



Welcome to Childsplay's Resource Guide for Teachers and Parents

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your children for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, classroom activities that deal with curriculum connections and education standards, and resource materials.

The Story:

As Willa Jo and Little Sister arrive for an extended visit with by-the-rules Aunt Patty, we get a glimpse at a family pulling together, dealing with grief the best way they know, coming to terms with loss, and learning to live with a sad truth. Adapted from a Newbery Honor book, this new play is poignant, uplifting and funny by turns as we trace a family's journey of acceptance and understanding in the face of loss.

Curriculum Connections:

Page to stage * family relationships
* dealing with loss * unlikely
friendships * coping * small
towns * the sixties * siblings

Getting Near TO BABY

Adapted by Y York from the novel
by Audrey Coulombis

Directed by **Andrés Alcalá**
Scenic Design by **Holly Windingstad**
Costume Design by
Holly Windingstad
Lighting Design by **Tim Monson**
Sound Design by **Sarah Roberts**
Stage Manager: **Abigail Hartmann**

The Cast

Willa Jo. Kaleena Newman
Little Sister. Caitlin Andelora/Jessica Webb
Aunt Polly. Katie McFadzen
Uncle Hob. Dwayne Hartford
Lucy Wainwright. Debra K. Stevens
Liz Fingers. Jannese Davidson
Isaac Fingers. Christopher Moffit/Brennan Metcaffé
Cynthia Wainwright. Michelle Cuneen

Tempe Center for the Arts, Studio Theater
October/November, 2008

Production Sponsors:

imagination begins with U.S.
U.S. AIRWAYS New Plays Festival For Families



Childsplay's 2008-2009 Season Resource
Guides prepared by
Drew Chappell and Katie McFadzen

Things to Talk About and Do :

Theatre Etiquette:

It's helpful to review the rules of theatre etiquette before seeing a



show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:

~Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our school performances.

~Stay seated during the performance.

~ Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance. Remember, the actors can see and hear the audience just like you can see and hear them.

~ Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.

~Food, candy, gum and beverages are not allowed in the theater.

~Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device is *not allowed in the theater at any time!*

From the PAGE to the STAGE



When a playwright takes a book and *adapts* it into a play, he or she must answer many questions, including:

- Can this book be an effective play?
- Who are the most essential characters? What are the most essential events?
- How can I confine the action to the space of the stage?
- Do I need to suggest ways to stage certain actions, changes of location, etc.?
- Is there anything *not* in the book that should be in the play?

Theatres like to produce adaptations because typically the plays are based on well-known books that will bring in audiences. But almost always, books are not intended to be turned into plays, and so translating them into scripts can seem "unnatural" or awkward. The playwright must find what is "theatrical" about the book and concentrate on those elements in order to create a successful adaptation. Theatrical elements might include conversations between characters, supernatural or imaginary characters, actors playing more than one character, multiple events taking place at the same time in different areas of the stage, stylized movement, and use of masks or puppets.

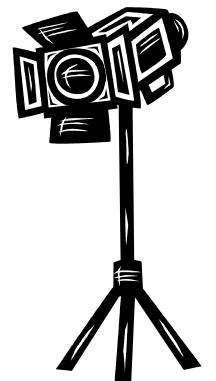
Discussion Questions:

1. If you were a playwright, would you rather write an adaptation of an existing book or write an original play? Why?
2. Do you like seeing plays based on books you've read? Why or why not?
3. How are plays different from TV shows or movies? What are the limitations of a play (things that can't be done on stage)?
4. What parts of the book *Getting Near to Baby* do you think will be difficult to stage? Why?
5. What other books do you know of that have been turned into a play?

