



Flora and Ulysses
Teacher's Guide

Tennessee Theatre Standards:

4.T.R1.A: Identify artistic choices made in a theatrical work through participation and observation.

4.T.R2.A: Compare and contrast multiple personal experiences when participating in or observing a theatrical work.

Tennessee ELA Standards:

4.RL.KID.3 - Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in a text.

4.SL.PK1.4 - Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details.

4.SL.CC.1 - Prepare for collaborative discussions on 4th grade level topics and texts; engage effectively with varied partners, building on others' ideas and expressing one's own ideas clearly.

Clear Learning Target:

Students will analyze and articulate their observations of character development and artistic choices in the stage adaptation of *Flora and Ulysses*.

Launch: Before the trip

- Begin with a collaborative discussion of students' prior experiences with theatre.
 - What do you think makes a performance exciting?
- Continue with a brief discussion about what students know about theatre and adaptations.
 - How do you think a book might change when it becomes a play?
- Explain theatre etiquette
 - Speak softly before the performance starts.
 - Stay seated and quiet during the show.
 - Show appreciation through applause at the end.
- Show a short video clip of a theatrical performance to inspire excitement.

- <https://shorturl.at/sa5lk>
- Read a brief summary of Flora and Ulysses aloud to the class. (see attached).

Essential Questions:

How can a story be adapted for the stage?

Key discussion points:

- Theatre Etiquette - The importance of being respectful, quiet, and attentive during the performance.
- Character Traits - Understanding how characters are developed through actions, dialogue, and interactions.
- Artistic Choices - Explain how theatre uses various elements (set, lighting, sound) to tell a story. Identify how the director and actors convey emotions and themes through the performance.
- Misconception - Students may think that the play will be exactly like the book. Clarify that adaptations often change elements to fit the stage.

Explore - After the trip

As a class, complete a character map using Flora as an example.

- What are her traits? (brave, imaginative)
- What motivates her? (desire to protect Ulysses)
- What does Flora do?
- How does Ulysses influence Flora's decisions?

Students will then complete their own character maps for Ulysses and/or one supporting character, providing examples from the performance.

- Include specific details from the performance.
- Encourage creativity in their presentations, such as using drawings or symbols to represent traits.
- Guiding Questions:
 - What does your character want?
 - How do they change throughout the story?
 - How do their actions affect other characters?

Small Group Discussion

- Students will discuss, in partners or small groups, their favorite character from the performance, describing why they connected with that character.
 - Students will share their character maps.
 - Students will discuss what they noticed about actors' choices during the performance.

Summarize - Whole group discussion

- Students will share with the class one character trait they found interesting and why.

Extension Activities

Act it out!

- Choose a scene or scenes from the book. Have a variety of students play different roles.
- Set the scene, talk through what happens in the scene, get everyone in place, and call "action!".
- Students act out the scene using words and movement.

Tableau – creating a silent frozen picture that represents a significant moment in a story. This is like a living photograph.

- Students use expressive faces, body poses, and positioning of themselves to create a visual image of a circumstance found in the text.
- This shows how actors use their faces and bodies to communicate, how characters in this circumstance would likely think and feel and how incorporating actions and expressions not directly stated in the text may help tell the story, even in a silent, frozen picture.

About the Organizations



SoLit, formerly known as Southern Lit Alliance, has become an essential literary arts hub for Chattanooga. Begun by a grant from the Ford Foundation in 1952, the organization has evolved over the years from various art programs to a focus on literature and writing. We deliver literary arts experiences that engage young people and adults in a life-long love of reading, writing, and community conversation. SoLit shares stories that matter, serving over 5,000 adults and children each year through literature festivals, author visits, writing workshops, writing contests for children, and outreach to area jails and underserved communities.

In the last decade, research has found a change in how our brains comprehend information after the advent of the internet, making concentration and critical thinking more difficult as we constantly scan information. Fortunately, the benefits of reading literature and writing are far-reaching and include improved critical thinking skills, empathy for others, vocabulary, writing ability, imagination, and cultural literacy. Literature is vital to our community and has the incomparable power to inspire, connect, and uplift. As the internet and social media have garnered a large part of our time, it is more important than ever to reach the next generation with the power of the literary arts.

Our Mission

To deliver literary arts experiences that engage young people and adults in a life-long love of reading, writing and community conversation.

Our Vision

Engage everyone in our community as passionate readers and writers.



ArtsBuild's mission is to build a stronger community through the arts.

Since 1969, ArtsBuild has served as a catalyst for the arts in our community, investing more than \$76 million in arts organizations, arts programs, and arts education. Throughout the past 52 years, the vision of our founders to build a stronger community through the arts has remained consistent. That vision includes creating access to the arts. We do this through grant-making, arts education initiatives, and arts advocacy. Imagine! Is an arts education initiative created by ArtsBuild in 2010 which provides a systematic introduction to the arts for Hamilton County elementary school students through performances and exhibits presented by several local arts organizations. These arts experiences are designed to enhance learning in the classroom. Teachers have access to educational support materials and curriculum that has been designed according to state education standards and is focused on teaching students about the creative process. Countless studies have shown that arts instruction, as well as integrating the arts into all subjects, strengthens a student's academic ability.

