Please be sure to share this guide with all teachers who are taking their students to see this production. Photocopy or download additional copies from www.firststage.org!

Based upon the motion picture *A Christmas Story*, written by Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown and Bob Clark, and *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash* by Jean Shepherd

**School Dates:**
**NOV. 24 – DEC. 24, 2006**
A Note to Teachers and Parents

Dear Teachers and Parents,

A CHRISTMAS STORY is a holiday classic for kids and adults of all ages. Told in the style of a memoir, the audience is transported back to 1938 in Hohman, Indiana, to share the Christmas recollections of Ralphie Parker. This well-known tale, written by Jean Shepherd, draws on the humor and absurdity of a Midwestern family’s daily life through the eyes of a ten-year-old boy. Yet, despite the laughter and wit of this memoir, A CHRISTMAS STORY reveals the unconditional love and support this family possesses for each other during the holidays, and all year round.

Enclosed in this enrichment guide is a range of materials and activities intended to help you discover connections within the play and throughout the curriculum. It is our hope that you will use the experience of attending the theater and seeing A CHRISTMAS STORY with your students as a teaching tool. As educators and parents, you know best the needs and abilities of your students. Use this guide to best serve your students—pick and choose, or adapt, any of these suggestions for discussions or activities.

We encourage you to take advantage of the enclosed student worksheets—please feel free to photocopy the sheets for your students, or the entire guide for the benefit of other teachers.

Enjoy the show!
Julia Newby
Education Director
414-267-2971
jnewby@firststage.org

ATTLENDING THE PLAY—GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

Discuss proper audience behavior with your students. While applause and laughter, when appropriate, are appreciated and anticipated, unnecessary noise or movement by audience members can distract the actors and other audience members and affect the quality of the performance for everyone. It is very important that students understand how their behavior can affect a live performance. You, the teacher, and other adult chaperones for your group have the primary responsibility for being sure your students behave appropriately. We ask that chaperones sit among the students, and not together in a group behind the students. Our ushers will react to disruptions and attempt to quell them, and we reserve the right to remove any student causing a distraction from the theater.

FIRST STAGE POLICIES

• Because of union regulations the use of recording equipment and cameras is strictly forbidden in the theater.

• Food, drink, candy and gum are not permitted in the theater.

• Any portable radios brought to the theater by students will be kept by the House Manager during the performance and returned to the group leader at the conclusion of the play.

• There is no smoking in the theater, by order of the Fire Marshal.

• Should a student become ill, suffer an injury or have another problem, please escort him or her to the theater lobby and ask an usher to notify the House Manager immediately.

• In the unlikely event of a general emergency, the theater lights will go on and someone will come on stage to inform the audience of the problem. Remain in your seats, visually locate the nearest exit and wait for First Stage ushers to guide your group from the theater.

SEATING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: If you have special seating needs for any student(s) and did not indicate your need when you ordered your tickets, please call the Box Office at (414) 267-2962 NOW. Our knowledge of your needs will enable us to serve you better upon your group’s arrival at the theater.

A CHRISTMAS STORY is most appreciated by adults, teens and young people ages 4 and older.
To begin the story, Ralph Parker, the narrator, takes us back to 1938, to his childhood home in Hohman, Indiana – and introduces us to his former self: a ten-year-old daydreamer named Ralphie. It is only a few weeks before Christmas, and Ralphie is diligently searching for the perfect gifts for his mother, father, and younger brother, Randy. Ralphie is also scheming to find the precise way to let his parents know what he wants for Christmas—an Official Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-Shot Range Model Air Rifle.

Ralphie daydreams about being a cowboy hero, rescuing his family from the clutches of masked desperados. As the dangerous bandits – armed with plastic water pistols and rubber daggers – menace his family, Ralphie saves the day with his 200-shot Carbine Action Range Model Air Rifle.

Meanwhile, in the real world, Ralphie’s family gathers around the kitchen table for their usual breakfast: Randy refuses to eat, so Mom tricks him into eating by pretending he is a little piggy; and the “the Old Man,” as Ralphie calls his father, enters the house – after his daily mauling by the neighbors’ countless, barking, snarling bloodhounds – with the newspaper and his Giant Jackpot Puzzle.

