ST. MARY'S 6TH GRADE CHILDREN'S THEATRE
PROGRAM PRESENTS AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT: THE
UNKNOWN SHOT

A Creative Honors Thesis Project (ID 499)

by

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[Signature]

Ball State University
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April 20, 1988

Expected Date of Graduation: May 22, 1988
1987-1988 CHILDREN'S THEATRE PROGRAM
AT ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

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Proposal Submitted

to St. Mary's Principal, Sister Dianne

Children's Theatre Program

Major Emphasis: Creative Dramatics - an opportunity for young people to express themselves in an uninhibiting, informal environment through pantomime, improvisation, movement activities and exploration, "building" a character, songs, games, and exercises. Through creative dramatics they will also experience learning and growth in areas of social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, creativity.

Will also learn about other areas of theatre: short history of theatre, oral interpretation, reader's theatre, using a script, writing a script, make-up, costumes, stage sets and lighting, play production.

I would like to direct the students in two small programs (given for parents and faculty) before March. From March until the end of May I would like to work with the students on a full-length play production to be given for the public (in fulfillment of senior honors thesis requirements).
These programs will allow parents and teachers to see some of the things learned in children's theatre and the individual progress made by each child.
Meeting with Sister Dianne
Sept. 18

St. Mary School Children's Theatre Program

6th Grade Attendance
Aaron Conrad
Kara Moore
Trina Meiser
Jeff Barrett
Natalie Manzanowski
Kim Silbert
Rachel Cost
Tony Yeagle
Chris Scheidler
Kathy Johnson
Kara Vasilek
Emily Hook
Lynne Kerksotf
Kathy Hoskorn
Crystal Lee

Monday 1:00-2:00
Friday 2:00-3:00
Start Sept 21, 1987

Video Equipment Available
Room to be Used: Gym with Stage
Lesson Plans

SEPT 21 - NOV 9
Monday, Sept. 21st
St Mary's School

Children's Theatre

Introductions:
- Get Comfy! Circle
- Names
- Talk about relaxed environment
- Tell agenda: I get to know each other

1. Overview

1. Pass Out M & M's
   a. Name (incl. middle)
   b. Birthday
   c. Number in family

2. Partners
   a. 3 Likes
   b. 3 Dislikes
   c. What do you want to be when you grow up?
   d. If you could be any character in movies or play, who would you be?

3. Introduce Myself
   a. Background Info
   b. College (Inside/Outside); Assignment Fri.
   c. Questions

2. Overview
   a. Discussion
      - Anyone seen/been in play?
      - Why did you like it?
      - Be someone you are not (emphasis)
   b. Read Proposal

3. If Time → Song
I. Collage Demonstration (assign for Monday)
II. Talk about audience respect - when to be quiet!
III. Discussion of theatre - What is it?
   - Has anyone ever seen a play?
   - Been in one?
   - What did you like about seeing/being in one?
      - Spectacle
      - Be someone you're not
      - Opportunity to be creative
IV. Creativity
   - add-on story exercise
   - Get in groups of four, choose a fairy tale, act out but change ending from original
Monday, Sept. 28

St. Mary's
Children's theatre

→ Collage Presentations
→ Perform Fairy Tales Talked About at Previous Class
→ Discuss what Pantomime Is
St. Mary's
Children's Theatre

October 2, 1987

I. Imagery: a creative exercise
   - Close eye; get in relaxed position
   - Walk down path
     - by sea?
     - in woods?
     - in desert?
     - north pole?
   - go over a hill and down other side
   - Far ahead you see someone you know
and you walk towards him/her
   - When you reach this person he/she says something to you - one sentence
   - You reply - one sentence
   - Come back same way you came

Discussion:
   - Describe path
   - What season was it?
   - Describe hill
   - Was it hard/easy to climb?
   - Who was the person?
   - What did he/she say?
   - What did you say?

II. Last two groups perform Fairy Tales

III. Explain Pantomime
   - Discuss Nonverbal Communication
     → Key: convey message to someone (audience)
     → Nonverb. Examples in Daily Life
       (Gestures, Signals, Body Language, Facial Express)
   - Do a Pantomime
     "Breaking into a House"
St. Mary's
Children's Theatre

October 5, 1987

I. Individual Pantomime (Pick from list or Do Own)
   - Planting a Garden
   - Rolling a House
   - Making a Fire
   - Doing Laundry
   - Changing a Diaper
   - Shopping
   - Getting up in Morning
   - Hanging a Picture
   - Baking a Cake
   - Finding/Checking out Library Books
   - Getting the Cookie Jar from Top Shelf
   - Getting a Lime out of Drain
   - Child in Nursery School/Daycare
   - Waiting at Bus Stop
   - Planning a Surprise Party
   - Playing Cards
   - Proposing Marriage