Flora and Ulysses Summary

Set in a suburb town of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Flora Belle Buckman, a self-proclaimed cynic, spends her time reading comic books and struggling to understand her parents' recent divorce. One day, she sees the neighbor, Tootie Tickham, accidentally suck up a squirrel in her powerful new vacuum cleaner. In a recurring section of Flora's comic books, Terrible Things Can Happen to You, Flora has read how to perform CPR.

She pulls the squirrel from the vacuum, resuscitates him and names him Ulysses. She believes his near-death experience may have turned him into a superhero. She tries to squelch her sense of hopefulness about this, however, remembering that her comic books recommend always observing rather than hoping. Hoping, the books say, may cause you to waste valuable times you could use to take action.

The squirrel develops some unusual skills upon coming back to life. He lifts heavy objects, including the vacuum cleaner. He enjoys feelings, such as his deep love for Flora, and he is able to think of things other than food. He can understand what Flora tells him, and he responds by nodding. He can even type and write poetry.

Tootie and her quirky great-nephew, William Spiver (who believes he is suffering from temporary trauma-induced blindness and insists on being called by his full name), are intrigued by Ulysses. While they are all at Flora's house, Mrs. Buckman (Flora's mother) sees Ulysses for the first time. He is climbing up a precious lamp that she calls Mary Ann.

Flora believes that her mother prizes Mary Ann (the lamp) above everything else, including Flora herself. Flora's dad comes to get Flora for a visit. Mrs. Buckman pulls him aside and demands he put the squirrel in a sack and beat it over the head before burying it. Flora realizes that if Ulysses is a superhero, then her own mother is Ulysses' arch nemesis.

Flora's father takes her to the Giant Do-Nut shop where Ulysses leaps onto a waitress's tall scary hair. Ulysses is thrown and hits his head, but not before he flies like a superhero. They escape from the angry restaurant staff to Mr. Buckman's apartment building.

Flora sees that one of his neighbor's doors says "doctor" on it, so she seeks medical help for Ulysses. It turns out the woman, Dr. Meescham, is a doctor of philosophy. Ulysses regains consciousness, and Dr. Meescham makes lunch. She talks about the perils of loneliness and mentions how sad Mr. Buckman was to leave Flora. Flora is surprised to learn her father has cried many tears over her on Dr. Meescham's couch.

Flora's concern that Ulysses may not actually be a superhero is soon put to rest. Her father arrives at Dr. Meescham's to take her home but is attacked by the building owner's vicious cat. Ulysses lifts the gigantic cat off of Mr. Buckman's head and throws it down the hall.

When Flora and her father return to Mrs. Buckman's house, they find William Spiver helping her write on of her romance novels. He feels he has a way with words, though he says his interests really lie in meditating on the ever-expanding universe. Flora calls him a traitor for helping her mother - Ulysses' arch-nemesis - and says she's going to move in with her father. Her mother says that Flora moving in with her father would make her mother's life easier. Despite all her efforts to be a cynic who doesn't care about love, Flora is crushed. William says he understands her grief and reveals that he was banished from his household by his mother and stepfather. His stepfather repeatedly refused to call William by his proper name, so he pushed the man's truck into a lake.

Flora's mother and father talk alone, and her father says Flora needs to stay with her mother right now because Mrs. Buckman needs her. Flora misses her father and William Spiver and the person her mother used to be. Her mother starts pretending to like Ulysses, his flying and the poetry he likes.

One night, Mrs. Buckman catches Ulysses at her typewriter and makes him type a letter stating he's leaving Flora. Ulysses is sad because none of his goodbye letter is true. He doesn't want to abandon his friend. When Flora discovers her mother and Ulysses are gone, she enlists the help of William Spiver and Tootie. They try to find Mrs. Buckman before she kills Ulysses. Flora brings Mary Ann, the lamp. She hopes she can use her mother's precious lamp to make an exchange for Ulysses. Flora and William Spiver take comfort by talking about missing their fathers.

Still unable to find Ulysses after several hours, Flora, Tootie and William Spiver go to Mr. Buckman's apartment. They learn that Ulysses escaped from Mrs. Buckman and made his way to Dr. Meescham's apartment. Mrs. Buckman shows up and the apartment building, and the apartment manager's vicious cat attacks. In the fray, Flora's mother's lamp breaks.

Flora thinks her mother will be devastated, but Mrs. Buckman is only concerned that Flora is okay. Mrs. Buckman admits to kidnapping Ulysses because she wanted things to go back to normal. But when she returned home and Flora wasn't there, she realized all she wanted was her daughter back. Ulysses types a poem about his love for Flora. Everyone listens as Tootie recites the words about how nothing would be easier without Flora and how she has expanded his universe.

What problems does your character face in the story?

What does your character want?

Character Traits

Character

How do your character's actions affect the other characters?

how does your character change throughout the story?