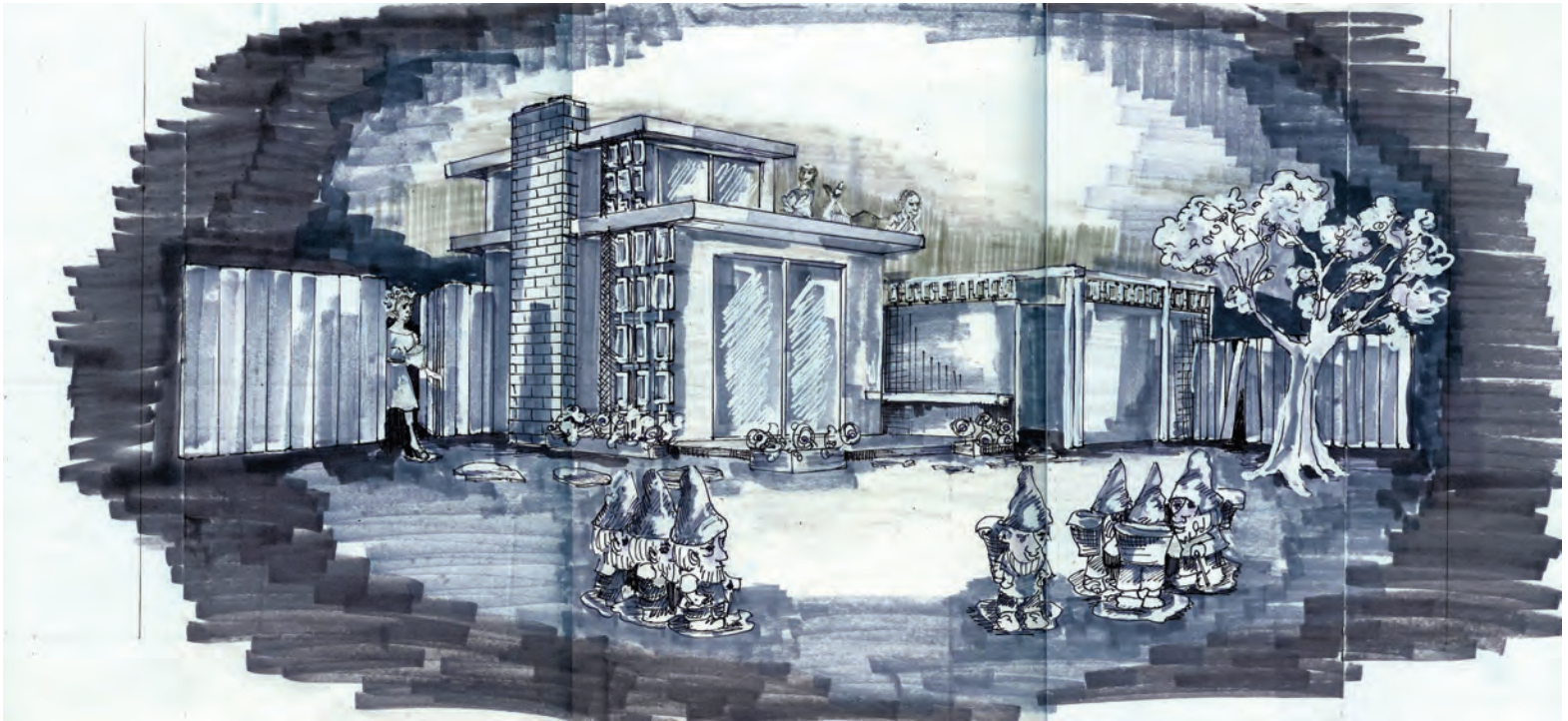


Production Elements:

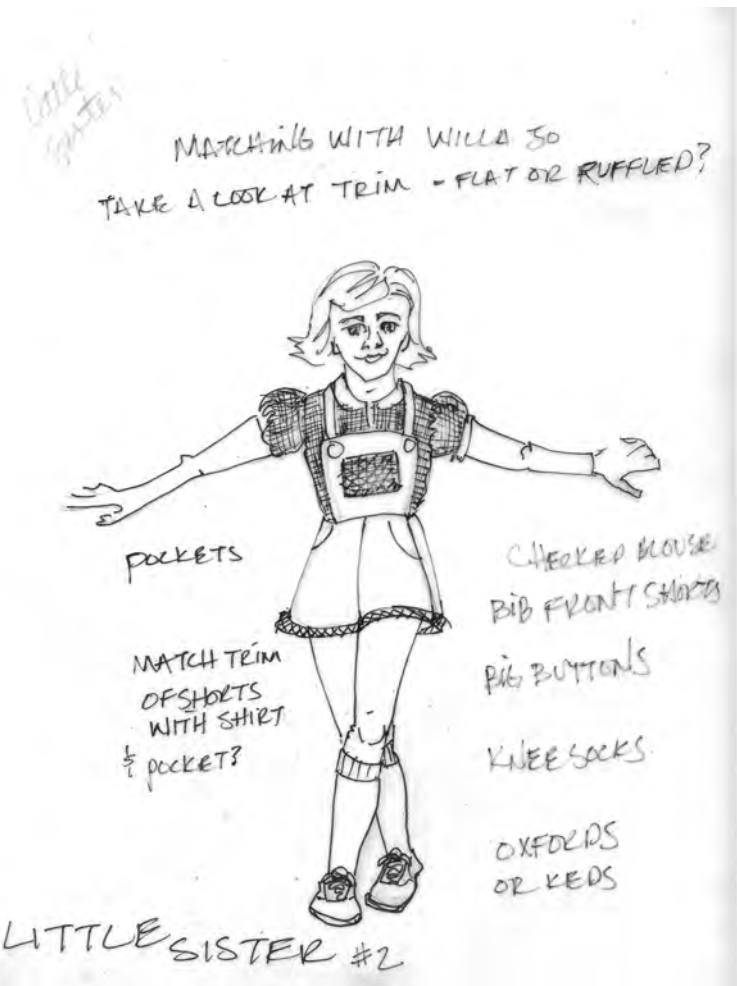
The production team includes a costume designer, lighting designer, sound designer, and scenic designer. All of the designers work together with the director to create the various elements of the production. For *Getting Near to Baby*, the costume and scenic designs are both by Holly Windingstad. Holly had the challenging task of creating the outside of a house with a functional roof top. She also had to create a second location—the cave. Her costume designs had to communicate the time period of the play (1967) as well as the age, social status, and personality of each character. A sample of Holly's preliminary scenic and costume designs follow on page 3.



