



THE UGLY DUCKLING

Bright Star Touring Theatre Study Guide



About the show:

Hans Christian Andersen, a prolific Danish writer, first published *The Ugly Duckling* on November 11, 1843. He spent a year working on the story, after being inspired by his stay in 1842 at a country estate. Originally titled *The Two Swans*, Andersen didn't want to spoil the end of the story, so he changed the title to *The Ugly Duckling*.

Andersen was born on April 2, 1805. He spent his childhood as an unattractive youth and often called *The Ugly Duckling* his autobiography. The timeless tale quickly sold out its first printing and is known the world over. It has had many different versions, from the Walt Disney cartoons in 1931 & 1939 to operas and musicals - not to mention Bright Star's take on this classic!

Before he died in 1875, Andersen wrote many children's stories, many of which we still cherish today. Some of his more familiar titles include *The Little Mermaid*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Thumbelina*, and *The Princess and the Pea*.

In the Bright Star production of *The Ugly Duckling*, you'll meet Eggbert, who's struggling to find friends and acceptance because he's different. His sister Zelda is the self-proclaimed 'prettiest duck on the pond' and she is not interested in getting to know her *different* brother. Luckily for Eggbert, his loving mother and a hilarious crane - who happens to love all things 1980s - accept him for who he is. Determined to set things right with his sister, he puts together a group of fellow bird friends and sets out to transform Zelda into a friend. When he becomes a beautiful swan, he discovers he has transformed much more than just himself in the process.

About Our Production:

This production is a touring show with Bright Star Theatre. During its run, this production may be seen by audiences in as many as 15 different states! Professional actors join Bright Star from across the United States to tour our shows. In a typical week, they'll perform in 10-13 venues for all kinds of audiences. Our actors travel in minivans, averaging 800-1000 miles of driving *per week*, and they have performed for as many as 10,000 people *in one week*! After the show, our actors are available for you to ask questions about this production and their lives as actors - it's one of the most exciting parts of the Bright Star experience - and we hope you'll have a chance to have your question answered!



Words to Know:

Theatre is a form of storytelling that has been entertaining people for thousands of years. Theatre has its own kind of language. Here are some terms that actors, directors, and other “theatre people” use all the time!

Audition: A hopeful actor will either read, sing or dance (or sometimes all three!) in order for the director to decide which actor she wants to cast in a particular role.

Director: The director reads the script, and tells the actors where they should go and what they should do. Each director has a different way of telling a story from every other director, and this means that each play will be unique from every other play!

Set: All of the scenery on the stage is part of what is called the “set.” It helps to paint a picture of where the story takes place, so it is easier for the audience to follow the play. For *The Ugly Duckling*, our actors use a backdrop, which is the colorful painted background.

Costumes: All of the clothes that are worn onstage by the actors are costumes. The bird outfits, the orange tights, and even the mother duck’s eyeglasses are all part of the costumes!

Props: Anything that an actor carries during the show is a prop. Can you remember any of the props used by the actors in this play?

Rehearsal: Once the cast of the play is set, everyone on the show needs to practice to get ready for the show. This can take weeks, and that gives time for the sets and costumes to be built, and for the actors to learn their lines.

Actors: These are the people that you see on stage. They each have a character to play, and they spend a long time rehearsing before they perform. They have to learn where they should walk, when they should talk, and how their characters should act. It’s a lot of work!

and of course -

Audience: Perhaps the most important element in the show! The audience consists of the people who come out to watch the play. You were our audience for *The Ugly Duckling*!

Seeing the Play:

Attending the theatre is very different than going to the movies or watching television. For one thing, the actors are real people who can hear and see everything that’s happening in the audience. It’s important to know a few rules before seeing a play:

- ★ Please be quiet and respectful during the performance so that those around you can hear what’s happening.
- ★ If something’s funny, it’s okay to laugh!
- ★ If you like the play, be sure to clap at the end.

What else can you add to the list?

Fowl Jokes!

Q: What do you call a crate of ducks?

A: A box of quackers!

Q: What time does a duck wake up?

A: At the quack of dawn!

Q: How do you get down from a duck?

A: A ladder!

Q: What’s a chicken’s least favorite day of the week?

A: Fry-day!

Q: What do you get when a chicken lays an egg on top of the barn?

A: An eggroll!

A duck walks into a pharmacy and asks for a tube of Chapstick.

The cashier says, “Cash or check?” and the duck answers,



“Just put it on my bill!”

Classroom Activities:

Create Your Own *Ugly Duckling* Story!

This activity incorporates creative thinking, writing, and performance!

1. Break students into small groups. Have each group create a version of this story on their own. Replace the traditional duckling and swan characters with other animals - or maybe even humans! The possibilities are endless and the more creative the story, the better the result!
2. Discuss all the things that make a play possible. Have each group think about how costumes, props, and the set could help bring their new story to life. If there's time, try to create some of these props or costume pieces from everyday items!
3. Have each group think about how the animals in their story move. How would you move differently if you were playing a bird? What about a squirrel? Or a cat? Next, add voices for the various animals. Voila! The beginning steps of performing a play have been accomplished! This is the same work our actors do when preparing for a role in a play!
4. Time for performance! Have each group perform their original story. Remind the other students about being good audience members while they watch their friends onstage!

Be an Artist!

This activity incorporates creative thinking, visual arts, and writing!

1. Have students pull out the paper and the crayons or colored pencils. Have them draw their favorite character or scene from the play.
2. Next, have students draw things that were not seen in the play - like the rest of the pond, Crane's family, or perhaps what the characters will look like when they get older. Be creative!
3. Have each student write a short description of the pictures they have drawn. Talk about why the student made his/her specific choices.

Fun Duck Facts:

- Ducks can live from **2-12** years depending on their species!
- Ducks are able to fly within **5-8** weeks of being born!
- A duck's foot has no nerves or blood vessels, so a duck can swim in very cold water without feeling it!
- Ducks can fly up to **70** feet per second or **4,200** ft per minute! (That's about **48** miles per hour! Wow!)
- Once a mother duck begins sitting on her eggs, it takes about **28** days for them to hatch!

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who was bullied in the play? Who did the bullying? What are some good ways to handle being picked on by a bully? Are there things you shouldn't do if you are being bullied? What ways could your school help someone who is being bullied?
2. Do you think it's more important to be beautiful on the inside or the outside? Why?
3. How does it feel to be picked on for something like the way you look or dress? What kind of emotions go along with being targeted by a bully?
4. How are you different from the other students in your class? How are you alike?