II. Pantomime Game: Lemonade
Childrens Theatre
St. Mary's School

Oct. 9, 1987

I. Pick Partners
   - Think of 2 Ideas for Duo Pantomime
   - Get approved
   - Talk through
   - Practice

II. Perform with Partner

III. Audience Critique
   - Explain Constructive Criticism
   - Suggestions
ST. MARY'S
CHILDREN'S THEATRE

I. Pantomime Exercise: "Freeze"
II. Finish Partner Pantomimes
III. Charades

OCTOBER 12
St. Mary's
Children's Theatre

I. Pantomime 5 senses

- Taste: sweet, sour, bitter etc.
- Smell: stinks, nice
- Touch: soft, hard, pointy
- Hear: loud, soft, sweet
- See: bright, dull...

Emotions

- Happy
- Mad
- Pensive
- Sad
- Excited
- Behildered
- Frightened
- Apathetic
- Surprised

II. Group Problem/Solution Pantomimes

A. Jeff, Rachel, Kim
   You work in an ice cream store; run out of ice cream; all 3 go get more, in the walk-in ice cream freezer; the door locks behind you; how do you get out?

B. Chris, Tony, Kara V., Aaron
   You are going on vacation with your family; in the middle of nowhere you get a flat tire; how do you get out of this mess?

C. Natalie, Kathy J., Emily, Lymon
   You are college students going shopping for 2 weeks worth of food; you load up your carts, check out, but find none of you has brought the money; how do you solve your problem?

D. Trina, Kara M., Kathy H., Crystal
   You are a family; two of you go out for the evening but the other two stay home and go to bed; the first 2 come home,
find out they've forgotten their key and climb through a window; the 2 who are in bed think it's robbers; what happens?

III Practice with Group

III If time, present them
St. Mary's
Children's Theatre

October 19

I. Present Pantomimes (Group)
II. Play "Freeze"
III. Character Analysis
   Name
   Age
   Social Class
   Time Period
   Family (Relationship w/ them)
   Where Live
   Personality Traits
   Physical Traits
   Extra Inf.
I. Pass out Group Pantomime Evaluations
II. Explain Improvisation
III. Play “Freeze” with talking
IV. Practice Group Pantomimes as Planned
    Improvis (with talking)
V. Present them if Time
St. Mary's
Children's Theatre

October 30

I. Present Improvs!
II. If time, talk about Christmas Show

Teacher's Institute
No class Oct 30 & Nov 2
St. Mary's  
Children's Theatre  
November 6, 1987

I. Announce Christmas Play and Explain Basic Plot and Characters "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever"

II. Read Through

III. Improvisations

A. Each person write a noun on a piece of paper
   - Groups of 4; each draws 1 piece of paper
   - Make up scene incorporating those 4 nouns

B. Park Bench
St. Mary's
Children's Theatre

November 9, 1987

I. Pass out scripts
II. Announce Cast
III. Read through
IV. Character Analysis

Name
Age
Social Class
Where live
Family (who and relationship with each other)
Personality traits
Physical traits
Time Period
Extra Info
Personal Reaction to the Program

Sept. 21: my first day with the kids was a little tougher than I had expected. The kids were like animals that had just been let out of a cage. The unrestricted environment of the gym was a little too much for them to handle. I noticed this right away and decided that the group should meet on the stage so I could attempt to keep track of all fifteen. I was wrong... 6th graders can go to real extremes even under the constraints of a small stage: hiding in the curtains, foolishly with props and old scenery from past productions, running, yelling, etc. They knew that I am a college student and they thought that fact was worth taking advantage. I tried to use some of the discipline techniques I had utilized for two years as a summer camp director. Again I was wrong. I chalked up my frustration to the idea that it was just the first day and we weren't used to the open environment and each other. But it didn't get better! The kids had no respect for anyone who was speaking or performing - including me. My evaluation of the group in a sweeping generalization? Fifteen spoiled children from well-off families, bright, intelligent, creative - the girls' hormones are just kicking and the boys associate EVERYTHING with Rambo and cold-blooded murder.
For the first few sessions I diligently tried to conduct a theatre class but with very little success. Finally on October 12th I talked to the principal and asked for suggestions. She offered to sit in on our next session, which I really appreciated. On October 16th Sister Dianne joined our class. In the course of the hour she took 13 of the 15 out into the hall (five of which never returned that day), and talked to about proper conduct. Ever since then, it's been cake! 110% improvement! Of course we still have our minor problems, but nothing I can't deal with.

