

NIGHTINGALE

NIGHTINGALE

By Hans Christian Andersen

Themes: Animals and Pets, Friendship, Folktales,

Music

Grade Level: PreK–4

Running Time: 25 minutes

SUMMARY

This version of the classic Hans Christian Anderson tale is set in the court of the emperor of China. A beautiful nightingale sings in the woods and gardens that surround the emperor's palace. The bird's song is so enchanting that it gets written about in a book, which is how the emperor becomes aware of the nightingale's existence. The emperor orders the bird brought to him. For a time the bird is the emperor's favorite. The emperor even grants the nightingale her wish not to be caged. All is well until the emperor receives a gift: a mechanical bird covered in dazzling jewels. The new bird looks far more beautiful than the nightingale, and sings a tune anyone can learn. When the nightingale will not sing a duet with the windup bird, she is banished from the court on pain of death. The mechanical bird, of course, eventually breaks down. And when the emperor becomes ill, the machine's song can't heal him. A kitchen maid, who has been the nightingale's best friend throughout the story, finds the bird in the forest and brings it back to the palace. The emperor is restored to health, and finally learns the difference between music and noise.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a story based on a folktale.
- Children will follow a plot that has musical elements.
- Children will make distinctions between

enduring art and passing fads.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Ask students to define what a nightingale is. Make sure they understand that a nightingale is known for its beautiful song. Inform students that the story they are about to view is based on an old folktale about a nightingale and an emperor. Ask students for their ideas about what an emperor looks like and how an emperor lives. What does a nightingale have that an emperor does not? Ask students to think about that question as they view the program.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Prompt students to help you retell the story. Ask Who, What, Where, When, and Why questions to help them recall the details. Discuss the setting, characters, and plot. For setting, ask students to recall what the palace looked like and where it was placed. What were the signs of the emperor's importance? How did the palace make it possible for the emperor to be the last person to know about the nightingale? As you discuss characters, focus on the emperor first. Then compare the other members of the court: the courtiers, the footman, and the kitchen maid. Who was the best person? After reviewing the plot, ask students what lesson the emperor learned. Discuss the difference between enduring art and beauty and passing fads, between the music money can pay for and real music.

Connect the story to science by asking students to students research nightingales. Is their song really noticeably different from that of other birds? Have them check nature guides, audio and video tapes about birding, and Internet sites to do their research. Reports to the class should include facts about any species of nightingales that live near you.

Connect the story to social studies by locating China on a map or globe. From current travel magazines and other sources, find pictures of modern Japan. Ask students to compare modern China to the pictures in the program. Lead them to the conclusion that the story is set a long time ago. Encourage interested students to learn more about the history of China. Students can visit web sites about tourism in China in order to see palaces and gardens that look like those in the video.

Connect the story to art, music and drama by helping students put on a live performance or puppet play of the story. Sliding paper walls, folding screens, and other features of palace architecture are easy to reproduce as puppet sets. Another advantage of puppets is that the sound track can be recorded. Students can take turns being puppeteers.

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THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

The Little Match Girl

By Hans Christian Andersen, adapted by
Maxine Fisher

Themes: Feelings, Growth and Change, Music

Grade Level: 2–6

Running Time: 26 minutes

SUMMARY

This program retells a classic tale, placing it in a modern urban setting and giving it a positive ending. The story is presented as a play, performed at a city YMCA. In the play, the main character, Angela, lives with her family and other homeless people in an abandoned subway station. On New Year's Eve, Angela goes to Times Square to sell matches. Around her she sees the extremes of wealth and poverty. She feels what it's like to be ignored and to feel hungry and cold. In spite of her suffering, she also encounters friendship. She meets a homeless dog, whom she names Alfred. They play and huddle together to keep each other warm. Angela lights matches, one at a time. With each match, she is transported to a place where there is food and warmth and where she is happy. Her happiness makes her play and move, helping her keep warm. But the night grows colder and colder. In the morning, people find Angela lying frozen on the sidewalk. Just when it seems that all is lost, Alfred keeps Angela from freezing to death. She is restored to her family, and the people who have passed her by begin working to help homeless people. The program ends with the YMCA actors taking their bows.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a modern adaptation of a classic story.
- Children will empathize with people who are poor and homeless.

