



Nicklaus Children's  
Health System



**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

# The Nutcracker



# Thank you for joining us for a Smart Stage Matinee!

Smart Stage Matinees are educational performances produced by professional companies for students in grades Pre K-12.

Integrating the arts into learning in meaningful ways, the performances reinforce classroom lessons, are aligned with Florida's B.E.S.T. standards, and spark creativity to help students make learning gains.

Here are just a few ways the Broward Center for the Performing Arts believes that Smart Stage Matinees provide educational arts integrated experiences for students:

- Watching live performances improves listening and observation skills.
- Students gain appreciation for the performing arts and understand its role in culture and history.
- Theater helps students develop empathy by experiencing diverse perspectives and emotions.
- Live theater reinforces classroom learning through storytelling, music, and visual arts.
- Students analyze characters, themes, and plot, which strengthens comprehension and interpretive skills.
- Exposure to live theater sparks imagination and creative problem-solving.

We'd love your feedback. Please click the link or QR code to help us continually improve our programming:

<https://forms.office.com/r/1pJAckCr4i>



# What's included in Curriculum Connections:

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## Know Before you Go:

- Arrive at the theater 15 to 20 minutes before show time. Allow extra time for Broward County traffic. We are unable to start a show late.
- Please stay on the bus until greeted by an usher. At that time, please give the usher your BUS document and the usher will escort you to the theater.
- Remember to watch our Know Before You Go Video:

<https://tinyurl.com/ElementarySeasWelcome>

<https://tinyurl.com/SecondaryWelcomeSEAS>

*“As South Florida’s only specialty-licensed hospital exclusively for children, Nicklaus Children’s provides expert pediatric care tailored to every stage of development. Nicklaus Children’s is proud to support early learning through the Smart Stage series, nurturing young minds alongside their health. “*



**Nicklaus  
Children's**

Where Your Child Matters Most™





**Dear Teacher,**

**We appreciate YOU and the incredible work you do!**

Our Curriculum Connections Study Guide is designed to make your classroom come alive—before or after your trip to see a play or musical.

These guides are aligned with Florida’s B.E.S.T. Standards and provide creative ways to bring the page to the stage, making learning engaging and memorable.

Why use Curriculum Connections?

- Boost comprehension and help students organize information.
- Encourage metacognition by giving students tools to check for understanding.
- Offer activities tailored for specific grade levels (clearly labeled for easy use).

Each guide includes:

- ✓ A reminder of theater etiquette
- ✓ A Social-Emotional Learning activity
- ✓ A Student-**Family** Cooperative Activity for extended learning at home
- ✓ A **NEW** Post-Show Cooperative Learning Page making group work easy after a show!

How to use it:

- Print activities for individual work
- Display on smart boards for class discussions
- Use in small groups for collaborative learning



**Pro Tip:** Discuss and or READ the play or musical as a class before your field trip. This makes the experience even richer!

**Stay connected with us:**



Follow @BrowardCenterEducation on Facebook and Instagram



Scan the QR code below to access our Teacher’s Lounge for insider tips, discounted tickets, and resources for you and your students!



Thank you for inspiring the next generation through the arts!



# Theater etiquette

*There is so much that goes into creating a show for the stage. Behind the scenes, there are people who control the lights and the sound, the sets and the props. There are directors, writers, producers, musicians, and choreographers. So many people work together to create the performance you and everyone in the audience watches.*

It is helpful to remind students of appropriate audience etiquette by explaining and discussing WHY these rules of behavior are important:

- Restroom visits are best made prior to the performance.
- Listen carefully to the ushers and your teachers. This gets everyone to your seats quickly and ensures a pleasant experience.
- Turn watches and cell phones to silent.
- Walk single file, hold hand rails as you use the steps for your safety.
- Listen carefully to each performer. They are working hard to entertain and inform with lots of clues about the story.
- Refrain from TALKING. This allows everyone to enjoy the show without distraction. Sometimes we think that if we whisper it is okay. But, if everyone in the audience whispers, it becomes disruptive.
- Laugh if something is funny, but not too loudly, you don't want to miss any dialogue.
- Photography and recording are not permitted.
- Pay attention to the lighting, scenery, costumes and music. All of these elements help provide more details to tell the story in an interesting way.
- Applaud (clap) and laugh at the right moments. This shows the performers that you respect and appreciate their work.



