



Teacher Resource Guide and Lesson Plan Activities

Featuring general information about our production along with some creative activities which will help make connections to your classroom curriculum, before and after the show.



The production and accompanying activities address **North Carolina Essential Standards in Theatre Arts, Goal A.1: Analyze literary texts and performances.** Look for this symbol throughout the resource guide for other curricular connections.

The Borrowers



By Mary Norton
Adapted for the stage by Charles Way

Founded in 1948, Children's Theatre of Charlotte has been opening young minds to the wonders of live theatre for over half a century. Today it continues to be one of the most technically imaginative and resourceful theatres in the country. Annually it reaches over 320,000 young people and their families with multiple program areas: Mainstage productions, Tarradiddle Players Professional Touring Company and a full scope of Education classes for both community and schools. Children's Theatre of Charlotte is housed in **ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center.** The facility is shared with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

About the Play

Under the floor boards, Arrietty Clock and her parents, Homily and Pod, live a quiet little life. Tucked away in their cozy home decorated with dollhouse furniture, they survive by "borrowing" what they need from the "human beans" who live above them. But life is too quiet if you ask Arrietty, a typical tween yearning to experience the grown-up world for herself. When the family's hiding place is discovered, they must venture into the giant universe outside where Arrietty gets a bigger adventure than she bargained for.

About the Author: Mary Norton

Mary Norton was born in London in 1903; her birth name was Kathleen Mary Pearson. She was raised in England but moved to the United States for a short time in the 1940's. Encouraged by American editors, she began writing books for children. Her first book: *The Magic Bed-knob; or, How to Become a Witch in 10 Easy Lessons* was published in 1943 and was later revised and adapted to the Walt Disney film *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*. In 1952, Norton wrote *The Borrowers* which became the first in a series of five books about the adventures of Homily, Pod and Arrietty Clock. *The Borrowers* won the Library Association Carnegie Medal in England as the outstanding children's book of 1952. Subsequently the entire Borrowers series achieved accolades and acclaim, and continues to be read and celebrated by children everywhere. Norton was the mother of four children. She died at age 88 in England.

About the Playwright: Charles Way

Charles Way has written and adapted numerous plays for young people in England, Germany and America. Way was commissioned to adapt *The Borrowers* through The Polka Theatre for Children in London, where it was first presented in November, 1999. He is a member of the Writer's Guild of Great Britain and the Welsh Academy of Authors.

“*And that’s how the whole world changes shape.*” - Arrietty Clock

The Borrowers Book Series

Mary Norton wrote five books in the Borrowers series. The stories are based on the adventures of the Clock family: tiny people who live beneath the floorboards and “borrow” things from the humans above in order to survive. The play version of *The Borrowers* draws from several of the books in the series, not just the first story. The entire series of books include:

- The Borrowers** first published in 1952
- The Borrowers Afield** first published in 1955
- The Borrowers Afloat** first published in 1959
- The Borrowers Aloft** first published in 1961 and
- The Borrowers Avenged** first published in 1982.

Questions for Discussion

Before seeing the play

1. What do you notice in each of the book titles listed above?
2. The story of **The Borrowers** is based on the lives of teeny tiny people and their adventures to survive. The books, and the play, feature both human beings, who are our size, and Borrowers, who are only a few inches tall. On a live stage with real actors, how do you think the differences between size will be created?
3. Do you think Borrowers are real? How can you be sure?

