
Composer	Writes the music. Deborah Wicks La Puma composed the music.
Director, musical director, choreographer	Penelope Caywood directs and choreographs the production and leads its music work.
Actors	Use voice, body, and imagination to play characters. The Pigeon is a puppet operated by an actor.
Designers and stage manager	Designers shape scenery, costumes, lights, sound, and props.
stage manager	The stage manager coordinates cues and helps each performance run smoothly.

WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
Before the show | 10 min	Prepare students for audience participation. Choose one theatre clue for them to notice.
The play | about 60 min	The Pigeon journeys to find the greatest gift. The performance includes audience interaction.
After the show | 5–10 min	Give students quiet think time, then invite a short response or drawing.

A FLEXIBLE CLASSROOM PATH

Choose one activity or follow the full arc. The guide works best as short invitations, not as a packet students must finish. Read directions aloud and allow students to choose how they participate.

NOTICE	IMAGINE	MAKE	REFLECT
Look for one stage or character clue.	Imagine a gift or play Mystery Gift Parcel.	Create three story pictures or design a stage setting.	Name one detail and what it helped you imagine.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

- Notice how theatre artists use movement, words, music, sound, costumes, lights, and scenery to tell a story.
- Use something seen or heard as a clue to imagine what a character wants or feels.
- Create a short story or design idea with others.
- Share a response and name a detail that sparked an idea.

RELEVANT UTAH STANDARDS | K–3

This guide supports selected Utah English Language Arts and Theatre standards. The activity pages offer flexible ways for students to meet them through talk, drawing, movement, sound, and group work.

GRADE	LITERACY	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	THEATRE	FINE ARTS
K	K.SL.1: Join conversations, listen, take turns, and share ideas. K.R.5, K.R.7: With support, ask and answer questions; identify characters, setting, and important events.	K.T.P.1: Identify character, setting, and plot. K.T.P.2, K.T.CR.4: Work cooperatively; define roles and make group decisions. K.T.R.1: Observe attentively and respond appropriately.
1	1.SL.1: Converse with partners, express ideas, and build on others' ideas. 1.R.5, 1.R.7: Ask and answer about key details; describe characters, setting, and events.	1.T.P.1: Identify character, setting, and plot. 1.T.P.2, 1.T.CR.4: Work cooperatively; define roles and make group decisions. 1.T.R.1: Observe attentively and respond appropriately.
2	2.SL.1: Build conversations and consider others' perspectives. 2.R.5, 2.R.7: Ask and answer about key details; describe how characters respond to events and challenges.	2.T.P.1: Identify character, setting, and plot. 2.T.P.2, 2.T.CR.4: Work cooperatively; define roles and make group decisions. 2.T.R.1: Observe attentively and respond appropriately.
3	3.SL.1: Collaborate, respond respectfully to perspectives, ask questions, and connect ideas. 3.R.5, 3.R.7: Support answers with details; explain how characters' actions shape events.	3.T.P.1: Identify story elements and how choices shape drama. 3.T.P.2, 3.T.CR.4: Work cooperatively; identify roles and make group decisions. 3.T.R.1: Observe attentively and respond appropriately.

Selected standards from the Utah State Standards for P–12 English Language Arts (adopted 2023) and Utah Core State Standards for Fine Arts, Drama/Theatre (adopted 2016). Teachers can choose the standards that best fit their grade and lesson focus.

Official standards: schools.utah.gov/curr/englishlanguagearts | schools.utah.gov/curr/finearts

FIND FEELINGS, FRIENDSHIPS, & CHOICES IN THE STORY

The play gives students a story-based way to consider Utah's six Social Emotional Learning outcomes. Keep the conversation with the characters and their choices. Students may share an observation, draw, point, dictate, or pass. No one needs to share a personal story.