It is so much easier to see the creativity and all-around talent these kids possess when they are cooperating. The exercises and games we've tried have been successful except for “lemonade,” which will next time be done outside! The concepts on which we have had to work hardest so far have been the following:

- Details in pantomime → remembering to keep doors and walls and furniture in the same place throughout a scene; to put something down or continue to hold it if you pick it up (it's amazing how many things disappear into thin air!) etc.

- When we switched from pantomimes to talking improvisations
It was hard to make the transition to normal, natural conversations — the kids tended to talk through everything. "Now we are going to the check-out counter; now we are getting out our money...."

"We better close the door - Slam!"

It's getting better though!

The script I've chosen for a small Christmas production is "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" adapted from the book by Barbara Robinson. The kids love it, but wanted to pick their own roles. I chose to give out random roles (drawn from a hat) in order to avoid competition. For my thesis project I plan to have them audition for a part. I am very excited about the Christmas show and I think it will go over well.

I have required a few written assignments along with their performance work. I am evaluating them by +, V+, V, V-, + instead of letter grades.
Winter Quarter
Theatre 496
THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

By Barbara Robinson
Adapted By Deb Lotz and Elaine Kloser

Joanie: The Herdmans were absolutely the worst kids in the history of the world. They lied and stole and smoked cigars (even the girls) and they talked dirty and hit little kids and cussed out their teachers and took the name of the Lord in vain and set fire to Fred Shoemaker's broken-down toolhouse.

Maggie: They were just so all around awful you could hardly believe they were real: Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Claude, Ollie, and Gladys--six skinny, stringy-haired kids, all alike except for being different sizes and having different black-and-blue places where they had clonked each other.

Molly: The Herdmans pretty much looked after themselves. Ralph looked after Imogene, and Imogene looked after Leroy, and Leroy looked after Claude, and so on down the line. The Herdmans were like most big families--the big ones taught the little ones everything they knew...and the proof of that was that the meanest Herdman of all was Gladys, the youngest.

Joanie: It was my brother, Charlie's fault that the Herdmans showed up in church.

Charlie: Oh, go on and take it. I don't care. I get all the dessert I want in Sunday School.

Leroy: What kind of dessert?

Charlie: Chocolate cake, and candybars and cookies and Kool-Aid. We get refreshments all the time, all we want.

Leroy: You're a liar.

Lydia: Leroy was right. We get jelly beans at Easter and punch and cookies on Children's Day, and that was it.

Charlie: We get ice cream too, and doughnuts and popcorn balls.

Leroy: Who gives it to you?

Charlie: The minister.
Molly: Of course, that was the wrong thing to tell Herdmans if you wanted them to stay away. And sure enough, the very next Sunday there they were, slouching into Sunday School, eyes peeled for refreshments. (Herdmans slink in, sit in back row)

Ralph: Where do you get the cake?

Mr. Grady: Well, son, I don't know about any cake, but they're collecting the food packages out in the kitchen.

Sally: What he meant was the canned stuff we brought in every year as a Thanksgiving present for the Orphan's Home. It was just our bad luck that the Herdmans had picked that Sunday to come, because when they saw all the cans of spaghetti and beans and grape drink and peanut butter, they figured there might be some truth to what Charlie said about refreshments.

Charlie: So they stayed. They didn't sing any hymns or say any prayers, but they did make a little money, because I saw Imogene snake a handful of coins out of the collection basket when it went past her. (Mime passing basket down the row--Imogene mimes taking some coins and stuffing them in a pocket--gets a smug look on her face.)

At the end of the morning, Mr. Grady came to every class and made an announcement.

Mr. G.: We'll start rehearsals soon for our Christmas pageant, and next week after the service, we'll all gather in the back of the church to decide who will play the main roles. But, of course, we want every boy and girl in our Sunday School to take part in the pageant, so be sure to let your parents know that you'll be staying a little later next Sunday.

(Imogene punches Joanie in the ribs)

Imogene: What's a pageant?

Joanie: It's a play.

Imogene: What's the play about?

Joanie: It's about Jesus.

Imogene: Everything here is.

Joanie: I figured she didn't care much about the Christmas pageant. I was wrong. After church the next week we all filed into the back seven pewx, along with two or three Sunday School teachers who were supposed to keep everyone quiet.
Mother: Now you little children in the cradle room and primary class will be our angels. You'll like that, won't you?