# My Theater Review

I saw: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

This play/musical was about...

Here's a drawing of  
my favorite character:

It made me feel:

I learned:

I gave this play/musical .... stars.



**We'd love to hear from you! If you'd like to submit this review,  
please send to [jenriquez@browardcenter.org](mailto:jenriquez@browardcenter.org)**

# The Nutcracker Synopsis

## Act 1:

The ballet begins on Christmas Eve. Clara, a young girl, eagerly awaits the arrival of her family's Christmas party. Her mysterious godfather, Herr Drosselmeier, a toymaker and magician, arrives with special gifts for the children. Among the gifts is a beautiful nutcracker in the shape of a soldier.

During the party, Clara's mischievous brother, Fritz, accidentally breaks the nutcracker. Devastated, Clara places the broken nutcracker under the Christmas tree. Later that night, unable to sleep, Clara sneaks back to the living room to check on the nutcracker. As the clock strikes midnight, strange things begin to happen. The Christmas tree grows tall, and mice, led by the Mouse King, invade the room. The nutcracker comes to life, and a fierce battle ensues between the toy soldiers and the mice.

## Act 2:

Clara finds herself magically transported to a fantastical world ruled by the Sugar Plum Fairy. The nutcracker has transformed into a handsome prince, who guides Clara through the enchanting Land of Sweets. They encounter various characters representing different sweets and treats from around the world.

Each character performs a beautiful dance to entertain Clara and the Prince.

As the festivities come to an end, Clara awakens from her dream, finding herself back in her home. Uncertain whether it was all just a dream or a magical adventure, she cherishes the memory of her enchanting journey to the Land of Sweets.

"The Nutcracker" ballet has become a holiday tradition worldwide, captivating audiences with its timeless tale of adventure, magic, and the spirit of Christmas.



# The Nutcracker ... Vocabulary and Terms



Ballet - a theatrical art form using dance, music, and scenery to create a story

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky - Russian composer who composed The Nutcracker

Choreograph - to design or plan movements of a dance

E.T.A. Hoffmann - the author of The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

Pantomime - acting by body movements and gestures without speaking

Pas de deux - a dance for two people used to display their beautiful technique

## **NUTCRACKER CHARACTERS AND DANCES:**

Nutcracker - a character in the ballet who comes to life as a prince

Mr. and Mrs. Petrov - Nicholas and Clara's parents

Herr Drosselmeier - Clara's godfather and ingenious toymaker

Sugar Candy Kingdom - a fantasy land where dancers from exotic places celebrate the defeat of the Rat King

Sugar Plum Fairy - a fairy who rules over the Sugar Candy Kingdom

Trepak - a lively Russian folk dance

Mother Matrushka - a character who keeps her children under her skirt

Nesting Dolls - Mother Matrushka's puppet children



# The Nutcracker... Pantomime

Pantomime (sometimes called just mime) is the art of using actions or gestures without words as a means of communication. It plays an important role in ballet, as it helps the audience better understand the story and what the characters are feeling. A dancer must use the arms, hands, fingers, head and eyes, as well as the feet to make a role "come alive." Here are descriptions of some of the most familiar gestures used in ballet.

## Try them in your group:

*group work!*

Anger	Fist shaken
Ask	Hands clasped together in pleading gesture
Beautiful	Hand circling face
Call	Hand or hands cupped around mouth
Fear	Body leaning away with hands open and palms out
Hear	Hand pointing to or cupping ear
I/Me/Mine	Hand to chest indicating oneself
Love	Hands over heart
Marriage	Index finger pointing to ring finger on left hand
Remember/Think	Touch or point to temple
Royal	Hand circling top of head to indicate crown
Sad	Finger tracing tears down face/wiping tears away
See	Finger pointing to eyes

1. Which ones were the easiest to interpret?

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2. Which were the hardest?