SLIDE 6
Character Clues

UTAH SEL OUTCOME	CONNECTION TO THE PLAY	ASK STUDENTS
1 | Understand and manage emotions	Notice Pigeon's excitement, confusion, surprise, or worry through voice, movement, and expression.	What clue helped you guess how Pigeon felt?
2 | Set and achieve positive goals	Pigeon sets out to find the greatest gift. The story gives students a chance to notice how a goal or plan can change.	What was Pigeon trying to do? What helped him keep going or rethink the plan?
3 | Feel and show empathy for others	Gerald and Piggie think about what Pigeon might enjoy. Students can connect a gift to what its recipient likes or needs.	What might Pigeon enjoy? Which detail from the story gave you that idea?
4 | Establish and maintain positive relationships	Friends share ideas, work through a busy celebration, and show that time together matters.	What did a character do that showed care for a friend?
5 | Make responsible decisions	The characters consider how to make a celebration work. Students can notice how choices affect the group.	What changed when the celebration became too much? What choice helped?
6 | Self-advocate	Pigeon communicates what he likes and wants. Students can notice how a character makes a preference known.	What did Pigeon say or do to show what mattered to him?

KEEP THE DISCUSSION SUPPORTIVE

Use a character example before inviting students to connect an idea to their own lives. Accept different interpretations when students can point to a story or stage clue. Let students pass, respond with a partner, or choose a nonverbal response.

PREPARE THE AUDIENCE & CHOOSE A CLUE

Students do not need to know the books before they see the play. The actors tell the story through words, movement, music, and stage pictures. Invite students to watch, listen, and join in when performers invite them.

SLIDE 3
You are part of the Room

QUICK PRACTICE | 2 MINUTES

Ask students to look at one classroom object silently for 10 seconds or pick an object from the slide. Invite them to name or point to a small detail, then ask: "What story could this object help us imagine?"

SLIDE 4
What do you notice?

THEATRE CLUE HUNT

Before the performance, choose one clue for the class to watch or listen for.

LOOK FOR	AFTER THE SHOW, ASK
A character's movement or expression; a returning sound; a change in light, scenery, or costume; or an important object.	"What did you notice? What did it help you imagine about the character, place, or moment?"

THINK ABOUT GIFTS AND THE PEOPLE WHO RECEIVE THEM

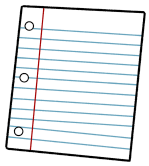
SLIDE 5
What can we give ...

IMAGINE A GIFT THAT FITS | 8–12 MINUTES

A gift can be an object, time, help, listening, laughter, or doing something together. Ask students to imagine a thoughtful gift for a character or someone they know.

- **1.** Choose a recipient. Ask what they enjoy, need, or might find surprising.
- **2.** Students draw, describe, or show a gift or kind action.
- **3.** Invite a reason: "I chose this because…" What clue helped them decide?

K–1: Model an example and offer two recipients. Grades 2–3: Ask how the gift connects to a character's actions or feelings.



Imagine a Gift That Fits. STUDENT HANDOUT

MYSTERY GIFT PARCEL

This circle game lets students invent and receive an imaginary gift. It practices pantomime, careful looking, and building on another person's idea.

Time: 8–10 minutes. **Materials**: None. **Space**: A circle. Students may sit or stand.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Mime holding an unseen parcel. Show its size, shape, or weight.
2. Pass it to a student. They mime opening it and show what might be inside without naming it.
3. Invite guesses based on clues. The receiver may reveal the gift or show how someone could use it.
4. The receiver reshapes and passes the parcel. The next student imagines a different gift.
5. Welcome passing, watching, guessing, and small gestures. Ask, "What did you see that gave you that idea?"

BUILD A STORY OR DESIGN ITS WORLD

CREATE A TINY EXTRAVAGANZA | ABOUT 20 MINUTES

In groups of 3–5, students make a short story about a celebration using bodies, faces, and optional sounds. No props or costumes are needed.

SLIDE 7
Make a tiny extravaganza.