Kids: Yes. (Not enthusiastic; with boredom, kind of all said at different times)

Mother: The older boys and girls will be shepherds and guests at the inn and members of the choir. Now, we need Mary and Joseph, the three Wise Men, and the Angel of the Lord. They aren't very hard parts, but they're very important parts, so those people must absolutely come to every rehearsal. (Kids getting restless) Now, we all know what kind of person Mary was. She was quiet and gentle and kind, and the little girl who plays Mary should try to be that kind of person. I know that many of you would like to be Mary in our pageant, but of course we can only have one Mary. So I'll ask for volunteers, and then we'll all decide together which girl should get the part. (Imogene raises her hand--Mother pauses looking around, sees her hand) Did you have a question, Imogene?

Imogene: No. I want to be Mary. (Look to Ralph) And Ralph wants to be Joseph.

Ralph: Yeh.

Mother: (totally shocked--pauses--gains composure) Well,(clearing her throat type deal--trying to fing a way out) we want to be sure that everyone has a chance. Does anyone else want to volunteer for Joseph? (No response--Mother waits forone--none) All right. Ralph will be our Joseph. Now does anyone else want to volunteer for Mary? (Mother looks around trying to catch someone's eye--Anyone's eye) Joanie, molly, Alice? Don't you want to volunteer this year?

Alice: (In a voice almost too soft to hear--slouched down in her seat) No, I don't want to.

Joanie: No one volunteered to be Wise Men either, except Leroy, Claude, and Ollie Herdman. So there was my mother, stuck with a pageant full of Herdmans in the main roles. There was one Herdman left over, and one main role left over, and you didn't have to be very smart to figure out that Gladys was going to be the Angel of the Lord.

Gladys: What do I have to do?

Mother: The Angel of the Lord was the one who brought the good news to the shepherds.
Lydia: Right away all the shepherds began to wiggle around in their seats, figuring that any good news Gladys would bring would come with a smack in the teeth.

Sam: (Raises his hand) I can't be a shepherd. We're going to Philadelphia.

Mother: Why didn't you say so before?

Sam: I forgot.

Maggie: (Raises hand) My mother doesn't want me to be a shepherd.

Mother: Why not?

Maggie: I don't know. She just said don't be a shepherd. (Everyone giggles)

Sally: (Shouts) Gladys Herdman hits too hard.

Mother: Why, Gladys isn't going to hit anybody! What an idea! The angel just visits the shepherds in the fields and tells them Jesus is born.

Sally: (Mutter) ...and hits'em.

Joanie: Of course she was right. You could just picture Gladys whamming shepherds left and right, but Mother said that was perfectly ridiculous.

The next Wednesday we started rehearsals. The Herdman go there ten minutes late, sliding into the room like a bunch of outlaws about to shoot up a saloon. (Herdman slink in) When Leroy passed Charlie, he knuckled him behind the ear, and one little primary girl yelled as Gladys went by. But Mother said she was going to ignore everything but blood, and since neither were bleeding, nothing happened.

Mother: And here's the Herdman family. We're glad to see you all.

Sally: That was probably the biggest lie said right out loud in the church. Imogene smiled—the Herdman smile, we called it, sly and sneaky—and there they sat, the closest thing to criminals we knew about, and they were going to represent the best and most beautiful. No wonder everybody was so worked up.

Mother: Now you're angels, you're shepherds, you're guests at the inn...(starts to separate kids)
Leroy:  (butts in) Who were the shepherds? Where did they come from?

Claude:  What was the inn? What's an inn?

(Kids start whispering back and forth)

Charlie:  It's like a motel where people go to spend the night.

Claude:  What people? Jesus?

Alice:  (mutter) Oh honestly! (Tired, resignedly) Jesus wasn't born yet! Mary and Joseph went there.

Ralph:  Why?

Imogene:  What happened first? (at Mother) Begin at the beginning!

Mother:  I'll begin by reading the Christmas story from the Bible. (picks up Bible--flips to the correct page) Let's see.... Here it is...Joseph and Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child....

Ralph:  PREGNANT!

(Big kids giggle--little kids pester them to find out what was so funny--Mother grabs a blackboard pointer and hammers it on the floor)

Mother:  That's enough, Ralph.

(Joanie pinches Alice--Alice squeals and Mother separates and puts Joanie by Imogene--Imogene doesn't even notice her.)

Imogene:  Shut up. I want to hear her.

(Joanie looks in disbelief)

Herdmans:  (yell) What's that?

Joanie:  They would always yell whenever they didn't understand the language, and when Mother read about there being no room at the inn, Imogene's jaw dropped and she sat up in her seat.

Imogene:  Not even for Jesus?

Mother:  Well now, after all, nobody knew the baby was going to turn out to be Jesus.
Ralph: You said Mary knew. Why didn't she tell them?

