

The Old Creamery Theatre for Young Audiences proudly presents



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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### OUR MISSION

The Old Creamery Theatre Company is proud to be the oldest professional theatre company in the state of Iowa. A not-for-profit organization founded in 1971, The Old Creamery is committed to bringing high-quality, live professional theatre to the people of Iowa and the Midwest. The mission of The Old Creamery Theatre for Young Audiences program is to provide children of varying ages with opportunities to experience, explore, and enjoy live theatre with the goal of instilling and nurturing a life-long appreciation of the performing arts. The company has always offered touring productions for children, but has recently added children's theatre productions to the main stage season along with a number of day-camps and week-long camps called Camp Creamery.

### ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION

Problem Solved! was created using stories submitted to The Old Creamery Theatre through the annual writing competition. Stories are adapted by The Old Creamery's professional artists, but remain faithful to the idea, purpose, and intent of the young person who wrote the story. The annual writing competition first began in 1990 and is open to all students in grades one through six. For instructions on how to submit a story for the 2010 competition, please visit The Old Creamery's website this fall for the contest rules and guidelines. Guidelines change each year, so please be sure to read the instructions carefully before submitting material. ([www.oldcreamery.com](http://www.oldcreamery.com))

### THE CREATORS

Problem Solved! is an original production created by the theatre professionals at The Old Creamery Theatre Company. After reading the over 400 stories that were submitted for the 2009 writing contest, they narrowed it down to a select few and began writing songs and dialogue, building sets and props, and designing the costumes and putting together the sound track. Problem Solved! premiered on February 17, 2009.

Director:	Sean McCall
Set Designer:	Tom Milligan
Sound Track:	Karl Bodenbender & Ryan Milligan
Costumes:	Marquetta Senters
Cast:	Deborah Kennedy Jackie McCall Sean McCall Tom Milligan Steve Weiss

## PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

Take time before the show to talk to students about the art form of theatre and prepare them for what will happen at the production. Make sure to emphasize what makes theatre different from other kinds of entertainment that they have experienced in the past. Help them realize what a special relationship the audience and the actors have with each other during a live performance.

### HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A PLAY?

Ask students if they have ever seen a play or live theatrical performance before. Discuss what they saw, what they experienced, and how that might compare to attending Problem Solved! at their school.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEATRE AND TELEVISION OR MOVIES?

- The audience is an important part of a live performance because the actors can see, hear, and interact with the people watching the play. Audience members can show their appreciation by giving the actors their full attention and by laughing and applauding at appropriate times, like at the end of a story or song.
- Movies and television shows are filmed. If an actor makes a mistake, the scene can be filmed again and corrected. Since theatre is live, unexpected things sometimes happen. This is part of the fun and excitement of live entertainment.
- Plays are performed by live actors. Although actors do their best to perform their part the same way each time they present a play, they can never make it exactly the same every time. Therefore each performance of a play is unique.

### WHAT IS PROPER THEATRE ETIQUETTE?

Explain what is expected of the students as audience members and discuss proper theatre etiquette as some of them may never have seen a live performance before.

- Make sure to remain seated and listen carefully during the performance. This will allow you and the people around you to enjoy the show without interruption. You will have plenty of time to talk to your friends after the show.
- Even though you may feel like saying something to the performers, keep your thoughts to yourself. You might disrupt the actors' concentration or disturb other people in the audience if you start talking out loud. Some plays are written for the audience to be a part of the show, but not all. You should participate if, and only if, you are invited to do so by the actors.
- Laughing and clapping are encouraged! If you think something is funny, laugh. If you like a story, clap at the end. This is how you let the actors know that you are having fun.

## STORY SYNOPSES

### “Problem Solved: The Game Show”

Written by McKenzie and Teressa in 6<sup>th</sup> grade

“Problem Solved” is a game show where contestants are asked to solve problems in non-violent ways. The hosts, Jimmy McJimmers and Hannah Knight, explain the three categories: Cooperation, Compromise, and Critical Thinking. The contestants, Nancy, Jason, and Marco, do their best to solve the problems presented to them in order to win fabulous prizes.

### “Colors”

Written by Sara in 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Long ago when the earth was still as blank as a new sheet of typing paper, there were only three creatures: Sun, Moon, and the Wise Worm. Sun and Moon are arguing over what color the ocean should be. The Wise Worm writes a poem to help them settle their differences and eventually they compromise.