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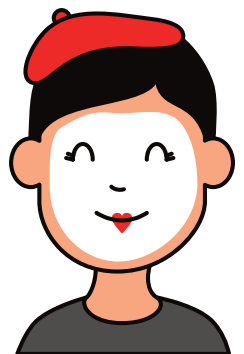
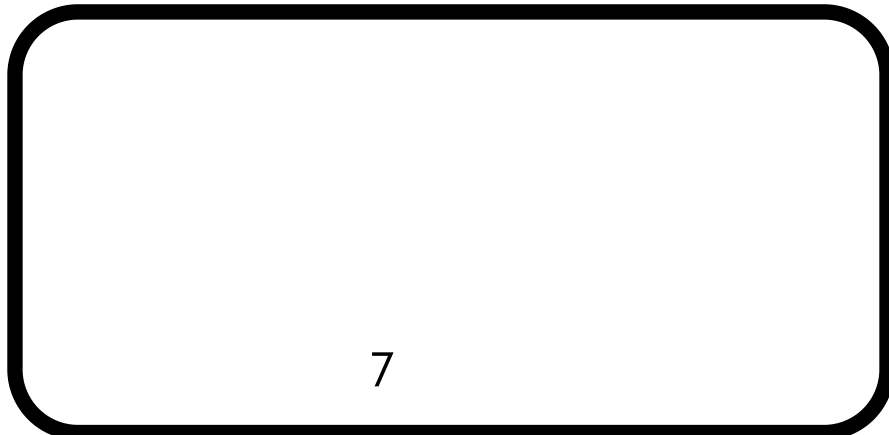
3. Which made you laugh out loud?

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Now, as a group, create an original one:

What is the feeling? -----

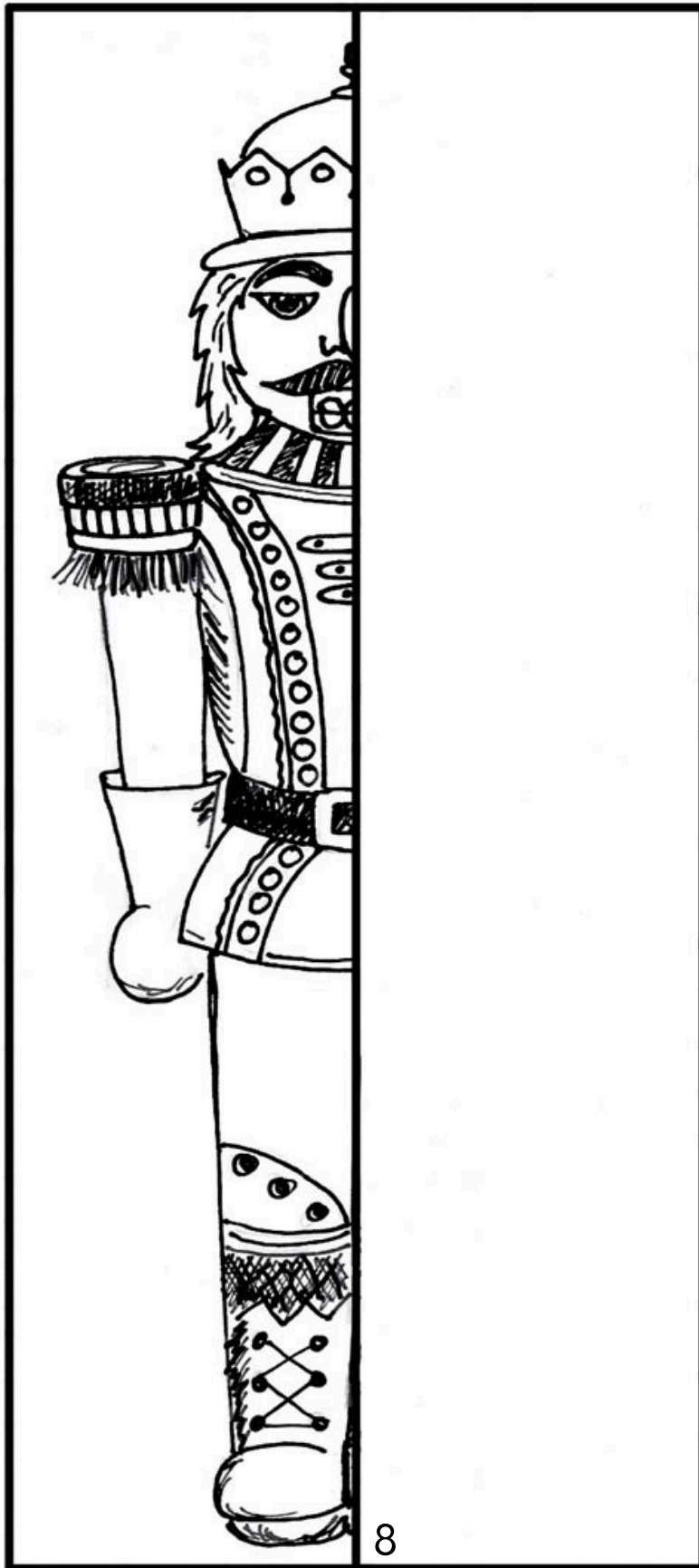
What is the gesture (explain or draw) -----



