



STUDY BUDDY™



*A one-act
musical based
on the book by
Frances
Hodgson
Burnett*

A Little Princess

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This performance study guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss ArtsPower's one-act musical *A Little Princess*.

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ArtsPower National Touring Theatre and Gary and Mark Blackman present *A Little Princess*; Based on the book *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett; Adapted and Directed by Greg Gunning; Musical Score by Richard DeRosa; Lyrics by Greg Gunning; Incidental Music by Ron Drotos; Costumes by Fred P. Sorrentino; Set by Red Dot Studios; Photos by Carol Rosegg

STUDY BUDDY™ *A Little Princess*
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USING THIS PERFORMANCE STUDY GUIDE

This *A Little Princess* performance study guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after attending the ArtsPower production. The guide includes information and activities intended to increase students' understanding of this and other theatrical performances.

Sara's Story The Plot

page 3

This synopsis of the play familiarizes students with the main characters and events.

Telling Sara's Story Through Characters The Main and Supporting Characters

page 4

This page familiarizes students with the play's characters and explains the theatrical practice of actors playing multiple roles.

Telling Sara's Story Through Lines The Dialogue

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This page invites students to examine words from the play's script and make inferences about plot and characters.

Telling Sara's Story Through Songs The Musical

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This page provides lyrics from the play and alerts students to listen for music and its uses in this and other musical plays.

Telling Sara's Story Through Imagination The Fantasy Scenes

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This page explains the dramatization of scenes that occur in a character's imagination. Students are invited to participate in an activity that involves them in staging portions of fantasy scenes.

Telling Sara's Story Through Drama The Adaptation

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This page explains the play's relationship to the original novel and invites students to compare and contrast the book and the play.

Telling Sara's Story Through the Years The Original and the Other Versions

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This page provides information on Frances Hodgson Burnett, author of the novel *A Little Princess*. Books, audio cassettes, videos, and other resources are listed here.

Telling Sara's Story Through Pictures A Theatrical Poster

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This activity page invites students to design a theatrical poster for *A Little Princess*.

Telling Sara's Story to an Audience The Rehearsals and Performances

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This page provides information on the roles of the ArtsPower theatre company and reminds students of their roles as audience members.

Telling Sara's Story to You Your Thoughts

page 12

This page invites students to complete a business letter that shares their thoughts about *A Little Princess* with ArtsPower.

Please photocopy any or all of the following pages to distribute to students.



THE MAIN & SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

MAIN CHARACTERS

There are four main characters in this play. They are:

Sara Crewe—a wealthy British girl with a vivid imagination. Sara was raised in India before her father enrolled her in Miss Minchin's boarding school in London.



Captain Crewe—an officer in the British army and Sara's father. After the death of his wife, he raised Sara on his own. He calls his beloved daughter his "little princess."



Miss Minchin—the greedy and cruel-hearted headmistress of Sara's boarding school.

Becky—a servant at Miss Minchin's school. She is an uneducated Cockney girl who is Sara's age.

BOARDING SCHOOL—a school where students live

HEADMISTRESS—the woman principal of a private school

COCKNEY—people from the East End of London. One way their speech is recognizable is that they leave the H's off the beginnings of words. For example, "here" is pronounced "ere," "home" is pronounced "ome."

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Other characters who help tell the play's story are supporting characters. In *A Little Princess*, there are nine supporting characters or roles. The cast, however, does not have 13 actors. In theatre, "doubling" means that an actor plays more than one character. Three actors in *A Little Princess* "double" in supporting roles:

The actor who plays Captain Crewe doubles as...	The actor who plays Miss Minchin doubles as...	The actor who plays Becky doubles as...
The Rajah (an East Indian ruler in Sara's stories)	An East Indian servant	An East Indian servant
Ram Das (an East Indian man who befriends Sara and Becky)	The sorceress (a woman who uses magic) in Sara's stories	Ke-Byc (a young attendant in Sara's first story)
	A nurse	

CHARACTER QUESTIONS

- How can one actor play several different characters?
- What changes can the actor make in appearance, movement, and voice?
- Why do you think theatre companies like ArtsPower have actors double in roles?