### “Superhero Guy”

Written by Andrew in 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Superhero Guy and Potato Guy are super heroes ready to help a little girl who is being bullied by Karate Gal. Superhero Guy is convinced that zapping away Karate Gal’s powers with the Power-taker-awayer 5000 and then bullying her back is the best way to deal with the situation. Luckily, Potato Guy shows him that talking things out is a much better and less violent way to solve the problem.

### “The Horse Who Could Not Neigh”

Written by Kennedy in 5<sup>th</sup> grade

This is the story of a horse that has everything going for her except that she cannot neigh. She takes a course, gets a tutor, and learns that if she is persistent and willing to practice she can learn how to neigh.

### “The Basketball Helper”

Written by Ali and Kally in 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Matt really wants to play basketball with the other kids at school, but he never gets picked. He believes it is because he is too short. His teacher, Mrs. Thompson, helps get to the bottom of the problem when she finds out that the real reason Matt is not getting picked is because he can’t shoot a basket. After getting some help from Bob and Jake, Matt becomes a better player and gets to join in on the fun.

### “Fred the Flea

Written by Brandi in 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Shep the Dog is being driven crazy after Fred the Flea and his friends take up residence on him. He tries everything he can think of to get them to leave but nothing is working until he starts using his head. He realizes that the only way to get rid of them is to get a bath, and the only way to do that is to get really dirty so his owner will have to wash him. With the fleas gone, Shep is once again a happy dog.

## “The Twintastic Contest”

Written by Courtney in 6th grade

Anna and Bella are twin cows that never seem to agree about anything. However, they are both very excited when they hear the famous movie actress, Margaret the Great, will be coming to their town to host the yearly talent competition. When they find out the rules of the contest will require them to perform together, they are less than thrilled, but by learning to work together they both end up shining at the competition.

## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Now that students have seen a live theatrical performance, take the opportunity to expand upon the experience and increase their understanding of what theatre is and why it is important. Use the following activities to stimulate class discussions and exercises. Appropriate grade levels are suggested, but feel free to adapt the activities to fit students' needs. The important thing is to have fun and be creative.

### THE 3 C'S

The 3 C's covered in Problem Solved! are Cooperation, Compromise, and Critical Thinking. Simple definitions for these problem solving tactics are:

Cooperation: Working together or seeking the help of others when faced with a conflict in order to solve a problem.

Compromise: Adapting what each party involved in the conflict wants in order to find common ground and solve the problem.

Critical Thinking: Evaluating the situation then using reasoning skills in order to come up with an innovative solution to the problem.

### NOW YOU'RE PROBLEM SOLVERS!

K-6

Discuss Problem Solved! with students asking them to recount what the problem in each story was and how it was eventually solved. Which one of the 3 C's was used? Cooperation? Compromise? Critical Thinking? A combination? Ask them to give examples from their own lives when they had a problem and used one or more of the 3 C's to solve the problem in a non-violent way.

### WRITE A STORY, POEM, OR SONG

K-6

Ask students to write their own story, poem, or song that solves a problem or teaches a lesson. Remind students that a good story has a beginning, middle, and end, and a problem or conflict that gets resolved. Encourage them to create imaginative characters and settings. What is the moral or lesson that is learned? How do the characters change? Did the characters use any of the 3 C's to resolve their conflict?

K-3

Take some of the stories that students have written and turn them into a play. With the teacher serving as the leader, cast students (or take volunteers) to play the various parts. Work together as a group to stage the play. Be creative. You may choose to add dialogue, songs, dances, characters, anything that helps tell the story. You may want to show off your play to parents or other classes.

4-6

Take some of the stories that students have written and turn them into a play. Divide the class into small groups of about five or six students. Each group (or the teacher) chooses one student per group to serve as the group leader. Have each group pick a story. The group leader assigns the roles in the story and the group works together to stage the play. Be creative. The group may choose to add dialogue, songs, dances, characters, anything that helps tell the story. Each group can perform their story for the other groups. You may want to show off your plays to parents or other classes.

## EXPRESS YOUR THOUGHTS

K-3

Ask students to write or draw pictures about the things that they saw and experienced during the play. Encourage them to talk about what they learned, what they liked, what they disliked, etc. They can even send pictures and letters to The Old Creamery Theatre Company at 39 38<sup>th</sup> Ave, Amana, IA 52203.

4-6

Ask students to write a review of the play. Encourage them to talk about what they learned, what they liked, what they disliked, how the play made them feel, and what it made them think about. Beyond just retelling the plots and themes of the stories, encourage them to discuss other elements of the production like costumes, set, props, sound effects, etc. They can even send their reviews to The Old Creamery Theatre Company at 39 38<sup>th</sup> Ave, Amana, IA 52203.