Imogene: I would have told them! Boy, would I have told them! What was the matter with Joseph, that he didn't tell them? (mumble) Her pregnant and everything.

Leroy: What was that they laid the baby in? That Manger... is that like a bed? Why would they have a bed in a barn?

Mother: That's just the point. They didn't have a bed in the barn, so Mary and Joseph had to use whatever there was. What would you do if you had a new baby and no bed to put it in?

Imogene: We put Gladys in a bureau drawer.

Mother: (Surprised, but not too) Well, there you are. You didn't have a bed for Gladys so you had to use something else.

Ralph: Oh, we had a bed, only Ollie was still in it and she wouldn't get out. She didn't like Gladys. (elbows Ollie) Remember how you didn't like Gladys? (other kids astonished--whispering--giggling)

Mother: (trying to regain control) Anyway, Mary and Joseph used the manger. A manger is a large wooden feeding trough for animals.

Claude: What were the wadded up clothes?

Mother: (looks confused) The what?

Claude: You read about it--"she wrapped him up in wadded up clothes."

Mother: (sighs) Swaddling clothes. Long ago, people used to wrap their babies very tightly in big pieces of material, so they couldn't move around. It made the babies feel cozy and comfortable.

Joanie: (to audience) I thought it just made the babies mad. Till then, I didn't know what swaddling clothes were either, and they sounded terrible; so I wasn't too surprised when Imogene got all excited about that.

Imogene: You mean they tied him up and put him in a feedbox? Where was the Child Welfare?

Mother: (ignoring her) And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone around about them, and---

Gladys: SHAZAM! (fings her arms out, smacking the kid next to her)

Mother: What?
Joanie: Mother never read Amazing Comics

Gladys: Out of the black of night, with horrible vengeance, the Mighty Marvo--

Mother: I don't know what you're talking about, Gladys. This is the Angel of the Lord who comes to the shepherds in the fields and--

Gladys: Out of nowhere right? In the balck of night, right?+

Mother: (unhappily) Well...in a way.

(Gladys sits back down, looking very smug and satisfied, as if it were the only part of the story she related to)

Mother: (continues) Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, behold there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem saying--

Ralph: That's you Leroy (Mother looks sick and tired of being interrupted) and Claude and Ollie. So pay attention.

Ollie: What does it mean, Wise Men? Were they like school teachers?

Claude: No, dumbbell. It means like President of the United States.

Mother: (surprised, pleased) Why, that's very close, Claude. Actually, they were kings.

Imogene: Well, it's about time. Maybe they'll tell the innkeeper where to get off and get the baby out of the barn.

Mother: (reading) They saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down and worshipped him, and presented him with gold, frankencense, and myrrh.

Leroy: What's that stuff?

Mother: Precious oils and frgrants resins.

Imogene: Oil! What kind of a cheap king hands out oil for a present? You get better presents from firemen!

Maggie: Then we came to King Herod, and the Herdmans never heard of him either, so we had to explain that it was Herod who sent the Wise Men to find the baby Jesus.

Ollie: Was it him that sent the crummy presents?

Mother: Oh, it was much worse than that. He planned to have the baby Jesus put to death.
Imogene  He just got born and already they're out to kill him!

Molly  The Herdmans wanted to know all about Herod—what he looked like, and how rich he was, and whether he really fought wars with people.

Claude  He must have been the main king if he could make the other kings do what he wanted them to.

Leroy  If I was a king, I wouldn't let some other king push me around.

Claude  You couldn't help it if he was the main king.

Leroy  I'd go be king somewhere else.

Lydia  They were really interested in Herod, and I figured they liked him. He was so mean he could have been their ancestor Herod Herdman.

Leroy  Who's going to be Herod in this Play?

Mother  We don't show Herod in our pageant.

Maggie  Then they get all mad. They wanted somebody to be Herod so they could beat up on him. I couldn't understand the Herdmans. You would have thought the Christmas story came right out of the FBI files, they got so involved in it—wanting a bloody end to Herod, worrying about Mary having her baby in a barn, and calling the Wise Men a bunch of dirty spies. And they left the first rehearsal arguing about whether Joseph should have set fire to the inn, or just chased the innkeeper into the next country.

Joanie  On the night of the pageant, Mother was so nervous she forgot to make dinner.

Father  When it's all over, we'll go someplace and have hamburgers.

Mother  When it's all over with, I may want to go hide someplace. We've never once gone through the whole thing. I don't know what's going to happen. It may be the first Christmas pageant in history where Joseph and the Wise Men get in a fight, and Mary runs away with the baby.