# The Nutcracker... Draw It

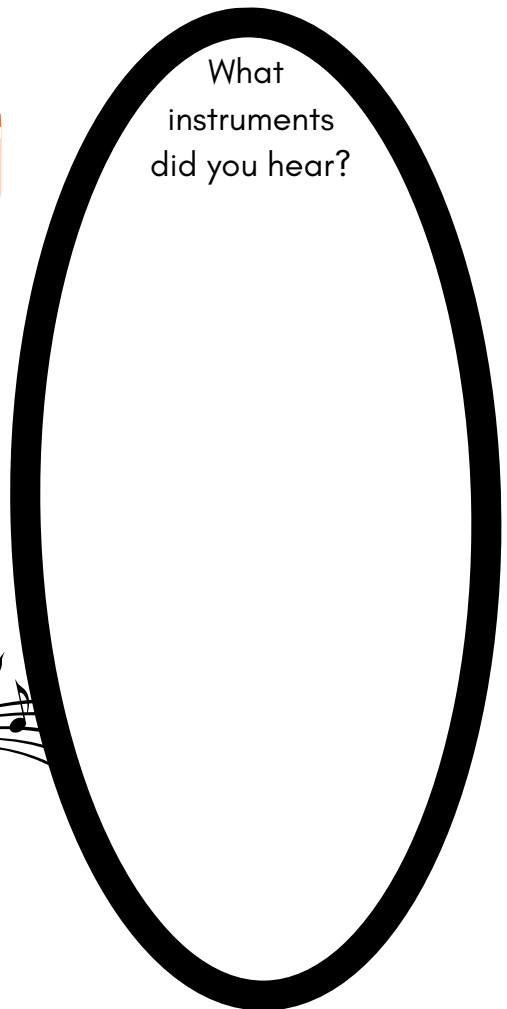
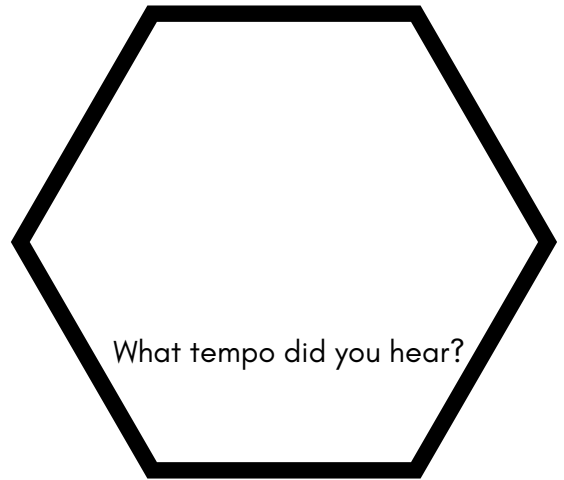
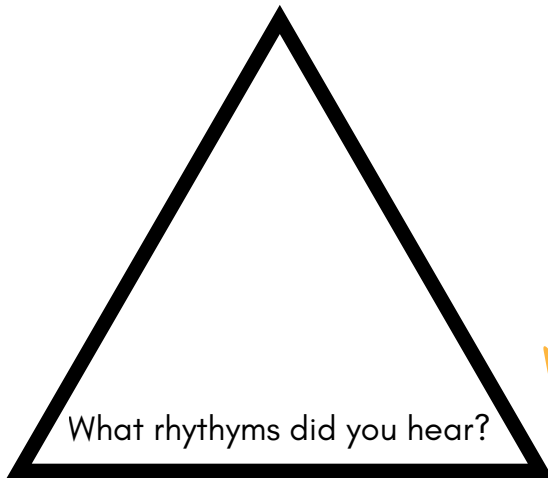