Preliminary scenic design for Aunt Patty and Uncle Hob's house in *Getting Near to Baby...*



One of Aunt Patty's looks...



Little Sister after she comes to stay with Aunt Patty...



Activity: Adapting a favorite book into a play

Objective- Students will begin to understand the process of adapting a book for the stage.



1. Have each student choose a favorite book. Tell them they will be re-imagining a scene from that book as a play scene.
2. Students choose a scene from the book to adapt. The scene should have dramatic action (characters dealing with a problem), and students should have an idea of how to stage the action.
3. Show students a page from a script if they are unfamiliar with script format.
4. Students write their scenes, starting with stage directions setting the scene and continuing through dialog and action until they reach a resolution.
5. Students trade their script pages and read each other's work *or* cast their scenes (with teacher guidance) and read them in reader's theatre style.
6. Students give each other feedback on how the scene translated from page to stage (focusing on what was clear and what confused them or caused them to "tune out") and suggest directions to go next with the script.

Scaling up: Have older students plan a scene breakdown for their entire book. How many scenes need to be included? Do any need to be added? Where is the climax of the book/play? How can they use the elements of the stage to tell the story of the book? They can do this using a storyboard format.

Scaling down: Have younger children draw a picture of a scene from the book as it would appear on the stage, create a tableau image (frozen picture) of the scene, or dramatize the scene using minimal set and costumes or puppets.

Post-Show

Discussion Questions:

1. Which characters and events did the playwright focus on? Were these good choices?



2. Was there anything not in the book that was included in the play? Why do you think the playwright chose to include it?

3. How did the playwright and director deal with the parts of the book you thought would be difficult to stage? Would you have made the same choices? Why or why not?

THEME 1: SMALL TOWN LIFE

Pre Show

Introduction (to read aloud or for your knowledge):

This play takes place in a small North Carolina town in the year 1967. Although the residents of the town live on plots of land that take up a great deal of space, they are a close community in which everyone knows each other's "business" and people are always coming to visit.



Discussion Questions:

1. What is the community you live in like? Do you know your neighbors? What common areas do you gather in?
2. Would you prefer to live in a small town, a big city, or something in between when you grow up? Why?
3. Do you have local businesses in your neighborhood? Other places like clubs, churches, etc.? How many of these places do you visit?

Post Show

Discussion Questions:

1. How did the people in the small town feel about each other? What was one misconception one of the main characters had about someone else?
2. How did Aunt Patty change from the beginning of the play to the end? Why do you think she changed?
3. Why do you think Aunt Patty cared so much about joining the Ladies' Social League? What will she do now that she's likely to be excluded from the club?
4. What do you think Aunt Patty's relationship will be like with the Fingers family now?

Activity: Creating a Community

1. Tell students they will be split into family groups living in a small town like the one depicted in *Getting Near to Baby*.
2. Break the class into small groups of 3-4 students. Each group gets a family card with a set of skills, hopes, and challenges written

on it. These should be appropriate to the setting of the play. (An example might be: York Family. Skilled in playing and reading piano music, laying pipe, and other construction. Hopes: to earn money through construction and build a community orchestra. Challenges: Mother York is sickly, and a great deal of the family's time and money are dedicated to her care.)

3. Randomly place each family in a residential space on a master town map. Have each family meet their neighbors in a series of brief improvised scenes.

4. Hold a town meeting, which you moderate. On the agenda: immediate needs of the town, future needs of the town, building a town charter (set of rules).

5. Have each family return to their group and write a letter to you responding to the meeting. Did they get to speak? Were their needs met? Will they stay in the town?

Scaling up: Have older students continue the role play over a week or two. Introduce challenge factors into town life such as fires or crime, or hold a municipal election.

Scaling down: Have younger students draw family portraits and imagine how they would use their land rather than giving them the family cards. Create a town map integrating shops and a way into a nearby large city.

Curricular Connections: Social studies (community roles, movement from small towns to cities); math (zoning a residential space); literature (stories having to do with small town life)



THEME 2: MANNERS AND CHARM

Pre show

Introduction (to read aloud or for your knowledge): One of the characters in the play, Lucy Wainwright, owns a charm school where she gives lessons to young women in the community. Charm, manners, and etiquette are very important to the Wainwright family. There are schools that offer courses in social behavior and etiquette, known as "finishing schools." Courses might include behavior at social functions, the proper addressing of invitations, dance lessons, and so forth. Women's colleges in the US were occasionally called finishing schools; these have disappeared since the 1960s. Lucy Wainwright's charm school is on a much smaller scale; her school and others like it offer courses in etiquette, but are not credentialed as full finishing schools.