READ ALOUD

"Your group is getting ready for a celebration. Something surprising happens. Show what the group does next. Make three frozen pictures. You may add a sound."

1 | GET READY	2 | SURPRISE	3 | WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
Who is there? What are they doing?	What changes? Show it clearly.	How does the story end?

After each share, invite the audience to name one detail and one change from the first picture to the last. Students can act, narrate, direct, or watch for a clue.

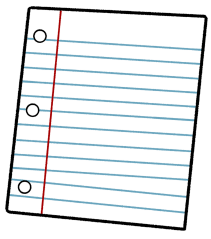
STUDY THE SET AND IMAGINE A NEW PLACE | 10–15 MINUTES

Show students the set rendering. Explain that it gives the theatre team a picture of how the stage might look. Give students a few quiet seconds to look before inviting responses.

SLIDE 8
Make a tiny extravaganza.

Ask: What do you notice first? What clues suggest where the story happens? What might the characters do here? How do the colors, shapes, or objects affect the mood?

Then invite students to use **Student Handout** to design another place Pigeon might visit, or to add one new detail to the pictured setting. Ask them to choose two details that help the audience imagine the place or its mood. Before the show, students can make predictions. After the show, they can compare their ideas with the set they saw.



TALK ABOUT THE THEATRE EXPERIENCE AND THE STORY

SLIDE 9
What stayed with you?

Students may draw, talk with a partner, dictate, or pass. Ask one question at a time and invite students to connect an idea to something they saw or heard.

ABOUT THE THEATRE	ABOUT THE STORY
What did you notice when you entered the theatre? What did the stage, costumes, lights, or sounds help you imagine? How did seeing a live performance feel different from a book or screen?	What did Pigeon think would make a great gift? What changed? How did one character's choice affect what happened next? What helped the Squirrels find a more manageable celebration? What can make a gift feel special?

SLIDE 10
Big words. Small examples.

WORD	WHAT IT MEANS
Extravaganza	A very big, lively show or celebration.
Skeptical	Not sure yet. Having questions.
Trudge	To walk slowly with heavy steps.
Bounteous	Plentiful. A lot to share.
In-between	In the middle of two choices. Not too much and not too little.
Coincidence	Two things happen around the same time by chance.
Character	Someone in a story.
Prop	Something an actor uses onstage.
Audience	The people who watch a performance.
Pantomime	Showing an action or object with your body, without using a real one.
Soundscape	A group of sounds that helps an audience imagine a place or moment.

NOTICE

COLLECT A THEATRE CLUE



NAME: _____

During the performance, choose one detail that catches your attention. It might be something an actor does, a sound you hear, or a change onstage.

MY CLUE

- I saw or heard: _____

_____

- I think it helped show: _____

_____

You can draw the detail instead of writing it. Try to include one small clue that helps someone else understand your idea.

IMAGINE A GIFT THAT FITS



NAME: _____

Think of a person or character. What might they enjoy, need, or find surprising?

My gift is for: _____

I chose this gift because: _____

_____

Draw the gift or kind action. Show who it is for.

KEEP ONE MOMENT FROM THE SHOW

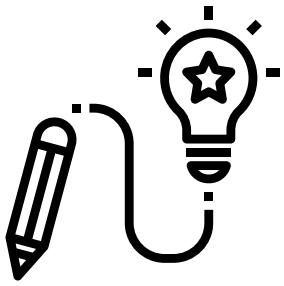
Think back to the show. Choose a moment you remember. IIt could be funny, surprising, exciting, or meaningful.

Draw the moment. Add one detail that helps someone else picture it.

Tell someone

- I noticed...
- I liked...
- I wonder...

YOU ARE THE DESIGNER



NAME: _____

Design a place for the Pigeon's holiday adventure. It could be a party space or a place the Pigeon visits. Use details to help the audience imagine the place and its mood.

Where are we? : _____

IWhat should the audience feel?: _____

_____

Add two details that help tell the audience where the story happens.