- Children will appreciate the importance of friendship and helping others during times of adversity.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

This program contains graphic images of homeless people and many passages that show the darker side of city life. Therefore it's especially important for the teacher to preview the program with the needs of the particular viewers in mind. A good general approach is to emphasize helping the homeless. Open with a general discussion of helping people who need help the most. Show students some examples of work being done in your community to help homeless people. Then introduce the story. Explain that it shows how one community put on a play to raise money. The play is a modern version of an old story called *THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL*.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

In class discussion after viewing, allow students to express their feelings about the story. Encourage them to express their fears and concerns, in open class discussion or private writing. For example, in the story Angela's parents send her out to sell matches. Be aware that many students will interpret that as a metaphor for sending her out to sell drugs. Lead the class into a discussion of the responsibilities of parents. Then ask for students' ideas on how best to help families. As in the opening discussion, emphasize what people in your community are doing to help.

Connect the story to music and dance. Have students replay the program and focus on the sound tracks and the dance moves. How do music and dance express Angela's feelings? How do Angela, Albert and others move to each kind of music?

Encourage students to retell the story, adding music and dance moves of their own.

With older or more advanced students, connect the story to literature and writing. Have students read the original story by Hans Christian Anderson. Ask them to compare the Anderson tale to the program. Encourage them to rewrite other Hans Christian Anderson tales into modern settings and situations.

Connect the story to social studies by discussing how communities rebuild and change. Make note of buildings in your neighborhood that have recently been torn down or built. Bring in old photographs to show changes over the years. Discuss the effects of such changes on the people in the neighborhood. In the discussion, try to convey the complexity of issues such as urban development and homelessness.

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THE RED SHOES

The Red Shoes

By Hans Christian Andersen, adapted by Maxine Fisher

Themes: Feelings, Friendship, Growth and Change, Music

Grade Level: 2–6

Running Time: 27 minutes

SUMMARY

This story is a retelling of a tale by Hans Christian Andersen. The narrator is Alphonse, a neighborhood shoemaker. The story begins on a block of apartment buildings in a rundown neighborhood. Two girls, Lisa and Jenny, are best friends who dream of being ballet dancers. Lisa especially needs her dreams. Her older brother is very sick, and her family life is not happy. Finally Lisa's brother dies. It is a dark time, but after a few months the family gets a surprise: they have won the lottery, and are now millionaires! Even as she is saying goodbye, Lisa's behavior starts to change. Before long she has cut off her old friends. At Christmas time Alphonse takes Jenny to a performance of *The Nutcracker*, which Lisa and her mother also attend. Afterwards, the girls see each other's reflections when they both look at an exhibit of famous dancers' shoes. Lisa snubs Jenny. To cheer Jenny up, Alphonse makes her a pair of red ballet shoes. Meanwhile, Lisa is insisting on a pair of red shoes, and her mother remembers Alphonse's skills. In Alphonse's shop, Lisa sees the red shoes. Alphonse won't sell the shoes, so Lisa steals them. She puts the shoes on—and then can't stop dancing. The shoes carry her back to memories of dancing with her friend and with her brother, and teach her to value love and friendship over material things.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a modern story based on a classic tale.
- Children will identify and appreciate qualities that enable people to overcome misfortunes, including ingenuity, patience, hope, imagination, and perseverance.
- Children will appreciate the use of humor in both words and pictures.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce the title of the story and inform students that magical red shoes are important to the plot. Ask them for ideas on what putting on a pair of magic shoes might do. If students know the Anderson tale, ask students to tell the others how the shoes affected a person who put them on. Alert students to watch for the red shoes and notice how the shoes change the attitudes and feelings of the characters.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

In recalling and discussing the story, focus on the character of Lisa. What are Lisa's good points and bad points? Ask students to describe their own impressions and to recall the exact details that gave that impression. Discuss how Lisa changes throughout the story. Then ask students what made the red shoes magic. Help students make the connection between Lisa's emotions over the loss of her brother and the big changes in her life and her feelings upon putting on the shoes.

Connect the story to music and dance by having students prepare and perform a musical and ballet of the story. Have students read the original Anderson tale and see movie versions. Encourage students to use the forms of music and dance they

know best, from classical ballet to hip-hop.

Connect the story to music and history by having students research and report on the history of classical ballet. Encourage students visit the web sites of ballet companies for inside looks at the world of ballet today.

Connect the story to writing by focusing on the feelings. Discuss how dance and other forms of art can help people express their feelings and overcome adversity. Suggest that students write imaginary letters or e-mail messages between Lisa and Jenny. Encourage students to keep journals that record their own feelings about traumatic events in their lives.

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