Molly  But nothing seemed very different at first. There was the usual mess all over the place—baby angels getting poked in the eye by other baby angels' wings and grumpy shepherds stumbling over their bathrobes.

Joanie  The spotlight swooped back and forth and up and down till it made you sick at your stomach to look at it, and as usual, whoever was playing the piano pitched
"Away in a Manger" much too high so we could hardly hear it let alone sing it. My father says "Away in a Manger" always starts out sounding like a closetful of mice.

Charlie

While we sang "Away in a Manger" we lit candles all around the church and the spotlight came on to be the star. After that we sang two verses of "O, Little Town of Bethlehem" while Mary and Joseph came in from a side door. (kids hum "O, Little Town of Bethlehem") Only they didn’t come right away. So we hummed and hummed and hummed which is boring and also very hard, and before long doesn’t sound like anything at all--more like an old refrigerator.

Alice

(to Joanie, whispering) I knew something like this would happen. They didn’t come at all! We won’t have any Mary and Joseph--and now what are we supposed to do?

Sally

I guess we would have gone on humming until we turned blue, but we didn’t have to. (Ralph and Imogene enter)

Ralph and Imogene were there all right, only for once they didn’t come through the door pushing each other out of the way.

Joanie

(Ralph and Imogene pause--look around--scared to death)

They just stood there for a minute as if they weren’t sure they were in the right place. They looked like the people you see on the six o’clock news--refugees, sent to wait in some strange ugly place, with all their boxes and sacks around them. (Ralph and Imogene walk to the front)

It suddenly occurred to me that this is just the way it must have been for the real Holy Family, stuck away in a barn by people who didn’t care much what happened to them. They couldn’t have been very neat and tidy either, but more like THIS Mary and Joseph--Imogene’s veil was cockeyed as usual, and Ralph’s hair stuck out all around his ears. Imogene had the baby doll but she wasn’t carrying it the way she was supposed to, cradled in her arms. She had it slung up over her shoulder, and before she put it in the manger she thumped it twice on the back.

Alice

(gasps, whispers) I don’t think it’s very nice to burp the baby Jesus as if He had colic. Do you think He could have had colic?

Joanie

(to Alice) I don’t know why not (to audience) and I didn’t. He could have had colic, or been fussy, or hungry like any other baby. After all, that was the whole point of Jesus-- that He didn’t come down on a cloud like something out of Amazing Comics, but that He was born and lived.... a real person.

(Gladys enters from back of angel choir, pushing her way through)
Joanie Next came Gladys, from behind the angel choir, pushing people out of the way and stepping on everone's feet. Since Gladys was the only one in the pageant with anything to say, she made the most of it....

Gladys Hey! Unto you a child is born!

Joanie And all the shepherds trembled, sore afraid--of Gladys mainly, but it looked good anyway. We got a little rest then, while the boys sang, "We Three Kings of Orient Are" and everybody in the audience shifted around to watch the Wise Men march up the aisle.

Alice (whisper) What have they got?

Charlie I don't know, but whatever it is it must be heavy--Leroy almost dropped it.

Maggie He didn't have his frankincense jar either, and Claude and Ollie didn't have anything although they were supposed to bring the gold and myrrh.

Alice I knew this would happen. I bet it's something awful.

Molly Like what?

Alice Like...a burnt offering. You know the Herdmans.

Joanie (to audience) Well, they did burn things, but they ahdn't burned this yet. It was a ham--and right away I knew where it came from. My father was on the charitable works committee--they give away food baskets at Christmas, and this was the Herdmans food-basket ham. It still had the ribbon around it saying Merry Christmas.

Alice I bet they stole that!

Sally They did not. I came from thier food basket, and they want to give away their own ham, I guess they do it.

Joanie But even if the Herdmans didn't like ham--that was Alice's next idea--they had never before in their lives given anything away except lumps on the head. So you had to be impressed. Leroy dropped the ham in front of the manger. It looked funny to see a ham there instead of the fancy bath-salt jar we always used for the myrrh and frankincense. And they went down and sat in the only space that was left. While we sang "What Child Is This?" the Wise Men were supposed to confer among themselves and then leave by a different door, so everyone would understand that they were going home by an alternate route. But the Herdmans forgot, or didn't want to or something, because they didn't confer and they didn't leave either. They just sat there, and there wasn't a thing
anyone could do about it.

Alice They're ruining the whole thing!

Lydia They are supposed to have come a long way. You wouldn't expect them just to show up, hand over the ham and leave!