After seeing the play

1. Review the five different book titles in **The Borrowers** series. Thinking back on the scenes you saw in the play, try to determine which scenes were adapted from which books.
2. What would you like or dislike about being a Borrower?
3. Is borrowing the same as stealing? In the play, Homily says that “you never ever borrow from another borrower.” Why does she think borrowing from a borrower is different from borrowing from a human?
4. In the beginning of the play, Pod, Homily and Arrietty live under the floorboards in a house. How does Homily feel about their home? What about Arrietty? What clues in the text make you think she feels this way?
5. How do you think Arrietty feels when she sees and speaks to the boy? How do Pod and Homily feel about it?
6. Why is writing in a journal so important to Arrietty?
7. Would you rather be an indoor Borrower like Pod and Homily, or an outdoor Borrower like Spiller?
8. When Mrs. Driver saw the family beneath the floorboards, how did she react? How do you think you would have reacted?
9. Were you surprised about Egglestina? What else in the play surprised you?
10. If you could write the 6th Borrowers book, what would it be?



Who’s Who in The Borrowers

The following are characters from the books who are also included in the play adaptation.

Borrowers:

- Arrietty Clock** - An adventurous 14-year-old Borrower girl
- Pod Clock** - Arrietty's father and, according to his wife, the most talented Borrower.
- Homily Clock** - Arrietty's mother.
- Hendreary** - Arrietty's uncle.
- Aunt Lupy** - Uncle Hendreary's wife.
- Egglestina** - Uncle Hendreary's daughter. She wandered away and disappeared after a cat had been brought into the house, leading her family to think the cat ate her.

The Big People:

- The Boy** - At ten-years-old he leaves his home in India to recover from an illness at the country home of his great-aunt and befriends the Borrowers
- Mrs. Driver** - The housekeeper-cook
- Crampfurl** - The gardener
- Gypsy Boy** - A wanderer who helps hide the Borrowers in a caravan

Homily, Pod, and Arrietty are the Clock family. Other Borrower families include the Sinks, the Drainpipes, the Harpsichords, the Bell Pulls, the Rain Barrells, the Stovepipes and the Overmantels. How do you think the Borrower families get their names?

Think about family names and cultures. How do locations impact names of families?

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy: SL2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media

The Setting: 1899

The story of *The Borrowers* is set in the year 1899... how many years ago is that from the present time? The world was very different at that point in history. For example:

- The president of the United States was William McKinley. He was the 25th president. Who is our president today? How many presidents have we had since McKinley?
- The world population in 1899 was less than 2 billion people. Today, there are around 7 billion people in the world. The world population has grown by what percent since 1899?
- The primary modes of transportation in 1899 included the bicycle, horse and carriage, train and - of course - walking! The fuel-powered car was just beginning to come into existence, but wasn't yet a common mode of transportation.
- Many things were invented and patented in 1899 including the paper clip, the lawn mower and aspirin. What sorts of things are being invented in current years?
- In 1899, women wore dresses or skirts which reached all the way to the ground. Hats were very common and shoes were laced tightly covering the entire foot and often the ankle. Bathing suits practically covered the entire body... it was very inappropriate to let any amount of skin show!
- In 1899, milk cost about 3 cents per gallon and bread was less than a penny per loaf. How would you calculate that rate of inflation?
- A popular song in 1899 was "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain." Do you know that song? Do you think there are any songs today that will still be known over one hundred years from now?

Repurposing

The Borrowers are experts at reusing objects. Talk about some of the items from the book or the play that the Borrowers used in a different way.

Activity: Collect a variety of small objects or create a list of small objects in your classroom. Imagine yourself only a few inches tall and determine how you would use each item in your home. Create a space plan of your environment — whether inside or out — and draw a picture of all of the borrowed items in your residence.

Is recycling the same as repurposing? Discuss how they are the same and how they are different. Most importantly, talk about how each one is important to the environment.



Social Studies Essential Standard 5.G.1 Understand how human activity has and continues to shape the United States.
EEn.2.8.4 Evaluate the concept of "reduce, reuse, recycle" in terms of impact on natural resources.

Emigration

In the play, Homily often refers to **emigration**. What does it mean to emigrate? What's the difference between immigration and emigration?

Animals, birds and people can all **migrate**, but only people can **immigrate** or **emigrate**. Migrate is the root word, meaning "to move". Animals and birds may migrate seasonally, but to immigrate or emigrate means to move permanently from your native home.