THE PLOT

To understand the action of the play, read this plot summary of **A Little Princess**.

The main characters' names appear in boldface type.

India, 1914 After the death of her mother, young Sara Crewe and her father leave their home in India. Captain Crewe must serve in the British Army. Sara will attend a boarding school with other British girls. The captain and his "little princess" sadly say good-bye to India and sail to England.

London, 1914 Sara's boarding school is Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies. Miss Minchin, the headmistress, is glad to have such a rich pupil. She promises to take good care of Sara.

Becky, a poor girl who works at the school, becomes Sara's maid. Becky loves Sara's imaginative stories. The two girls become friends.

When Miss Minchin receives a letter saying that Captain Crewe died penniless, she forces Sara to become a servant. Miss Minchin

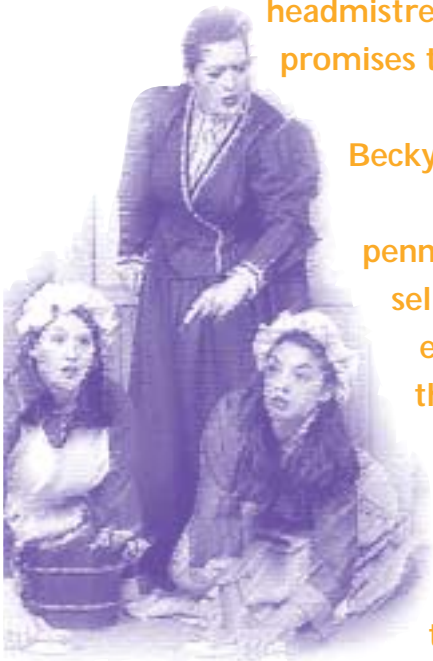
sells all Sara's belongings and makes her work to earn small amounts of food. Sara moves to the attic with Becky. There she notices a window across the roof from hers. Becky says it's a hospital window. Soon after, the girls meet an East Indian man named Ram Das who is standing in that window. He feels sorry for the two

hungry girls. One day, he fills their attic room with special treats.

When Miss Minchin discovers Ram Das's surprise, she accuses Sara of being a thief. She threatens to have her arrested.

Will Sara escape Miss Minchin's cruelty?

You will find out when you attend **A Little Princess**.



THE DIALOGUE

Playwrights are people who write plays. They tell stories through lines of dialogue written for actors to speak. The lines give information about the plot (story) and the characters.

Read the lines of dialogue from *A Little Princess* printed here. What do they tell you about the plot and characters?

CAPTAIN CREWE

Well, your mother and I were drilling for water. We didn't mean to strike diamonds. But I'd give it all away if it meant your mother could be alive again.

MISS MINCHIN

Your father left you nothing. You're a pauper! You haven't a brass farthing! No, no – worse than that! You owe me!

BECKY

The only thing I believe in is eating and keeping a roof over my 'ead.

SARA

Anyone who's loved is royalty! Even if they dress in rags! Or live in attics! Or sell flowers! Or drop their "H's"! We're all royalty if we're loved and give love in return! What's the matter, Miss Minchin? Didn't your father ever tell you that?

PAUPER-
an extremely poor person

FARTHING-
a coin once used in Great Britain worth one fourth of a penny

LINE DELIVERIES

Actors experiment with different ways to say or "deliver" their lines. Try delivering the above characters' lines in different ways (boldly, fearfully, proudly, sadly, etc.). Which line deliveries do you like best? Why?

When you attend *A Little Princess*, listen for these lines and for how the actors deliver them. Compare their line deliveries to yours. What similarities and differences did you notice?

THE MUSICAL

EAST INDIAN MUSIC

In *A Little Princess*, listen for music and chanting that suggest the country of India.

You will hear this music playing while Sara tells some of her stories and when Ram Das prays. Listen also for bits of dialogue and songs in Hindustani, an East Indian language.

A musical is a play with music and songs. The music and songs help to establish mood and setting, tell the story, express characters' emotions and inner thoughts, and move the action forward. Lyrics are the words of songs.

What do these lyrics from *A Little Princess* tell you about its plot and characters?