As Mom cleans the breakfast dishes, she asks Ralphie what he wants for Christmas. Without thinking, Ralphie blurts out: “I want an Official Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-Shot Range Model Air Rifle.” His mother replies with the classic mother block: “You’ll shoot your eye out.” Ralphie casually dismisses the idea, but realizes that this may prove to be the most difficult challenge of his life – to persuade his parents to buy him the greatest Christmas present in the world.

As the boys head off to school, they are met by Flick and Schwartz—Ralphie’s two best friends. Walking in the snow, the group is ambushed by Scut Farkas—the meanest, toughest bully in all of Hoham, Indiana. After enduring their daily dose of terror, the boys escape Scut’s tight grasp, and finally arrive at school.

At recess, Ralphie and his classmates gather around the frozen flagpole, debating whether or not a person’s tongue will stick to it. Schwartz insists that it can happen; Flick takes the opposing side. When Schwartz “tripled dog dares” Flick to touch his tongue to the pole, Flick is practically obliged to follow through. As his tongue touches the flagpole—it sticks! Everyone stares in wonder, as the recess bell rings. Everyone panics and rushes back into the classroom, leaving Flick stuck to the flagpole—alone in the cold. When Miss Shields, their teacher, learns of Flick’s predicament, she calls firemen, who release Flick from his bondage, and wrap his tongue in bandages.

After the class has been sufficiently scolded, Miss Shields assigns them homework: they must write a persuasive theme. Ralphie recognizes this assignment as the perfect way for him to express his desperate longing for the Official Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-Shot Range Model Air Rifle, and he sets out to convince Miss Shields that it truly is the best Christmas gift for a ten-year-old boy.

Back at the Parker household, Ralphie’s parents repeatedly find advertisements for the Official Red Ryder Air Rifle, which Ralphie – who knows he must hit his parents from all sides if he wants to persuade them – has slyly placed in their mail, magazines, and newspapers. But this is no ordinary
December night. The Old Man has just received word that he is the recipient of a “major award,” having won a contest sponsored by the World of Sports. A large wooden box arrives by special delivery and the family is breathless with anticipation – it could be anything! – as they dig into the exotic crate, searching for the mysterious major award. It’s a lamp! Shaped like a female leg, actual size, and wearing a spiked high-heel and mesh stocking, it is topped with a fringed lamp shade. The Old Man is beside himself, and wants to display this award for the whole neighborhood to see. The boys are also eager to show it off, but their mother is mortified by the provocative lamp and doesn’t want a single soul to see it. The debate over the display of the leg lamp – a continuous, heated issue between Ralphie’s parents – has begun.

Later that night, the family heads over to Goldblatt’s Department Store, so Ralphie’s parents can do their Christmas shopping, while Ralphie and Randy wait in line to visit Santa Claus. Ralphie is certain that, with Santa as an ally, he’s bound to find the rifle under their tree on Christmas morning. But, to Ralphie’s astonishment, Santa’s reply is a major setback: “You’ll shoot your eye out!” Though the conspiracy against the coveted rifle deepens, Ralphie continues to daydream: with his trusty rifle by his side, he could surely rescue his family and friends from any peril.

The infamous leg lamp continues to be a major point of controversy. One night, as the Old Man is in the basement, futzing with their temperamental furnace, the lamp mysteriously falls over and breaks into a hundred pieces. The Old Man rushes up from the basement to see his major award shattered on the living room floor. Though Mom insists that the disaster was accidental, the Old Man accuses her of jealousy, pointing out that she never wanted the lamp in the house. The demise of the lamp remains an unsolved mystery, but Mom is nevertheless relieved that the leg lamp is no longer on display to the entire neighborhood!

On the day before Christmas vacation begins, Ralphie gets his theme paper back, and is crushed to learn that he has received a C+ for his ingenious, well-crafted essay. As he heads home, his dreams dashed and his spirit wounded, Scut Farkas hits him in the face with a snowball. This is the final straw for Ralphie, and before he knows what he is doing, he begins to pummel Farkas mercilessly. Mom and Randy rush in to pull Ralphie off of Farkas, and Ralphie is terrified to think of how the Old Man will react when Mom tells him about the fight. That night, though, when Mom makes light of the fight and changes the subject, Ralphie realizes, “from then on, things were different between me and my mother.”