Discussion Questions

1. How important are manners to you? To your family? Why do you think this is so?
2. When do you need to become more "mannered" and "charming" (Important dinner, special event, etc.)?
3. Would you ever want to learn more about etiquette? Why or why not?
4. Many people think that manners are becoming less and less important. Do you agree? What parts of etiquette do you think we should try to keep as a society?

Post Show

Discussion Questions

1. What was Lucy Wainwright hiding? Why do you think her school was struggling?
2. Why did Liz Fingers want to learn about etiquette? Do you think Lucy Wainwright's lessons would be helpful to her?
3. What could Lucy Wainwright do to change her school and make it more important to her community?

Activity: World Customs and Practices

1. Ask the class what some customs and practices are from their community (washing hands, shaking hands, waiting at

the table until everyone is finished, etc.) Tell the class they are going to research customs and practices from around the world, and then get together for a formal dinner.

2. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4. Assign each group a contemporary world culture to research. They should find information on the following topics: greetings, health, conversation, and eating practices (you may add dress if you wish).
3. When the groups have finished their research, lay a large table for them and put out either food you've brought in or wooden/plastic food. You play the part of the host/ess and invite all the groups to sit at the table (if you wish-and if they have access to them-you may ask the students dress in formal clothes from their culture). They are to interact with each other and share the food. You may want to give them conversation topics such as: what do you think of our community? What books have you read lately? What do you like to do? Hopefully some of the customs will "bump up against" each other, but be dealt with civilly. (During role play, watch for cultural stereotypes emerging and be prepared to address them.)
4. After the party is over, wish everyone a good trip home and say goodnight (send them back to their seats.)
5. Have the groups share their customs and (if necessary) explain what they were doing and why.
6. Ask the groups to collaborate on a journal entry about the party. Post the journals.

Scaling up: Have older students research more about the origins of the customs. Present these findings after the meal concludes. Reflect on what the customs suggest about the culture.

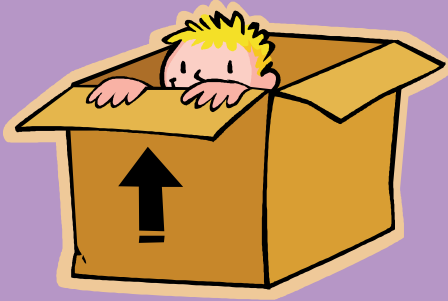
Scaling down: For younger have the students try one set of customs at a time (perhaps on subsequent days). Rather than world cultures, have them perform customs appropriate to a picnic, family dinner table, and restaurant.

THEME 3: SPECIAL/SECRET PLACES

Pre show

Introduction (to read aloud or for your knowl- edge):

Many people have a special place they use for “getting away” from responsibilities or the routines of daily life. These places might be out in nature, or in a secret part of the house. In *Getting Near to Baby*, there are two of these hideaways, and getting the children out of them is sometimes a challenge!



Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a special place to “get away”? More than one? Why is it special to you?
2. Have you ever brought someone to that space? What was it like to show them around?
3. What would happen if someone “invaded” your special space (chose it as theirs as well)? Could you both share the space?

Post Show

Discussion Questions

1. What concerns did the adults have about the Fingers’ cave? Did these concerns turn out to be important?
2. Why did the Fingers invite Willa Jo and Little Sister to their cave? Was it a good decision? Why or why not?
3. Little Sister says she went out on the roof to get near to Baby. Do you think being on the roof helped her make peace with her sister’s death? Why was it important for her to be on the roof in order for this to happen?
4. If you were Willa Jo, how long would you let Little Sister stay on the roof? If you were Aunt Patty, would you have joined the girls on the roof? Why or why not?

Activity: Designing a special space

1. Remind the class that there were two spaces where the child characters went to get away from the adults in the play. Have them describe the qualities of each of these spaces from their memories of the play.
2. Give each student a piece of blank paper. Ask them to design the “perfect” special space- somewhere they can get away. They should draw this space and label its elements. Ask the following guiding questions: is your space indoors or outdoors? What furniture is there? Other objects? Does it have a phone? Internet access? How is it laid out? Is there room for someone else? How is it decorated?
3. Have the students share their spaces with a partner. The partner should ask questions about the choices the designer made.
4. In whole group, share discoveries and talk about commonalities and unique elements.

Scaling up: Have older students write a series of postcards as if they are hiding out in their special spaces. The postcards should explain why they went to the space and what will bring them out.

Scaling down: Have younger students build their special space out of found materials rather than drawing/labeling them. Have them do this work in small groups with your facilitation (ask them the guiding questions from above). Display the spaces.