Immigrate is to enter a new country,
different from where you were born.
Emigrate is to leave your native country.

These terms are particularly interesting because their definition depends on point of view. If a man moves from England to the United States, he **emigrates** from England and **immigrates** to the US. To his neighbors in England, he is an emigrant because he is leaving. To his new neighbors in America, he is an immigrant because he is arriving. He is both an emigrant and an immigrant.

From 1840 to 1920, nearly 40 million immigrants arrived in the United States, most through the center at Ellis Island. This wave doubled our country's population and helped to shape our national identity. Many people came to America from England to escape political and religious rules, but immigrants have come from countries all over the world, for all sorts of reasons.

There is rarely controversy regarding emigration, but immigration has been a very complex subject for many years. Some people believe that immigration creates rich cultural diversity while others believe that immigrants intrude and compromise the native land. Immigration is a very challenging topic. Begin a discussion with the following questions, then conduct some further research on immigration.

- If you were an immigrant, how would you want to be treated?
- If someone was immigrating to your country, what sort of behavior would you expect from them?
- If someone immigrates to a new country, should he or she be required to speak the language of that country? Why or why not?
- Almost every family in America immigrated from another country at some point in time. Do you know your family's country of origin?

Theatre Corner

Every play produced by Children's Theatre of Charlotte is created in the city of Charlotte by a talented team of designers, carpenters, stitchers, props masters and lighting technicians, not to mention the director and the actors.

Because it is presented live, a play is very different from a television show or a movie. As a class, discuss what you experienced when you went to the theatre.

1. What was the first thing you noticed on the stage?
2. Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed?
3. What techniques did the design team use to show different sizes and scales in the production?
4. What did you like about the costumes? Did they fit the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
5. What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
6. Discuss the use of puppets in the production. Were the puppets an effective way of supporting the story?
7. Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story that you forgot you were watching a play? Talk about those moments.
8. Is there a TV or movie version of the play you saw today? What makes a stage play unique?
9. Were there any actors who played more than one character? At what point in the play could you tell that it was the same person? What are some ways that you can be the same person but play different characters?



North Carolina Essential Standards in Theatre, 4.A.1.2:
Critique choices made about characters, settings and events as seen or portrayed in formal or informal theatre productions.

Be a Reviewer!

Write a review of *The Borrowers*. Include comments about all of the production elements including the actors, set, costumes, sound, lights and special effects. Mail your review to us at Children's Theatre of Charlotte, 300 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28202.

Children's Theatre of Charlotte is sincerely grateful to our generous sponsors and supporters:



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The Martin Dollhouse

An amazing dollhouse lives in the ImaginOn building... it would certainly be a dream home for the Borrowers!

The dollhouse was built by Joe Martin in the late 1970's for his daughter, Elizabeth. The dollhouse is a replica of Joe's Aunt Sara's home in Savannah, Georgia: a home where Martin enjoyed many wonderful childhood memories. The level of detail in replicating the home is admirable: Joe was very determined to have it look precisely the same as Aunt Sara's! Joe and Elizabeth repurposed many items to use in the house, creatively finding ways to up fit the tiny quarters. ImaginOn is proud to display the dollhouse until Elizabeth's daughter Jane is old enough to play with it.

Our facility, ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center, is named in honor of the Martins for their commitment and inspiration to the Charlotte community. Joe, a champion of racial and gender equity, served as a community leader and employee at Bank of America, retiring in 2001. He is the author of two books: *Fire in the Rock* and *On Any Given Day*, his personal and touching account of living with ALS. Joan's commitment to the community includes her involvement in PTA, scouting, non-profit organizations and learning programs in public schools. She has been a devoted leader of the Learning Center and a teacher at Christ Church.

Joe passed away on July 1, 2006. He and Joan remain an inspiration to us all, in our work and in our lives.