On Christmas morning, after all the presents are opened, the Old Man asks Ralphie if he got everything he wanted. Disappointed because he hasn’t received the Red Ryder air rifle, Ralphie shrugs. Then the Old Man “notices” another gift, hidden behind a table. Ralphie tears it open to find the Red Ryder air rifle! He is speechless and exuberant with joy, and rushes into the yard to test it out. On his first shot, the BB ricochets off a garbage can and rockets straight for his eye — knocking his eyeglasses to the ground. Frantic, Ralphie steps on the glasses, accidentally crushing them. He quickly comes up with a story to tell his parents: he was hit by an icicle. Just as Ralphie works up the courage to face his parents, the neighbors’ bloodhounds burst into the kitchen and eat the entire Christmas turkey, which has been cooling on the counter. Without a Christmas dinner, the Parkers are forced to go to a local Chinese restaurant, and have Peking duck for their holiday meal. Later that night, Mom apologizes for breaking the leg lamp, and the Old Man admits it was pretty “jazzy.” Peace is been restored to the Parker household, and they all enjoy their merriest Christmas ever.
PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. Is there a special Christmas that you remember more than any other Christmas? What happened during that Christmas that made it so memorable and special?

2. Have you ever wanted a present that your parents didn’t want to get you? What was that present? Why do you think your parents didn’t want to get it for you? What did you do to try to convince them to get it for you?

3. What is a bully? Have you ever been bullied at school, or witnessed someone else being bullied? What can you do to prevent someone from bullying you or someone else?

4. What is the best gift you have ever received, and why? What is the worst gift you ever received, and why? What is the best gift you ever gave someone?

5. Does your family have any Christmas, or holiday, traditions? What are those traditions, and why are they special to your family?

6. Do you ever daydream? What do you daydream about?

7. What makes Christmas, or another holiday, unlike any other time of the year for you and your family?

A true American original, Jean Shepherd was a writer, humorist, satirist, sportscaster, actor, and master storyteller. Drawing from life experience, he wove tales of the joy, humor, intrigue, and angst of growing up.

For almost three decades, Shepherd – called “the first radio novelist” by Marshall McLuan – told stories to eager radio audiences. Between 1950 and 1954, Shepherd performed a nightly radio show in Cincinnati called “Rear Bumpers,” which was eventually developed for television. In 1956, Shepherd moved to New York, where he treated listeners to a nightly dose of genius – for 21 years. Each show was a menagerie of commentary, silly songs, jokes, and other digressions, all centered around a single tale.

Shepherd was an early contributor to the Village Voice, most notably in his “Night People” column. He also wrote for several magazines, including Car & Driver, Omni, and even Mad Magazine. He contributed comments in the 1994 documentary Norman Rockwell: An American Portrait, and his voice can be heard in the documentary video Chicago White Sox: A Visual History.

Shepherd was also an accomplished actor, beginning his career in Chicago at the Goodman Theatre, and at a nightclub on Rush Street. He appeared on Broadway in New Faces and Voice of the Turtle, and played a dance instructor in the 1964 film The Light Fantastic. In the 1970s, he took his talents to television, in a series of humorous narratives for PBS called Jean Shepherd’s America – later continued on the PBS New Jersey Network as Shepherd’s Pie – in which he satirized the more offbeat aspects of America.

Shepherd made countless personal appearances over the years, including visits to Carnegie Hall, New York City’s Town Hall, and many schools and colleges. He often visited Hammond, Indiana – his childhood home – where he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Purdue University in 1995. Even with his extensive repertoire, he always brought original and fresh stories to his old and new fans.

Jean Shepherd passed away in 1999 at a hospital near his home in Sanibel Island, Florida – at the age of 78. His most popular and well-known work remains the 1983 film A Christmas Story – now an American classic – which he co-wrote and narrated.