Curricular Connections:

Literature (secret places, coping with loss); science (caves and spelunking); arts (expressions of secret spaces across the arts)



FULL LESSON PLAN

Target grade level: 6

Standards:

Theatre Strand 1 (Create) Concept 2 (Acting), PO

101: Imagine and describe characters, their relationships, what they want and why (e.g., through variations of movement and gesture, vocal pitch, volume, and tempo).

Visual Art Strand 1 (Create) Concept 2 (Materials, Tools, and Techniques), PO 201: Identify and experiment with materials, tools, and techniques appropriately and expressively in his or her own artwork (Technique=abstract painting).

Language Arts Strand 2 (Writing Components), Concept 2 (Voice), PO 2: Convey a sense of identity through originality, sincerity, liveliness, or humor appropriate to the topic and type of writing.

Objective: Students will examine dramatic moments from *Getting Near to Baby*. They will improvise dialogue around the climactic event of the play. They will build understanding of the character Little Sister and her mother by creating a greeting card for a family member they miss.

Materials: Blank paper and paint or colored pencils for making greeting cards.

Introduction: Ask students to recall Willa Jo and Little Sister's journey from the beginning of the play to the end. What moments do they recall? Write the main characters' names on the board and have the students call out words that describe them. Leave these descriptions up throughout the lesson.

Procedure:

Part 1- Tableaux of scenes

1. Divide students into small groups of 3-4. Give each group one of the following scenes to represent in tableau (still pictures made with the actors' bodies). Add scenes if you wish.

- The girls arrive at Aunt Patty and Uncle Hob's
- Cynthia steals the cookies
- Willa Jo and Little Sister visit the Fingers' cave
- The children get a charm lesson
- Patty sees the girls on top of her roof

2. Once the groups have finished their scenes, ask one group to show their tableau to the rest of the class. Have the audience talk about what they see using the following guiding questions: What's happening in this picture? How do you know? Which character is at the center of the action? What is that character doing? Thinking? How are the other characters involved?

3. Repeat the process for the other groups.

Part 2- Convincing the girls/Convincing Aunt Patty

4. Select three students to role play the girls and Aunt Patty. Divide the rest of the class into two groups.
5. Have each group meet. One group will decide on reasons the girls should come down from the roof. The other group will decide on reasons that Aunt Patty should come up on

the roof. Meanwhile, assign the three students their roles and ask them to write down why their character is either on the roof or not.

6. Place the three students in the center of the space. Put each group on either side of the three.

7. Have the groups take turns calling out reasons the girls should come down or Aunt Patty should come up.

8. As the reasons are called out, have the students in the center move toward one side or the other based on how convincing they thought the reasons are.

9. Reflect and discuss the reasons and the characters' movement. How convincing were the reasons? What made the students in the center decide to move? Would they change what they initially wrote? Did the two groups feel concerned about the outcome?

Part 3- Greeting cards

10. Have students discuss what it feels like to miss someone close to them.

11. Tell the students they will be creating a card to send to that person (if possible) or to dedicate to that person if s/he is already gone.

12. Pass out a large piece of white construction paper and ask the students to fold it in half (to make the card).

13. They will create a painting on the left side and leave the right side blank.

14. Ask them to think about how color and movement can show emotion. Demonstrate with paint yourself: experiment with different colors and different brushstrokes based on how you feel. (Don't make a realistic painting. It should be abstract.)

15. Tell the students they should think about how they feel when they are with the person they miss, as well as how they feel when they are gone.

16. Have them select colors that reflect those emotions. Have them experiment painting with these colors using different brushstrokes while they think of how they feel.

17. As the paintings dry, have the students write an "ode" to that person on a separate sheet of paper. This will become the inside of the card.

18. For the "ode," you can use the following sentence starters:

To _____

You are _____, _____, and _____

When you are here I feel _____

When you are gone, I _____

I will see you _____

19. Have the students edit their poems and then write them the final draft on the inside of the card.

20. Have them share their cards—the paintings and odes—with a partner.

21. As a class, discuss the ways you can express emotions through painting and writing. Discuss why we miss people when they are gone or far away.

Assessment:

Observation- Did the students participate fully in the activities? Could you tell they were giving thought to the role they were playing and their writing and painting?

Group reflection— Did the students participate in the reflection? Were their answers on topic and insightful?

Resources...

About Childsplay:

Childsplay is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood, which are the keys to the future.

We love to hear from our audience members!

Childsplay
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Tempe, AZ 85281



Phone:
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Email us at:

info@childsplayaz.org

Check out our web site:

www.childsplayaz.org

Our new home is The Sybil
B. Harrington Campus of
Imagination and Wonder at
Mitchell Park
900 S. Mitchell
Tempe, AZ 85281

Want Some Drama in Your Classroom?