Can you draw the rest of the nutcracker? Complete and color.



# The Nutcracker... After the Performance

Directions: Answer the following questions contained in each shape AFTER seeing The Nutcracker.





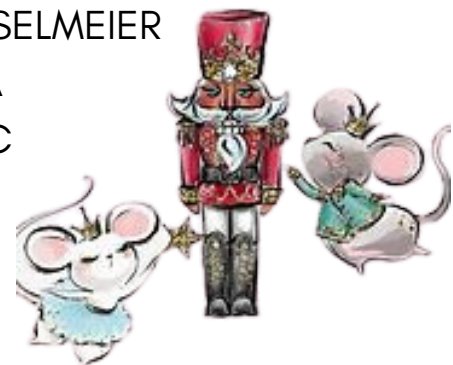


# The Nutcracker ... Word Search

M J H Q D O Q B C R R I O J G G T  
X Q J S A N H V F A R Z M T K O S  
B D G E R K A C R T X P I U Y U D  
O R U K A S R D I V I Y Q S G C S  
W O X A L C L T T L J D O A O B T  
O S P L C I E J Z M U L R L F F E  
G S B F N G Q J S Y D P U K T A E  
E E A W Y A U Q U I L M F Z L O W  
C L L O N M I X E U B O Y D I M S  
N M L N T M N R M I J S I G B T F  
I E E S O X S F N J E E Q A I E O  
R I T M T E A E N C E G I A N I D  
P E L F B I L E F W R L F U J S N  
M R Q W R M K B B U Y Y J I Y U A  
W B Q Y W O N F N Y V O Q P U V L  
L D L X R N E N Y X F R S S D K Z  
Z F L B R E K C A R C T U N A O N