From: www.keyflux.com/shep/
Now in our house we always opened one present on Christmas Eve. Other less fortunate people, I had heard, waited until Christmas morning before they were allowed to open anything. I always thought of our family as more civilized. Those great heaps of tissuey, crinkly, sparkly, enigmatic packages were a terrible temptation. That one opened present of Christmas Eve helped relieve the pressure. -Ralph

1. Ask the class if they can define the term tradition. Give them examples of family traditions you follow, as well as those traditions of other families, cultures, and communities that you are aware of.

2. Hand out the Venn diagram worksheet (see the back of this packet). Have the students label one circle everyday and the other circle holiday. Explain to the students how a Venn diagram works: students should write down activities and rituals they do daily in the Everyday circle; write down activities, rituals, and traditions they do only on holiday in the Holiday circle; and activities and rituals they do everyday and on holidays in the area where the two circles meet.
   a. The Venn diagram activity can be done individually, in small groups, or as a class.
   b. Instead of writing Holiday as the title for the second circle, you may choose to specify that category and title it as Christmas Day.

3. After the Venn diagram exercise is completed, discuss the similarities and differences between a typical day and a holiday with the class.

4. Ask students to think of one special holiday family tradition or holiday family memory they have. The holiday tradition or memory does not need to be connected to Christmas, Kwanza, or Hanukkah—it can be a special winter memory students may have.

5. Pass out the holiday ornament worksheet (see the back of this packet). Ask students to write one or two sentences inside the ornament, describing their favorite holiday family tradition or memory. Once they have written their tradition or memory inside the ornament, allow the students to decorate the ornament.

6. Cut out the tradition/memory ornaments and put them up around the classroom, to remind everyone of all the different and unique ways the holiday season is special!

Seasonal Science: How Does That Happen?

SCHWARTZ: All right then, if you don’t believe me, I double dare ya!
FLICK: So you’re sayin’ if I put my tongue on this post it’ll stick!
SCHWARTZ: Yeah!
FLICK: That’s dumb! It wouldn’t happen!
SCHWARTZ: Then go ahead! Prove I’m wrong!

Lips and tongues stick to metal in winter for two reasons: the metal is colder than an ice cube, and it’s a dry surface. When your moist lips or tongue touch a cold metal surface, the saliva on your mouth freezes and sticks. Metal telephone poles, or fence posts, are large enough to remain cold even after you touch them, so the skin stays frozen until it is painfully ripped off. This doesn’t happen when you lick an ice cube. First of all, an ice cube is usually only a few degrees below the freezing point of water (the temperature of most household freezers). On a cold day a telephone pole will be the temperature of the outside air, which can be as low as 20 or 30 degrees below zero. That lower temperature makes the liquid on your lips freeze much faster. The second reason: an ice cube is made of frozen water. When your warm tongue touches it, the heat of your mouth melts the surface of the ice, producing a liquid layer that acts like a lubricant so your tongue can slide along the surface. That’s why your tongue doesn’t stick. A metal pole is dry, so the extra liquid layer doesn’t form. Finally, the pole is much larger than an ice cube, so it takes much more energy to heat it up. Your mouth is too small to make much of a difference, so the pole stays cold and your lips stay frozen to it.

From: www.dmt123.com/other-health/1977-dmt123.html
Preparing for school during an Indiana winter was like getting ready for extended deep-sea diving. Long johns, three pairs of socks, high tops, overshoes, corduroy knickers, flannel sheepskin coat, gloves, mittens over the gloves, stocking cap, ear flap hat over the stocking cap, and a scarf wound around and around until only the faint glint of two eyes peering out of a mound of moving dry goods told you that there was a kid in there. Somewhere. —Ralph

Living in Wisconsin, near Lake Michigan, we are used to cold winters, and dressing for the cold weather. Hold a discussion with your students, asking them how they dress when the weather is cold—to stay warm and avoid getting wet:

- What clothes do you wear in cold weather?
- How do you choose the best clothes to keep you warm, dry, and protected from the wind?
- How do you choose the thickness of your clothes, and the number of layers you will wear?

After sharing responses to the questions listed above, complete this science experiment with the class to find out which clothing material offers the best protection against the cold.