If you would like help incorporating drama into your curriculum by having Teaching Artist come into your classroom, Childsplay can help. We offer a variety of artist-in-residence and teacher training experiences. We can also help with pre- and post-show activities related to the production. For more information, contact Patricia Black at:

pblack@childsplayaz.org or
480.921.5750

Booklist

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham, Member, Board of Directors, Association for Library Service to Children



Family Relationships

James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl

Smiles to Go by Jerry Spinelli

Twelve by Lauren Myracle

It's an Aardvark-eat-Turtle World by Paula Danziger

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck

The Penderwicks on Gardam Street by Jeanne Birdsall

Dealing With Loss

Belle Prater's Boy by Ruth White

Eggs by Jerry Spinelli

Unlikely Friendships

Bread and Roses Too by Katherine Paterson

The Traitor: Golden Mountain Chronicles, 1885 by Lawrence Yep

A Long Way from Chicago by Richard Peck

Coping

Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary

Love, Ruby Lavender by Debbie Wiles

Small Towns

Room One by Andrew Clements

The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs by Betty G. Birney

Going Through the Gate by Janet Anderson

Here Lies the Librarian by Richard Peck

The Sixties

The Wednesday Wars by Gary D. Schmidt

Where Have All the Flowers Gone: The Diary of Molly McKenzie Flaherty by Ellen Emerson White

Siblings

The Saturdays by Elizabeth Enright

The Penderwicks by Jeanne Birdsall

The Unseen by Zilpha Keatly Snyder

Saffy's Angel by Hilary McKay

Websites of Interest:

Site of the author, Audrey Coulombis:

www.audreycoulombis.com

Site of the playwright, Y York:

www.york.com/index.html

Some photos of another production:

www.york.com/getting_near_to_baby.html

Discussion guide for the novel:

www.multcolib.org/talk/guides-getting.html

North Carolina travel site: www.visitnc.com

The history of the Hallmark greeting card company:

<http://corporate.hallmark.com/History>

Emily Post's etiquette site: www.emilypost.com

Information of spelunking (cave exploration) for kids:

<http://pbskids.org/kws/sports/spelunking.html>



ACTIVITY PAGE: Grades 4-6

Town Map:

Getting Near to Baby takes place in a small town. In the space below, draw a map of a town like the one in the play. Be sure to include: modes of transportation, government buildings, services (utilities, libraries, places of worship, etc.), living spaces, parks/green spaces, and shops. Give your town a name. List some of the problems you think your town might deal with.

Name of Town: _____

Problems: _____



ACTIVITY PAGE: Grades 4-6

My Favorite Place:

Think about a special place you like to go to escape, to rest, to think, to imagine. Write a poem in the voice of that place. Use these sentence starters for ideas.

I am...

I have...

I usually...

___ visits me when...

I see....

I hope....

ACTIVITY PAGE: Grades 7-8

Singing About Small Towns:

Rock singers John Mellencamp and Bruce Springsteen both sing about coming from small towns. Look at excerpts from their songs below. Compare the two songs. Put your ideas about each in the circles. If the songs have something in common, put it in the middle. Now look at how each singer thinks about their hometown. Why do you think they feel the way they do?

