



# STUDY BUDDY



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### ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

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### Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

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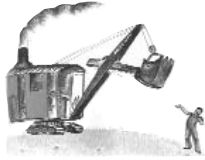
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## Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

Teachers: Please read this section to your students.

### Our Story



Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel Mary Anne are best friends. They work hard to dig canals, smooth out roads, and make deep foundations for buildings. But there's a problem: Mike's boss wants him to get rid of Mary Anne and use a newer shovel. Mike knows that his boss doesn't understand: only a few people who "believe" can actually see Mary Anne as she really is. She is more than a machine; she is a real person to Mike because he believes in her.

Looking for work, the two friends come to the town of Popperville. They agree that they will finish their job in just one day, or else the Mayor, Henry B. Swap, will not have to pay them. Will they succeed? In the end, it depends on one little boy and his struggle to believe in Mary Anne.



From left, Mayor Henry B. Swap, Henry Jr., Mike Mulligan, and Mary Anne are the main characters in ArtsPower's **Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel**.



**ACTIVITY** 

Think about your best friend.  
What makes this person special?  
What can you see in this person that no one else can see? Draw a picture of yourself and your friend doing something that you like to do together.

## *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*

Teachers: Please read this section to your students.

### Meet the Characters

The words that characters say onstage help us to understand who they are. What do these pieces of **dialogue** (lines spoken by actors) tell us about the characters? How do you think each line would be spoken? Angrily? Sadly? Loudly? Softly? Any other ideas?



You see -- if you wish it -- anything can have a life.

Well, people shouldn't judge things only by how they look.

By the way...a steam shovel,...rather old-fashioned, isn't it?

It would be nice to maybe -- maybe -- believe in something.

MIKE                      MARY ANNE                      MAYOR HENRY B. SWAP                      HENRY, JR.

#### ACTIVITY

Make up a character of your own. How would this person talk, act, and dress? What is his or her name? Write a few lines of dialogue for him or her.



## *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*

Teachers: Please read this section to your students.

### If You Believe

We go to the theatre to enjoy ourselves, but we also go because plays can teach us valuable lessons. ArtsPower's production of *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, you will hear about the themes below.

#### **Friendship**

Mike doesn't give up on Mary Anne. By helping each other out, they accomplish great things. Listen for these song lyrics:

**We work together as a team.  
I start the task; you see it through.  
I may have brawn, but you're the heart.  
C'mon Mary Anne! I need you!**

#### **Outside and Inside**

To most people, Mary Anne seems like an ordinary machine. But Mike knows there's more to her than meets the eye. The way something looks may not tell the whole story. Listen for these song lyrics:

**So you can't judge a book,  
Better take a second look,  
'Cause you can't judge a book  
By what's outside!**

#### **Believing**

Henry Jr., the Mayor's son, learns how important is it to trust yourself. Once you do, you'll be able to trust other people, too. And you just might see things you never saw before! Listen for these song lyrics:

**If you believe,  
Just want it,  
And I swear  
It will be there for you!**

## *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*

Teachers: Please read this section to your students.

## Mike and Mary Anne's World

When we see a play, we pretend that we are in another time and another place. *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, for example, takes place in 1939. How many years ago was that? How might things have been different back then?

### LOOK AT THIS LIST OF PRICES IN 1939\*



- ✓ A car cost \$750.
- ✓ A house cost \$6,400.
- ✓ Bread was 8¢ per loaf.
- ✓ Milk cost 49¢ per gallon.
- ✓ A postage stamp cost 3¢.
- ✓ Gasoline was 19¢ per gallon.



\*source: [www.tvhistory.tv/1939%20QF.htm](http://www.tvhistory.tv/1939%20QF.htm)

### ACTIVITY



Imagine that the year is now 1939. Describe a day in your life. What would you do? What do you see? Do you think you would have enjoyed living back then?

## *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*

Teachers: Please read this section to your students.

### Meet the Author

Virginia Lee Burton was born in 1909 in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. She studied at the California School of Fine Arts, and married George Demetrios in 1931. Burton's two sons, Aristides and Michael, were a great help to her in writing; she wanted to make sure that her stories kept children happy. She wrote and illustrated her most famous work, *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, in 1939. Burton enjoyed giving life to things like houses and shovels and trains, which do not seem alive to most people. She passed away in 1968, but her stories are still read and loved today.



Author Virginia Lee Burton

### Here are some other Virginia Lee Burton books:

*Choo Choo* (1935)

*Calico, the Wonder Horse* (1941)

*The Little House* (1942)

*Katy and the Big Show* (1943)

#### ACTIVITY



Read Virginia Lee Burton's *Katy and the Big Show*. How is this book similar to *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*? How is it different?