Be A Lyricist

Write some lyrics that express your thoughts about homework. Try to write at least four lines. Your lyrics can rhyme, but they do not have to. What style of music (snappy, slow, smooth, rhythmic) do your lyrics need? What do your lyrics tell about you? Share your lyrics with your classmates.

Handwriting lines for writing lyrics, featuring a decorative musical staff background with notes.

SARA AND CAPTAIN CREWE

There is an endless sky that surrounds us. Remember, I'm looking at it too. And know I'm thinking thoughts of you.

MISS MINCHIN

*Sara Crewe! The fire's died!
Sara Crewe!
I'm not satisfied!
Sara Crewe! Where are you?
Sara Crewe! Sara Crewe!*

SARA

This window is my only hope! I'm trapped inside these prison walls! Where's the door? My escape? My window to the other side of the wall?

BECKY

*Sometimes I think I see the sky!
Someday I will get out of here!
To the other side of the wall!*

THE FANTASY SCENES

In the movies and on TV, scenes that happen in people's imaginations often begin with a wavy image on the screen. Sometimes the film or video blurs or runs in slow motion. "Dreamy" music (often a harp) also suggests that the action is not reality. It's fantasy. It occurs in a character's imagination.

A Little Princess dramatizes several scenes that occur in Sara Crewe's imagination. She loves to create and tell stories. Her stories reveal her fears and foreshadow her future. Here are some ways to recognize the fantasy scenes in this live performance:

- * Sara tells a story while other actors **mime** her narrated action. They exaggerate their movements and gestures:

"The **Rajah** decided that he must take his daughter away – up north – to a land where he felt she could be safe. Together they floated up the **Ganges River**. They floated past the **Taj Mahal** and the different temples and **minarets**."

- * The actors dramatize some of Sara's story through dance:

"The two of them danced and played together under that endless sky."

- * Music and sound effects emphasize Sara's words:

"The storm grew and grew! The waves tossed the boat!"

- * The actors use masks to change characters:

"Then the kindly old woman revealed herself as the evil sorceress Cheminn!"

- * The actors move in slow motion:

"The time had finally come for the great King Rajah to do battle. He slowly lifted his magic sword over his head to signal his army to start to march forward."

FORESHADOW-

the audience clues about an upcoming event in the play

MIME-

to act out with body movement and gestures, but no words

RAJAH-

a ruler in India

GANGES RIVER-

a river of northern India and Bangladesh

TAJ MAHAL-

a temple in India

MINARETS-

a tall slender tower on a mosque (a Moslem place of worship)

SORCERESS-

a woman who uses magic to control others

Act Out the Fantasy Scenes

Choose a narrator to read Sara's lines (in quotation marks above).

Choose actors to mime the narrated action or create sound effects. Experiment with ways to express the words and act out the portions of the fantasy scenes provided above.

THE ADAPTATION

In 1905, a British-born American author named Frances Hodgson Burnett published the novel *A Little Princess*. In 1998, ArtsPower playwright Greg Gunning based his one-act musical play on her story. "Based on" means that the playwright used the original story as a starting point. Mr. Gunning kept some of the novel's characters and problems, but he also made many changes. The play is an adaptation of the novel.

The left-hand column of the chart below displays some situations that occur in the novel, but were changed in the play. After the performance, fill in the right-hand column of the chart with the changes made in the play.

A Little Princess

In the novel...

Sara never knew her mother because she died during Sara's birth.

Captain Crewe puts Sara in boarding school because the climate in India was bad for children.

Sara and her father shop together to purchase Sara's doll Emily.

Miss Minchin does not speak French. Sara charms her French teacher with her ability to speak his language.

At the boarding school, Sara has a French maid.

Two students named Ermengarde and Lottie become Sara's good friends.

Sara spends four years as a pupil at Miss Minchin's school before she is forced to be a servant there for two years.

Captain Crewe is reported to have died because of jungle fever and anxiety over the loss of his money in diamond mines.

In the musical play...

THE ORIGINAL AND OTHER VERSIONS

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

The Author of *A Little Princess*,

Frances Hodgson

Burnett was

born in 1849.

During the

American Civil

War, her family

moved to the United

States. She published her

first stories when she was a teenager. She

wrote over 40 books for adults and children.