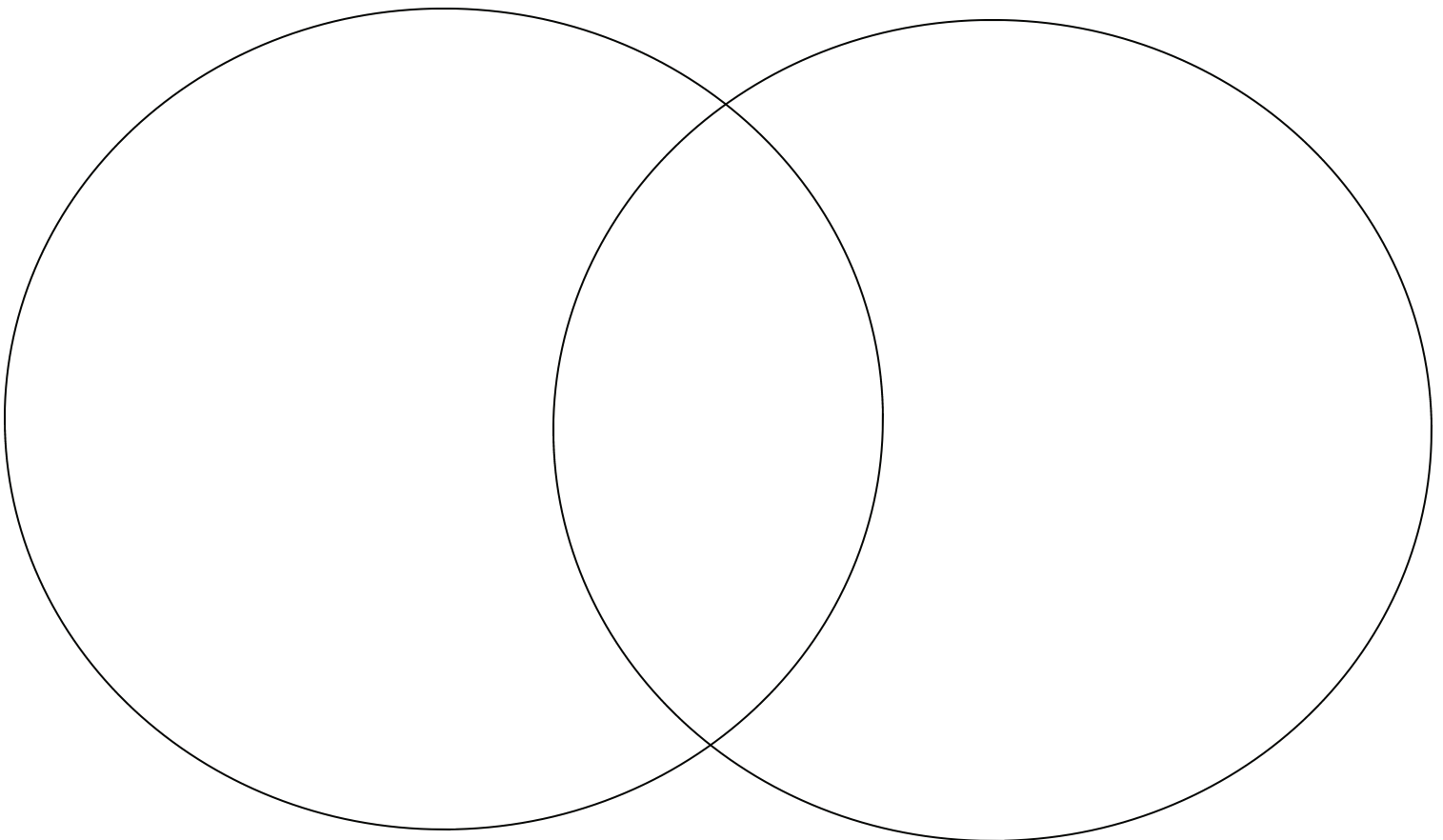
(Lyrics excerpted from "Small Town" [1985] and "My Hometown" [1984])

John Mellencamp:

No I cannot forget where it is that I come from
I cannot forget the people who love me
Yeah, I can be myself here in this small town
And people let me be just what I want to be

Bruce Springsteen:

Now Main Street's whitewashed windows and vacant stores
Seems like there ain't nobody wants to come down here no more
They're closing town the textile mill across the railroad tracks
Foreman says "These jobs are going, boys, and they ain't coming back
To your hometown."