SUGARPLUM FAIRY  
BROKEN  
HARLEQUIN  
FRITZ  
NUTCRACKER  
SNOWFLAKES  
TOY SOLDIERS

PRINCE  
BALLET  
LAND OF SWEETS  
COLUMBINE  
DROSSELMEIER  
CLARA  
MAGIC

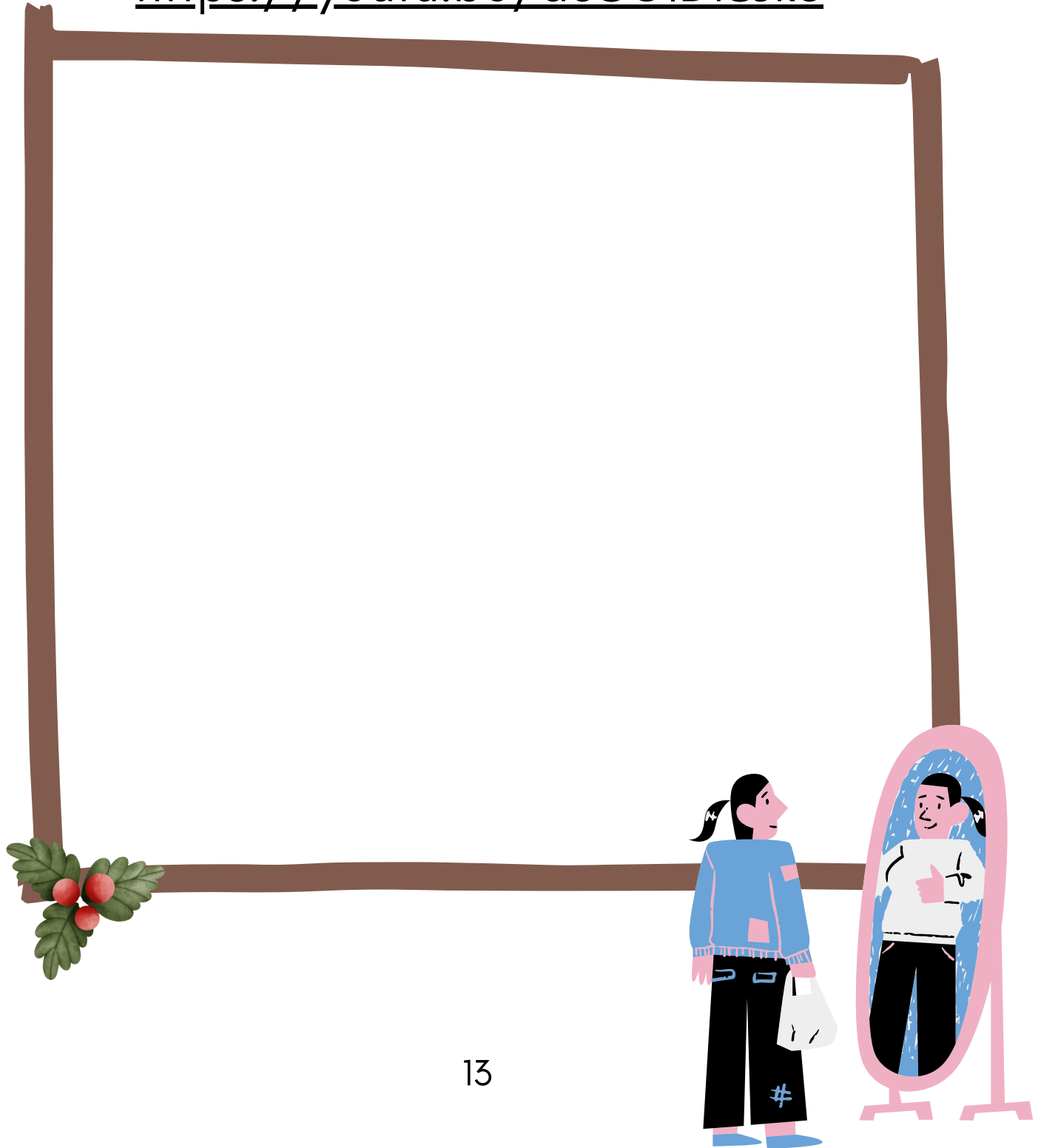


# The Nutcracker...S.E.L.

The performers you will see in the Nutcracker are very talented, but we all have things about us that are AMAZING!

Watch (or read) **The Best Part Of Me** by Wendy Ewald and then describe or draw the best part of you!

<https://youtu.be/a6SGIDiSjk8>



# Theater Vocabulary: From Script to Spotlight

**Play:** A story told live on stage by actors in front of a live audience.

**Musical:** A story told live on stage by actors in front of a live audience that also involves singing and dancing.

**Genre:** The style of a play.

**Plot:** The timeline of actions in the story from beginning to end.

**Setting:** Where a story takes place.

**Characters:** Who the story is about.

**Conflict:** A problem that the characters in the story have to face and overcome. A conflict arises when a character wants something but something else gets in their way.