Mrs. Burnett is best known for her children's

books *The Secret Garden*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*,

and *A Little Princess*.

A Little Princess was originally published in

1888 as *Sara Crewe*. In 1903, the author

rewrote *Sara Crewe* as a play entitled *A Little*

Princess. Finally, she added characters and

events to her original novel. She used the title

of her play for her longer new novel—

A Little Princess.



BOOKS, AUDIO TAPES and VIDEOS

If you want to read the novel, *A Little Princess*, look for...

Burnett, Francis Hodgson. *A Little Princess*, illustrated by Tasha Tudor. NY: J.B. Lippincott, 1985.

Burnett, Francis Hodgson. *A Little Princess*, illustrated by Graham Rust. Boston: David R. Godine, 1994.

If you want to listen to *A Little Princess*, look for...

Sound Recordings of A Little Princess. Audio cassettes available from Blackstone Audio Books, Big Ben Audio Series, or Recorded Books, Inc.

If you want to watch a video of *A Little Princess*, look for...

Warner Brothers Home Video. *A Little Princess*, 1995. (Note that this adaptation changes the setting of Sara's boarding school from London to New York City.)

If you have access to the Internet, you can find an on-line copy of *A Little Princess* at:

www.catawbac.k12.nc.us/books/lpress11.txt

If you want to read other books by Frances Hodgson Burnett, look for...

Little Lord Fauntleroy. NY: Dell Publishing, 1986.

The Secret Garden. NY: Viking Penguin, 1988.

If you want to read more about Frances Hodgson Burnett, look for...

Carpenter, Angelica, & Jean Shirley. *Frances Hodgson Burnett: Beyond the Secret Garden*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1990.

Thwaite, Ann. *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett 1849-1924*. NY: Scribner, 1974.

A THEATRICAL POSTER

Theatre companies advertise their plays to encourage people to attend performances.

One way to advertise is with a theatrical poster.

After the performance, design a poster for **A Little Princess**. You may wish to illustrate some of the characters or a favorite scene.

When you are done, share your poster with classmates and family members.

ArtsPower National Touring Theatre presents...



A Little Princess



THE REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCES

When you attend **A Little Princess**, you will experience the work of

ArtsPower National Touring Theatre. ArtsPower is a theatre company. In theatre, a company is a group of actors,

technicians, designers, producers,

directors, writers, and other artists who work as a team to present a performance.

The playwright wrote and revised the script. The actors auditioned for their parts and memorized their lines and songs. The designers created the set, costumes, and lighting. Everyone involved worked until the play was ready to tour.

The company of **A Little Princess** is a traveling troupe. The four actors and a stage manager pack the set, costumes, lights, and recording equipment in a van. They bring the

show to the audience. They set up, change, and pack the scenery. They take care of all the costumes and props. When traveling, they stay in hotels. Sometimes they present 13 performances in a week.

The company of **A Little Princess** is ready to perform. All they need now is you!

You are the audience. You play an important role in the performance of **A Little Princess**. Your role requires you to listen carefully and watch closely. It's okay to laugh or applaud if you enjoy the play, but remember that you and the actors are in the same room. Talking, whispering, or making noise during the performance will distract them and other audience members, too. Please help the company present the performance by playing your role well.



STAGE MANAGER-
the person responsible for overseeing all the backstage elements of a production

TROUPE-
a group of touring actors, singers, or dancers

PROPS-
objects such as dolls, brooms, and bowls handled by actors

YOUR THOUGHTS

**ArtsPower
Would Like to
Hear From
You!**

After you attend the play, you may write to ArtsPower to share your thoughts about **A Little Princess.**

You may complete the business letter on this page or write your own letter.

(Your address)

Date

ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

39 South Fullerton Ave.

Montclair, NJ 07042-3354

Dear ArtsPower:

I attended a performance of A Little Princess at

My favorite part of the play was

My favorite character was

because

Another thing I remember about the performance is

One thing I would change about the performance is

That's because

The best adjective I would choose to describe A Little Princess is

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

ARTSPOWER
ONLINE

If you want to communicate via ArtsPower's Internet web site, go to: www.artspower.org and click on " Kids."