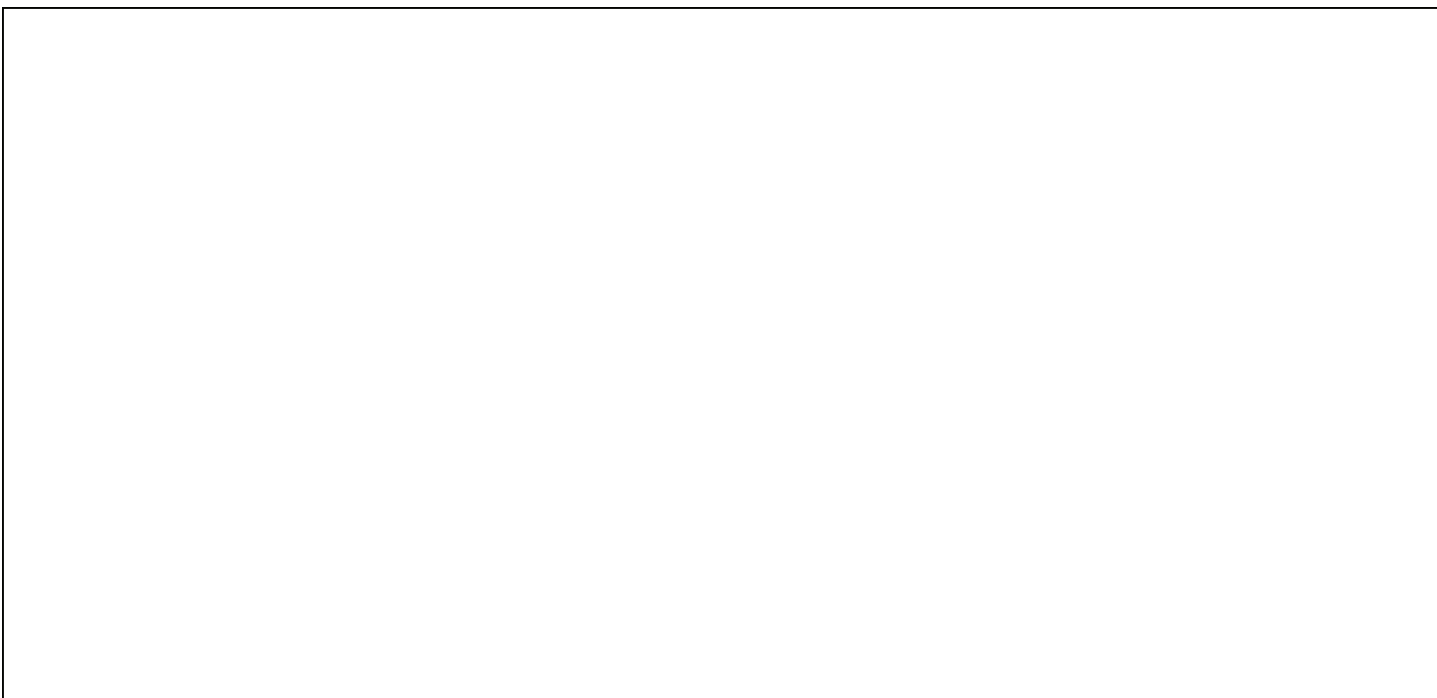
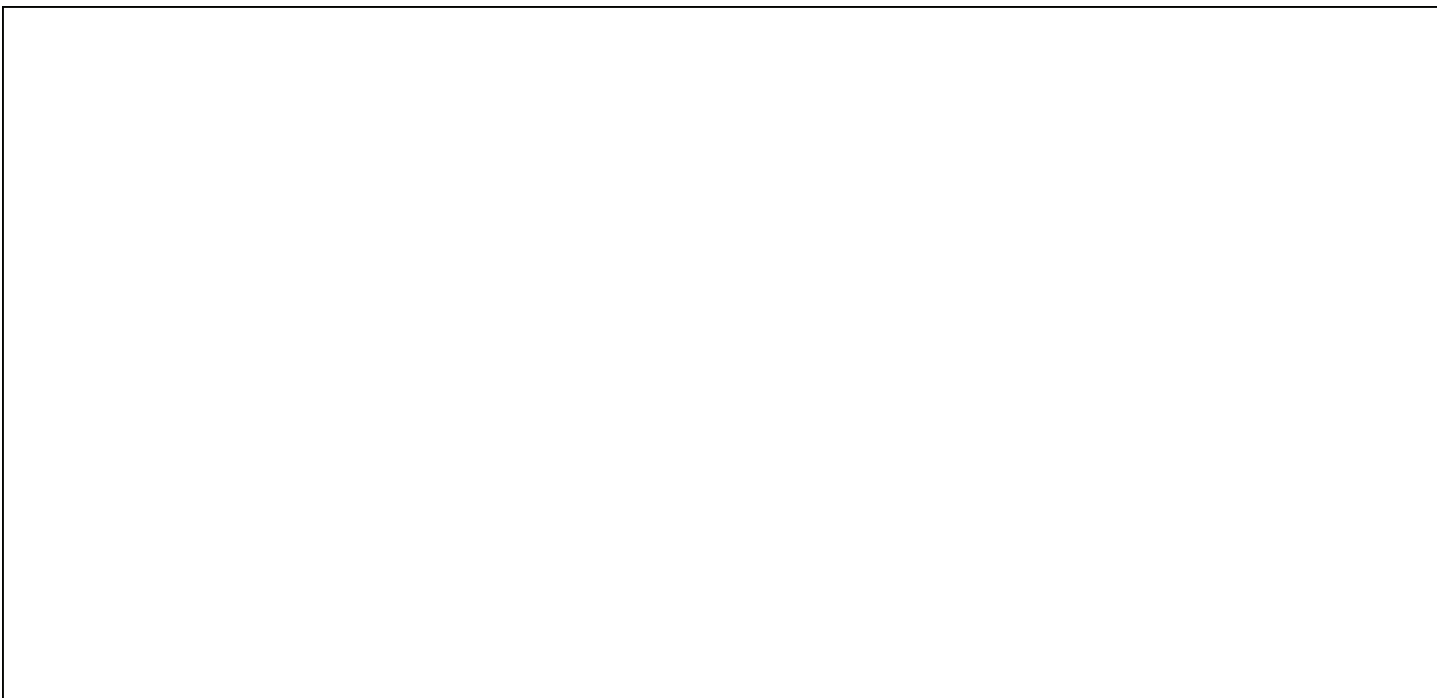


ACTIVITY PAGE: Grades 7-8

Your Place at the Table:

Visual artist Judy Chicago created an art installation called "The Dinner Party." She imagined what place settings might look like for great women from history, created those place settings, and arranged them around a triangular table.

Using the two placemats below, follow Judy Chicago's idea and design a place setting for a character from *Getting Near to Baby* and one for yourself. Think about what kind of plates, cups, napkins, and silverware you would want, and how you would decorate it. Share your design with a neighbor (explain your choices).



ACTIVITY PAGE: Grades 7-8

Special Place Interviews:

Ask your family and friends about the special places they like to retreat to and what they like about those spaces. Put the information in this table. Now think about the spaces in relation to the people. Would you expect them to choose these spaces? Why or why not?