**Objective:** What a character wants to achieve or solve in the story. In other words, a character's goal.

**Protagonist:** The story's *hero*. This is the character who is out to accomplish a goal or find purpose.

**Antagonist:** The story's *villain*. This character is usually against what the protagonist(s) needs to accomplish their objective or goal.

**Dialogue:** a conversation between two or more people in a play or musical.

**Blocking:** Movement the director give to the actors to show them where to go on the stage

**Choreography:** A sequence of dance moves assigned to a dancer in a musical number (song) that are used to help tell the story.

**Cue:** In theater, a cue signals when another action should begin. Ex: The actor's cue to enter the stage might be after they hear the thunder sound effect.

**Playwright:** The writer or writers of the play. Playwrights write the dialogue between characters in a play.

**Composer:** The artist who writes music for a musical.

**Lyricist:** the artist who writes words to the music in a musical.

**Actor:** the artist who embodies or puts themselves "in the shoes of" a character or characters in a play or musical to tell that character's story to the audience.

**Audience:** a group of people who attend a live event like a theatre performances to watch, listen, and respond to the event on stage.

**Director:** the artist who works with the writers, actors, and designers to tell a clear story on stage for the audience.

**Stage Manager:** The artist who manages the onstage and backstage areas before, during, and after a performance.

**Costume Design:** A costumer designer chooses and creates the articles of clothing that characters wear on stage to help tell the audience who the characters.

**Sound Designer:** an artist that creates the mood or atmosphere of the play through the use of sound, sound effects, and music in a play or musical.

**Props:** Objects used by a character on stage to help tell the story. Ex: A character may use a prop like an umbrella on stage if it is raining in that scene of the play.

# Post Show Cooperative Learning Opportunities

(Group Work Ideas for Teachers)



## 1. Group Reflection Circle

Sit together and share your favorite moments, characters, or songs from the performance. Encourage everyone to explain why they liked those parts.

*This builds listening skills and helps everyone appreciate different perspectives.*

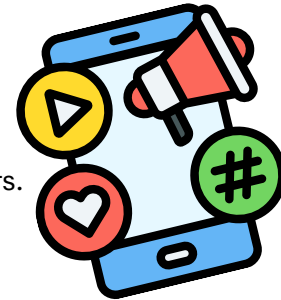


## 2. Create a Mini Review Together

Work as a team to write a short review of the show.

Assign roles: one person writes, another edits, others brainstorm key points.

You can post it on social media or keep it in a class journal.



## 3. Reenact a Scene

Pick a favorite scene and act it out as a group.

Add your own twist—maybe change the setting or improvise new dialogue.

*This sparks creativity and teamwork.*



## 4. Design a Poster or Program

Collaborate to create a poster or program for the performance you saw. Include drawings, quotes, and fun facts.

*This is great for artistic expression and memory keeping.*



## 5. Plan a "Behind the Scenes" Discussion

Research how the performance was made (costumes, music, choreography).

Assign each group member a topic to present.

*This turns curiosity into a cooperative learning activity.*



# K-5 Student to Family Cooperative Activity Ideas:

- Create a home theater space: Dedicate a specific area in your home as a temporary theater space. It can be anywhere with a little bit of space to "put on a show". Create a cozy ambiance with lighting and comfortable seating.
- Create tickets and programs: Design and print them at home or even hand made. Deliver the tickets to family members, and the programs can include information about the performance, cast, and crew. This adds a touch of authenticity and excitement.
- Snack bar and concessions: Set up a snack bar or concessions stand with a variety of treats and refreshments. You can even create special themed snacks related to the performance you are watching.
- Interactive viewing experience: Encourage audience participation during the performance. For example, during a musical, you can sing along to the songs and clap during applause-worthy moments!
- Post-show discussions: After the performance, have a family discussion about the show. Share your thoughts, favorite moments, and discuss the themes or lessons portrayed. This can foster critical thinking and encourage creativity in your kids.
- **Remember, the goal is to create a memorable and immersive experience. Adapt these ideas based on your family's preferences and the resources available to you. The key is to have fun and enjoy the theater experience in your digs!**