JoANIE Usually by the time we got to "Silent Night", which was always the last carol, I was fed up with the whole thing and couldn't wait for it to be over. But I didn't feel that way this time. I almost wished the pageant would go on, with the Herdmans in charge, to see what else they would do that was different. Maybe the Wise Men would tell Mary about their problem with Herod, and she would tell them to go back and lie their heads off. Or Joseph and Mary might ask the Wise Men to take the Christ Child with them, figuring that no one would think to look there. Everyone had been waiting all this time for the Herdmans to do something absolutely unexpected, and sure enough, that was what happened. (pause) Imogene Herdman was crying.

Well, it was the best Christmas pageant we ever had. Everybody said so, but nobody seemed to know why. When it was over, people stood around the lobby of the church talking. There was something special, everyone said, but they couldn't put their finger on what. And that was the funny thing about it all. For years I'd thought about the wonder of Christmas, and the mystery of Jesus's birth, and never really understood it. But now, because of the Herdmans, it didn't seem so mysterious after all.

When Imogene had asked what the pageant was about I told her it was about Jesus, but that was just part of it. It was about a new baby and his parents who were in a lot of trouble. No money, no place to go, no doctor, nobody they knew.

Father I guess that's everything. All over now. It was quite a pageant. (to Mother) What's that you're carrying?

Mother: It's the ham. They wouldn't take it back. They wouldn't take any candy either. But, Imogene did ask for a set of the Bible-story pictures, and she took out the Mary picture and said it was exactly
right, whatever that means.

Joanie: I think it meant that no matter how she herself was, Imogene liked the idea of the Mary in the picture—all pink and white and pure-looking, as if she never washed dishes or cooked supper or did anything at all except have Jesus on Christmas Eve.

But as far as I'm concerned, Mary is always going to look a lot like Imogene Herdman—sort of nervous and bewildered, but ready to clobber anyone who laid a hand on her baby. And the Wise Men are always goin' to be Leroy and his brother, bearing the ham.

When we came out of the church that night (the four walk across the stage, ambling, looking up at the sky) it was cold and clear, with crunchy snow underfoot and bright stars overhead. And I thought about the Angel of the Lord—Gladys with her skinny legs and her dirty sneakers sticking out from under her robe, yelling at all of us everywhere:

Gladys: Hey! Unto you a child is born!

The End
Reader's Theatre Presentation: The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson
Adapted by Deb Lotz and Elaine Kloser
St. Mary's Elementary School - 6th Grade

We only had 8 - one hour sessions to put together our presentation:

Nov. 13th - introduced the script and read the story to the kids. They all liked it and were very excited about putting it on. Each had a definite idea of whom he/she wanted to be, but to avoid competition and due to lack of time, I told them that I would draw names and assign parts at our next session.

Nov. 16th - Assigned parts and we all read through the script together. A few kids agreed to trade parts and in the end all we content with the parts they had (An unexpected pleasure). I told them that if they had a smaller part now, they would have a larger one in the spring and then went on to talk of the old theatre motto: "There are no small parts, only small actors." We discussed many of the characters personalities. I gave them the assignment of reading the play once a day over Thanksgiving break so they could become familiar with it (Knowing full well they'd be lucky to read through the whole thing once). The big question was, "Why do we have to read the whole thing? Can't we just go over our parts?" So, that was followed by a discussion of how everything in a play fits together to make a whole - each part of the play affects every other part of the play... etc!

Nov. 30th - Started blocking on the stage and assigned character analysis for Dec 4th. Talked about Readers Theatre and using a script. The kids didn't seem to be keen on using scripts for a "real" performance, so we went more in-depth on how scripts could be utilized as props such as a diary, music book, clipboard and Bible in the production.
Dec. 4th - Shared character analysis with each other, emphasizing background and relationships with other characters. Also continued blocking. The kids had a hard time attaining any sense of depth in their character analysis - they were focusing on the surface qualities and couldn't seem to get past that. Only one girl really delved into her character and that was because she had just read the novel by Barbara Robinson which provides a lot of insight into the life and personality of each character. I encouraged the rest of the class to take turns reading the book.

Dec. 7th - Finished initial blocking and then ran through the whole play and did some reblocking. We talked about props we would need and everyone agreed to bring in something. We also decided on simple costumes that each person could find at home.

Dec. 11th - Ran through the entire production while being videotaped. I was hoping that by watching this at the next session the kids could see that they should quit goofing off and try to take things seriously or it would be a disaster. Prior to the video-taping, they were considering this whole ordeal a recess time and were not taking directions very well. But when they saw the camera recording them, an entire evolution took place. They all took the session seriously and jumped on the few who didn't. Much improvement took place!

Dec. 14th - Viewed part of the video-taped and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their performances up to this point. I gave everyone a chance to comment and each did a pretty good job at criticizing constructively. Afterwards we ran thru the first ½ of the play using props and costumes.

