

INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDE

INTO the WOODS



FEBRUARY 10 - MARCH 5, 2023

**THE FIRST OF TWO PRODUCTIONS IN OUR
CELEBRATION OF STEPHEN SONDHEIM**

**Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by James Lapine
Directed by Bill Berry**

This "Inside the Musical" Guide offers supplementary curriculum containing educational content, interactive activities, opportunities for reflection, and resources based on the themes of the show *Into the Woods*. This guide can be utilized before or after experiencing the show. Questions? Reach out to educationprograms@5thavenue.org

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SYNOPSIS

“Happily Ever After” has never been so complicated.

That’s what Little Red, a Witch, Cinderella, the Baker, and his wife discover as they invade one another’s stories and find themselves tangled in a web of unexpected consequences. They quickly find this web is too big to untangle on their own and that they must work together to set everything right in the kingdom. *Into the Woods* reminds us that only together can we defeat the wolves and giants of the world. With a stunning, unforgettable score featuring “No One is Alone,” “Children Will Listen,” and “Giants in the Sky,” this iconic show will enchant, entrance, and delight!

A Tony Award®-winning Broadway hit and feature film sensation, *Into the Woods* continues to enthrall theater lovers more than three decades after its creation. This is the first of a rare and remarkable two-show celebration and exploration of the theatrical genius of Stephen Sondheim.



Watch “The Mind of Stephen Sondheim, Part 1,” the *Into the Woods* Show Talks with Albert Evans.

[CLICK HERE](#) or scan the QR code to access.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN



Narrator

Self-important but rational



Baker

Devoted but tentative



Baker's Wife

Clever but high-handed



Witch

Decisive but overbearing



Little Red Ridinghood

Plucky but impetuous



Wolf

Cunning but single-minded



Cinderella

Kind hearted but indecisive



Cinderella's Stepmother

Self-preserving but cruel



Cinderella's Stepsisters

Ambitious but selfish



Cinderella's Mother

Comforting but distant



Rapunzel

Inquisitive but vulnerable



Rapunzel's Prince

Passionate but fickle



Cinderella's Father

Available but oblivious



Cinderella's Prince

Dashing but unscrupulous



Giant

Menacing but grief-stricken



Mysterious Man

Helpful but enigmatic



Jack's Mother

Protective but overwhelmed



Milky White

Mooooo



Jack

Naive but tenacious



Steward

Dutiful but inflexible

INTO THE MUSIC OF *THE WOODS*

By Albert Evans, Dramaturg



Young Stephen Sondheim loved going to the movies of the 1930s and '40s. He was mighty impressed by their symphonic background scores, many of them by great European composers like Max Steiner and Bernard Herrmann, whose score for the 1945 melodrama *Hangover Square* was a major influence on Sondheim's own *Sweeney Todd*.

After graduating from Williams College in 1949, Sondheim wanted to expand his compositional resources. He studied privately with composer Milton Babbitt, one of the most extreme of the avant-garde, and a pioneer in electronic music.

In their lessons, Milton would teach Sondheim the latest techniques of taking a random series of notes, then playing it backwards, upside down, and upside down and backwards. Sondheim had no interest in Babbitt's music, but he would later apply his teacher's way of getting the most out of just a few notes when writing his own kind of tonal music, as you'll hear in *Into the Woods*.

The music of *Into the Woods* is largely built on a few short themes, musical "motifs." Some of them are quite easy to spot, once you know what you're looking for. Here are three examples.

The very first sung words in the musical are "I wish" — two notes, right next to each other. From those two tones,

Sondheim builds an entire song, "Into the Woods," by repeating them, playing them going up, down, and yes, backwards.

IN-TO / THE WOODS

IT'S TIME / TO GO

I HATE / TO LEAVE

I HAVE / TO THOUGH...

Another thing you'll hear over and over is the "Magic Bean" motif: five notes as the Baker counts the beanstalk beans into Jack's hand. This will be transformed into Rapunzel's wordless chant, Jack's excited "Giants in the Sky," the Witch's mournful "Stay with Me," and appears as a countermelody in several other songs.

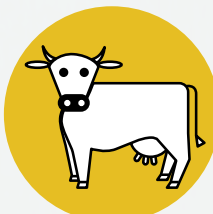
The most frequent motif throughout *Into the Woods* is the steady "chunk chunk chunk chunk" rhythm that sends the characters on their various journeys. Not a melody, it's a crunchy cluster of low notes expressing effort and determination. And isn't that what we all need on a quest?

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION



After you experience the show, reflect on the following questions:

1. Which character did you relate to the most and why?
2. What is a wish that would make you go “into the woods”?
3. The “woods” can be symbolic and represent many different things to different people. What are the woods in your life?
4. Reflect on a time when you’ve had a big wish. Did your wish come true? What happened after that and how did it impact you?
5. What is it like to feel responsible for someone else’s wish?
6. What deeper role does the Narrator’s character play in the musical and how do they impact the story? How does the story change when the Narrator is no longer present in their role?
7. Could you help a person that you care about make their wish come true?
8. What wishes do the characters make that take on a life of their own? What paths do these wishes unintentionally carve out for the characters?
9. What do you wish to leave behind for future generations?
10. What do you imagine might happen next for each of the characters? What lesson(s) did they learn (or not)?



FAIRY TALES & REPRESENTATION

Into the Woods contains adaptations of several popular fairy tales, including Cinderella, Rapunzel, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Little Red Riding Hood.

Fairy Tale (noun): a story about magical and imaginary beings and lands; an instance of a folklore genre that takes the form of a short story; a story in which improbable events lead to a “happy” ending.