**Materials**

- Eight 8-inch squares of each fabric: wool, cotton, down, fur, nylon, polypropylene, fiberfill
- 14 baby food jars
- warm water
- 8 thermometers
- 8 rubber bands

1. As a class, label each baby food jar 1—14, and place the jars in pairs (i.e. 1—2, 3—4, 5—6, etc.).
2. Fill each jar with warm water and record the temperature of each jar.
3. Wrap one jar in each pair with two layers of a fabric—each different type of fabric wrapped around only one jar—securing the fabric with a rubber band.
4. After 20 minutes of having one jar in the pair wrapped in a fabric and one exposed, record the temperature of each jar again.
5. Compare the temperature differences between the jars wrapped in fabric and the ones left uncovered.
6. Compare the temperature differences between the jars wrapped in fabric: which fabrics retained the most heat and which fabrics lost the most heat?
7. After observing the temperature differences between the wrapped and bare jars, as well as the temperature differences between fabrics, share this information with your students:

   When dressing for the cold, you need to think in four layers.
   - First Layer - tight, nonabsorbent materials to keep body moisture away
   - Second Layer - loose fit, trap air and keep body moisture away
   - Third Layer - Insulation Layer: provides thickness
   - Outer/Shell Layer - windproof, waterproof, and breathable to let moisture escape

8. With this information, split the class into groups of four. Give each group one baby food jar and a piece of each different type of fabric.
9. Have each group fill the jar with warm water and record the temperature with a thermometer.
10. Using the layer guide listed above, each group should then attempt to layer their jar so that it will lose the least amount of heat.
11. After twenty minutes, have each group record the temperature of their layered jar and compare the temperature differences with the other groups in the class. In what order did each group layer their jar, and why? Which group’s layering was most successful, and why?

Adapted from: http://www.spotsylvania.k12.va.us/nspt/teach/linsul01.htm; lesson play by Thomas C. Spencer
Red Ryder, star of radio, television and the silver screen, is probably the most successful western hero ever to come out of comics. Red Ryder was a popular American fictional cowboy created by Stephen Slesinger and drawn by artist-author Fred Harman. Additional characters introduced in this first comic included Red’s long-time girlfriend, Beth Wilder; his long-time enemy, Ace Hanlon; his sidekick, Little Beaver; and his trusty horse, Thunder. The Red Ryder comic strip was first published in newspapers throughout the country on Sunday, November 6, 1938. The comic strip ran from until 1964 in over 750 newspapers throughout the nation, with a readership of 14 million. Radio shows, films, and television shows developed from the popular Red Ryder comic strip. Dell Comic Books began publishing Red Ryder comic books in August, 1941. The Red Ryder comic book was published until 1957, 151 issues in all. The Red Ryder radio series began in February, 1942, and lasted for a decade. The radio show was broadcast three times a week by the Mutual Broadcasting System. Between 1944 and 1947, Red Ryder appeared in 23 feature length B-films – movies made on a low, or modest budget. A Red Ryder television show began in 1956, but it only lasted for 39 episodes—one season. Red Ryder could also be seen on the back cover of hundreds of comic books and magazines for boys, as the spokesootn for Daisy Air Rifles. Daisy Air Rifles manufactured a BB gun with Red Ryder’s name and picture on it.

Red Ryder is a fictional character: a cowboy who lived in the Old West. Do some research to find out how people—including cowboys—lived in America’s western frontier. Use the websites listed below to help you investigate life on the range:
http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/owfrm.htm
http://www.americanwest.com/
http://lonehand.com/

List three different jobs that were prevalent in the Old West:
1.
2.
3.

What were the advantages, as well as the drawbacks, of the lifestyle of the Old West?

From your research, choose one job that you would like to have if you lived back in the 1800’s, during the time of America’s Western Frontier. Describe this job, in the format of a “Position Wanted” ad. Make sure the advertisement includes the approximate salary and specific duties of the job. Also, remember to make the ad appealing and eye-catching!
A daydream is a “dreamlike” musing or fantasy that occurs when you are awake. Although most daydreams last only a few minutes, it is estimated that people daydream for one-third to one-half of their waking hours. Daydreaming is sometimes frowned upon, because it appears that people are not being productive when they are daydreaming. However, new studies prove that daydreaming can actually be beneficial because it boosts productivity.