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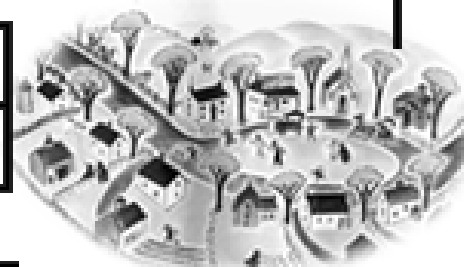
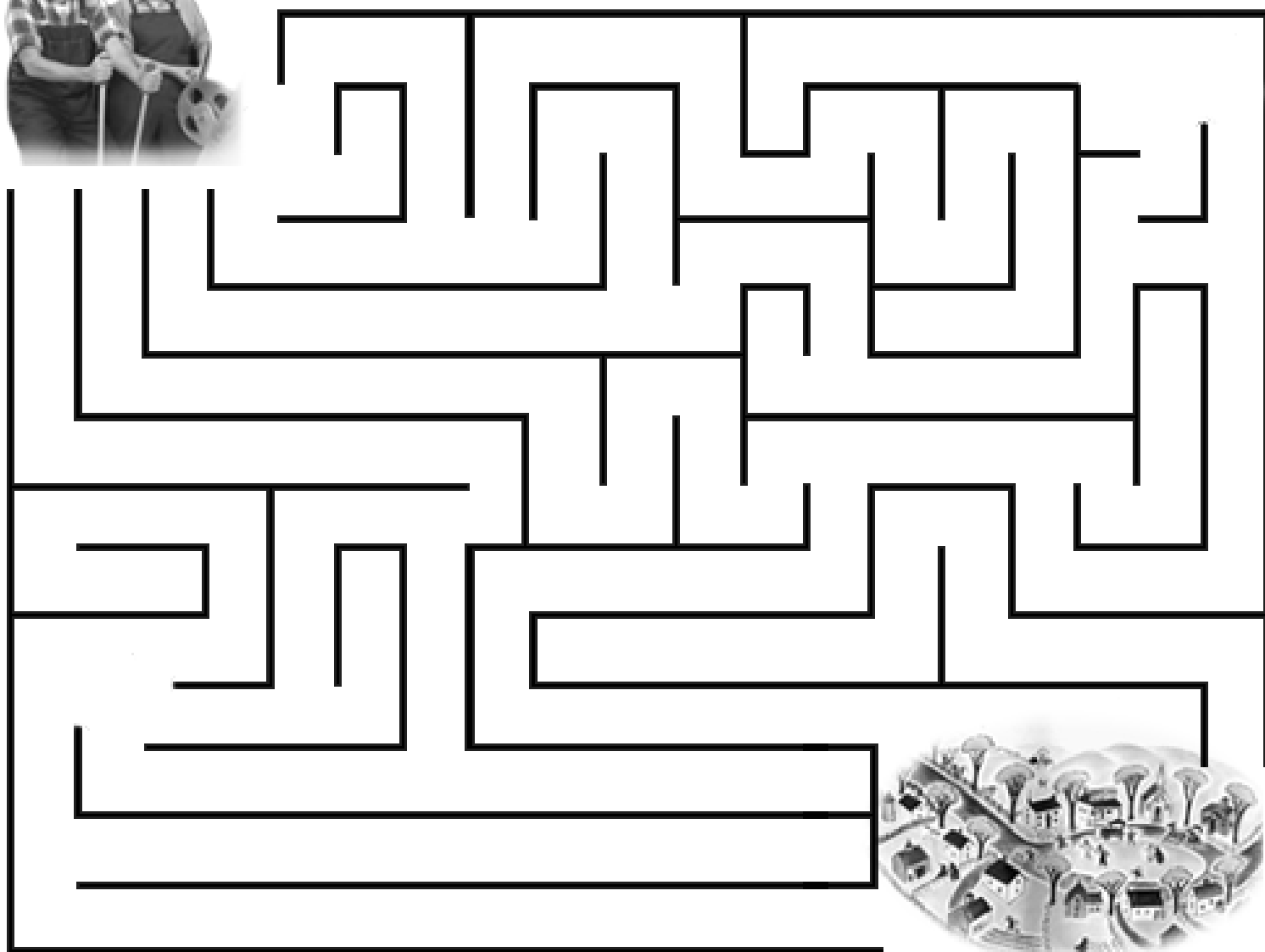


*Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*  
Reproducible Student Activity Page

## Your Turn!

Mike and Mary Anne need to get to Popperville for the big dig, but they have lost their way. Help them find it again before someone else gets the job!

**START**



**FINISH**

## Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

Teachers: Please read this section to your students.

### Tricks of the Trade

Playwrights and actors want to make it easy for us to believe that what is happening on stage is real. Sometimes, though, they use certain tricks which we know people would never actually do:

Sometimes characters "**freeze**" in place.



When this happens, we know that the frozen actors are not part of the onstage action. One of the characters who is not frozen often tells us something important here.

This is a **musical**.



Characters sometimes tell us how they are feeling in song instead of just in words.

**Time** goes by quickly.



In between scenes, any amount of time -- hours, days, weeks -- may pass.

Actors sometimes play more than one role.



This is called **doubling**. For example, the man who plays Mike's boss will also play the Mayor.

### After the Performance

**Teachers:** Please continue the discussion about the performance after you leave the theatre. Here are a few questions that will spark further discussion.

1. Why do you think it helped Mike and Mary Anne so much to hear people cheer for them?
2. How did the Mayor change by the end of the show? What do you think made him change?
3. What was the funniest part of the play? The saddest? The part you liked best?



# Study Buddy



*Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*  
Reproducible Student Activity Page

## Contact Us!

ArtsPower would love to hear what you thought about **Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel**. We invite you to write us a letter in the space below. Please send it to: **ArtsPower National Touring Theatre, 39 South Fullerton Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07042.**

●	My Name:	Date I saw the show:
	My Grade:	
	My School:	
	My favorite character was:	
	I liked that character because:	
●		
	Three words I would use to describe the show are:	
	1.	
	2.	
●	3.	