Fairy Tales are popular stories that exist in many different versions, cultures, and languages. Follow the steps below to reflect on the representation found in your go-to fairy tales and expand your own library and experience with fairy tales through the list below!

1. Brainstorm a list of fairy tales you know. Work on your own or with others to brainstorm a list of fairy tales you know or are familiar with, starting with the stories found in *Into the Woods*. Maybe you know them as books, movies, or stories that have been told to you throughout the years.
2. Reflect on similarities and what is not represented. Reflect on your brainstorm list and think about what fairy tales you're familiar with and what version you know. You could even look at pictures of the characters you know from the books or movies you're familiar with as a visual guide. Use phrases like “I notice...” or “I observe...” to point out similarities between these characters and stories. Your observations can include things like race, culture, language, gender, disability, etc., when reflecting on the different characters and experiences that are included in these stories.

Use these questions as guiding prompts for your reflection:

- What similarities did you find between the fairy tales you know?
 - Do you feel that these characters and stories represent a wide variety of cultures? Were there any types of characters or stories you noticed were missing or excluded from your list?
 - To connect with more fairy tales, stories, or characters outside of what you already know, what additional identities and stories do you want to see?
3. Find ways to connect with stories and characters that represent cultures and experiences outside of what you might already know. Below is a list of suggestions as a starting place for inspiration. Keep in mind that this is just a starting place, and there is so much more wonderful content out there to continue exploring!

BOOK LIST

The books listed below include versions of fairy tales, folk tales, and other stories with different races, cultures, languages, countries, ethnicities, LGBTQ+, and disabilities represented, including options for both children's stories and young adult novels. We invite you to continue searching and connecting with additional titles.

We recommend that each person or family determine which book(s) are age appropriate and connect with your local library to check them out!

A Curse So Dark and Lonely

by Brigid Kemmerer

Beanstalk: An Unforgettably

Magical Journey by Lola Sapphire

Brothers of the Knight

by Debbie Allen

Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella

by Robert D. San Souci

Cinderella is Dead by Kalynn Bayron

Dan and Diesel by Charlotte Hudson

Featherless/Desplumado

by Juan Felipe Herrera

Forest of a Thousand

Lanterns by Julie C. Dao

Geekerella by Ashley Poston

Girl, Serpent, Thorn by

Melissa Bashardoust

God of Neverland: A Defenders of

Lore Novel by Gama Ray Martinez

Kami and the Yaks by

Andrea Stenn Stryer

La Princesa and the Pea by Susan
Middleton Elya, Juana Martinez-Neal

Little Red Gliding Hood by Tara Lazar

Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood

Story from China by Ed Young

Looking After Louis by Lesley Ely

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An
African Tale by John Steptoe

My Pal, Victor/Mi amigo, Victor

by Diane Gonzales Bertrand

Princess and the Peas

by Rachel Himes

Princess Princess Ever

After by Kay O'Neill

Promised Land by Adam

Reynolds, Chaz Harris

Rapunzel by Chloe Perkins

Rubia and the Three Osos

by Susan Middleton Elya

Saltypie: A Choctaw Journey

from Darkness into Light by

Tim Tingle, Karen Clarkson

Spinning Silver by Naomi Novik

The Blind Hunter by Kristina Rodanas

The Ghanaian Goldilocks

by Tamara Pizzoli

The Korean Cinderella

by Shirley Climo

The Lunar Chronicles

by Marissa Meyer

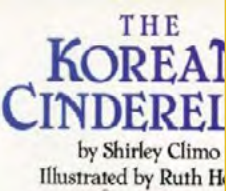
The Prince and the
Dressmaker by Jen Wang

The Royal Heart by Greg McGoan

Skin of the Sea by Natasha Bowen

The Wrath and the Dawn

by Renée Ahdieh



WRITE YOUR OWN (HAPPY?) ENDING

The second act of *Into The Woods* explores what happens after the “happily ever after” we expect at the end of most fairy tales. Exercise your creativity and stretch your imagination to write an alternate ending to a fairy tale or continue a familiar story of your own!

Some things to consider:

- Which parts from the traditional version of the story do you really like and want to keep?
- Are there updates that would make the story more meaningful for audiences of today?
- What character grabs your attention the most? What might their point of view add to the story?

Fairy tales to explore:

- *The Frog Prince*
- *Beauty & The Beast*
- *Snow White & The Seven Dwarves*
- *Sleeping Beauty*
- *Hansel & Gretel*
- *The Little Mermaid*
- *Rumpelstiltskin*
- *Goldilocks & The Three Bears*
- *The Princess & The Pea*
- *The Elves & The Shoemaker*

what happens after...

tell a story..

Will it be a
happy ending?

Photo Credit: Edz Norton

FAIRY TALE TABLEAUX

Tableau: a frozen picture representing a scene from a story.

Fairy tales might seem simple or even overly-familiar, but *Into the Woods* shows us that these stories are often more complex than they appear at first glance. Here's a game that will test your storytelling abilities as well as your acting skills!

1. Brainstorm the titles of some familiar fairy tales. Write each title on a slip of paper and place the papers into a container.
2. Divide your group into teams of 3-4 people. Each team draws a title from the container of fairy tales.
3. Teams get 5-10 minutes to create three tableaux that illustrate the story on their piece of paper. One tableau should be from the beginning of the story, one tableau from the middle, and one for the end. Rehearse the tableaux in order so your group can move from one to the next smoothly.
4. Each group takes a turn presenting their tableaux. At the end of each group's three tableaux, the other group(s) guess what fairy tale was acted out.

Not enough people for teams? Try making three statues or drawing three simple pictures for another person to guess!