Dec. 16th - Ran through the last ½ of the play and then had a final dress rehearsal. If it were my choice, I would've had one more dress rehearsal to polish it off by, but NO TIME!! Oh well!

Dec. 18th - We gave our performance for St. Marys and for a few parents who could get off work. Things seem to go smoothly for the most part although this was the first time we used microphones. They were extremely excited as well as extremely nervous, but they
Seemed to use that nervousness in a beneficial way. A few little mistakes happened, as expected, but I think both performers and audience alike enjoyed it. (The kids gave me a cute sweatshirt that they had all signed when it was over!)
I decided to have the kids evaluate the first half of the program— I was really looking for some feedback on the following issues:

1. Evaluation of program as a whole
2. Improvements for the class; suggestions
3. Evaluation of me as a teacher
4. Evaluation of [The Best Christmas] Pageant [questions]
   5. What would be a better form of discipline to use for those who constantly disrupt the class?
6. If our class could do any play, musical or non-musical, what would be your top 3 choices?

I told them not to put their names on them so they could be honest in their responses. [Evaluations follow]→
1. I think it is fun except for the boys don't act mature or cooperate to get things done.
2. I would like for us to tour N. Y. & find out really about acting is about. And when the boys & don't act mature send them out like today.
3. I think you are a good teacher except for you could be a little stricter. They think they are free of doing anything because they think they can take advantage of you. And they get gross and goofy. I really like you. I think it could of been better if everyone didn't cooperate. They say they couldn't remember their lines but that is because they really DID NOT TRY!

Plus for parts to the play we should have tried out for it.
5. A good form of discipline is to send them back and let others in, because I know people who would like to be in too. I would bahave!

6. Musical movies like "Grease" or "Oklahoma", and that would include everyone.
   1. Grease
   2. Oklahoma
   3. *Like Father Like Son*
1. I truly think that drama class is really fun! I liked being up on the stage, and I liked doing all the other little bits we did. The only thing I don't like is how they don't cooperate with the class that much.

2. I would like to go on a small tour (Claine's Framed) and think that it would be fun to work with makeup and scenery, and I would like to try on another play.

3. I think that you are a very funny drama teacher and I'm glad that I am in your class.

4. I think that our play is a good one. It was fun to do, and I think that
the audience liked it.

5. I think that maybe more people should see and enjoy good entertainment. If it got any worse you could send them to Siberia.

6. An Agatha Christie murder mystery please, or 2, and take Father Hubbard.
1. Drama class is usually fun. I like to do plays and to practice for them. I like to do the little plays we do and solo.

2. I would like to go to California, but I doubt we will. I would like to go to a play. Two improvements I don't think there are any except that some of the other kids are too loud. If we do a play I would like to be the person to put on people's makeup on. That's my first choice, and then if I can't do that, I'd like to do scenery. I would like to do a movie that has special effects, like movies or something and keep it on a recorder.

3. I think you really need that. That's the thing that would really make you look better. It's if you budget well so much.
If you yell but not scared
knew, like you said just
give the people that are
talking me warning and
then send them out of
the class

If I liked all play, it was
fun to do and practice
for. I think that how
the marano's parts
were spit were okay. I
would like to have trips.

Musicals are what I
like best.
The plays I would
like to do (in this order)
I guess.
A murder one.
B. annie
1. I think drama is fun, but there are too many people butted in during talks.

2. I'd like to see plays, or go places. Maybe go to rehearsals to see how the director handles problems. I also would like to make a lot of scenery. I also would like the boys to go back to the room.

3. I think your fun, and your one of my favorite teachers. But BE STRICT!!

4. I think our play was good except for the few mistakes by some people.

5. An Agatha Christmas
   Grease
   Oklahoma!
1. I like drama class very much, but I also wish I could have art. I don't like to everyone butting in, in whatever someone else has to say.

2. I would like to see the boys act more mature. I would like to get involved in make-up for people to do props & scenery. I would like to go places.

3. You are one of my favorite teachers. Your method of teaching seems different, but I like it.

4. I think our first play turned out good. I would
like to play a serious part.

5. I think you should make Tony, Jeff, Aaron, Chris, Lyman, and Kara step up or slip out.

6. I need musical of the movie Grease

1. Grease
2. OKLA homz
3. Like FATHER Like Son
1. I like drama because it's fun.
   I don't like drama because there is no violence in our plays.
2. I like bloody war ending.
3. I like the way she thickens.
4. Cheap, to money lines to rember!
5. a party as a reward or sent to room.
6. a bloody war story. Non-musical