## Additional Activity Ideas:



- Memory jars: Create a memory jar with your children. Write down favorite childhood memories on small pieces of paper and put them in a jar. Each week or month, take turns pulling out a memory and sharing it. This can spark conversations and lead to further discussions about your childhood experiences, and theirs too!
- Bedtime stories: Instead of reading traditional bedtime stories, take turns sharing personal stories from your childhood. These could be tales of adventure, funny incidents, or heartwarming experiences. This can create a strong bond between you and your children as you share personal narratives.
- Encourage your kids to create their own journals or scrapbooks to document their childhood memories. Take the opportunity to share your childhood stories as you help them with their own projects. You can even contribute by adding some of your own stories or mementos to their journals.
- What was your favorite song, band or genre growing up? Play a few songs for your child/children and let them play a few of their favorites for you!
- Create traditions with your child/children!: Establish special rituals or traditions that you can share. It could be a weekly movie night, cooking together on weekends, going for a walk after dinner, or singing at the top of your lungs before bedtime.

# M/H Student to Family Cooperative Activity Ideas:

- Cook a themed meal: If the play had cultural or culinary references, consider cooking a themed meal together as a family. Research recipes from that culture or recreate dishes mentioned in the play. This culinary exploration can add a delicious dimension to your theater experience and allow you to immerse yourselves further in the production.
- Watch a related film or documentary: If there are any film adaptations or documentaries related to the play or its subject matter, plan a family movie night to watch them together. This can provide additional context, offer a different perspective, or deepen your understanding of the themes explored in the theater production.
- Share impressions and discuss the play: Sit down with your kids and have a conversation about the play you all watched. Share your impressions, thoughts, and emotions. Discuss the elements that stood out to each of you, such as the performances, the set design, or the storytelling. This exchange of perspectives can deepen your understanding and appreciation of the production.
- **Remember, the goal is to create a memorable and immersive experience. Adapt these ideas based on your family's preferences and the resources available to you. The key is to have fun and enjoy the theater experience in your digs!**

## Additional Activity Ideas:

- Attend workshops or classes: Look for theater workshops or classes that interest you and your child. Participating in these educational opportunities can help your kids develop their skills, gain confidence, and connect with others who share their interest in the performing arts.
- Encourage your kids to create their own journals or scrapbooks to document their childhood memories. Take the opportunity to share your childhood stories as you help them with their own projects. You can even contribute by adding some of your own stories or mementos to their journals.
- What was your favorite song, band or genre growing up? Play a few songs for your child/children and let them play a few of their favorites for you!
- Volunteer or participate in theater activities: If your kids have developed a keen interest in theater, encourage them to get involved in local theater groups or school productions. Volunteer backstage, audition for roles, or assist with set design and costumes. This hands-on experience allows us to gain practical knowledge and further nurture a passion for the performing arts, and the whole family can volunteer with the show!

## Standards Alignment: The Nutcracker

**Standards Alignment:** The activities in this guide are aligned with the standards listed below. When teachers incorporate the arts, they increase student engagement, offer multiple points for students to access the curriculum, and provide alternate means for students to demonstrate what they know.

Florida's Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.)	
Kindergarten through Grade 12/ English Language Arts	
ELA.K12.EE.1.1	Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.
ELA.K12.EE.2.1	Read and comprehend grade-level complex texts proficiently.
ELA.K12.EE.3.1	Make inferences to support comprehension.
ELA.K12.EE.4.1	Use appropriate collaborative techniques and active listening skills when engaging in discussions in a variety of situations.
ELA.K12.EE.5.1	Use the accepted rules governing a specific format to create quality work.
ELA.K12.EE.6.1	Use appropriate voice and tone when speaking or writing.