**Listed below are a number of benefits of daydreaming:**

1. **Relaxation:** Daydreaming allows our brains to take a rest, which in turn, helps us relieve tension and anxiety. After daydreaming, our minds are refreshed and less stressed.

2. **Conflict Management:** Sometimes, by visualizing—or mentally rehearsing—how we might handle a conflict, we feel better able to handle the actual events.

3. **Nurturing of Relationships:** We most often daydream about the people we love. By daydreaming about people we are not always with, it helps to strengthen the relationship and the bonds we have with our family, friends, and other loved ones.

4. **Boosted Productivity:** Taking a few minutes out of a busy schedule to daydream about people, places, and dreams, instead of all the work that needs to get done, helps clear our minds, put us into a better mood, and feel more desire to be productive and get work accomplished.

5. **Increased Creativity and Goal Achievement:** By daydreaming about achieving our goals, wishes, and desires, we actually work harder to make these dreams become a reality. Athletes and performers use visualization techniques to help them perform to their best ability.

6. **Relief from Boredom:** Daydreaming helps to keep our minds stimulated and fresh when we are feeling bored, tired, and without inspiration.

*Taken from: [www.webmd.com/content/Article/96/103910.htm](http://www.webmd.com/content/Article/96/103910.htm), by Christina Frank, 2004*

In *A CHRISTMAS STORY*, Ralphie daydreams about saving his family and friends from rotten bandits and killer pythons with his “Red Ryder 200-shot Carbine Action Range Model Air Rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock."

What sorts of things do you daydream about?

When do you usually daydream?

If your friends were trapped in the jungle, and wild alligators and pythons were coming after them, how would you save them?

In Ralphie’s daydreams, he is always a hero—saving lives and making the world a better place to live. Daydream about how you could be a hero to your family and friends. What would make you a hero? What sort of dangers would you save your family and friends from, and how would you do it?
For this assignment, write a theme to inform or persuade. Your choice. Single page. Watch your margins. Since it’s the holiday season, this will be your only homework assignment for all of next week. But with two weekends and five school days, I expect excellent work. Questions? – Miss Schields

For your assignment, write a persuasive THEME, or essay, to Santa, telling him what you want for Christmas and why you deserve it. Remember, the goal of this theme is to persuade Santa Claus to get you exactly what you want for Christmas because you deserve it!

Some tips to writing persuasive essays:

• The purpose of a persuasive essay is to convince the reader, in this case, Santa Claus, to agree with your viewpoint, or recommendation.
• Use evidence to support your viewpoint. Statistics, facts, and examples will help you to build a strong case for your argument. Appeal to the reader’s sense of logic by presenting specific and relevant evidence in a well-organized manner.
• Consider opposing views. Try to anticipate the concerns and questions that a reader might have about your subject. Responding to these points will give you the chance to explain why your viewpoint or recommendation is the best one.
• Present a strong conclusion. All your evidence and explanations should build toward a strong ending in which you summarize your view in a clear and memorable way.
• TIP: Use a pleasant and reasonable tone in your essay. Sarcasm and name-calling weaken an argument. Logic and fairness will help to keep it strong.

Theme Title:

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
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I found the ad in a magazine called Open Road for Boys. It was a magnificent thing of blanched copy, superb artwork, and subtly contrived catch phrases. It said: “BOYS! At last YOU can own an OFFICIAL RED RYDER carbine action 200-shot RANGE MODEL AIR RIFLE!” And there was a picture of Red Ryder himself. No self-respecting cowboy would be without one. -Ralph

Design your own advertisement!
Think of a product you would really like your parents to get you for a holiday or birthday. This product can be a toy, an article of clothing, a computer or gaming device, even a bike or a go-kart. Think extreme! Think of something you would never imagine your parents getting you…even in your wildest dreams!

Use the space below to create an advertisement for your desired product. What does the advertisement need to include to capture the attention of your parents and convince them to buy it for you?

- What specific images, or pictures, should be included on the advertisement?
- What should the advertisement say about the product?
- What color should the background of the advertisement be?
- What is the layout—the way the advertisement is designed and arranged—of the advertisement?
- How can this product sound appealing, or interesting, to adults—specifically parents?
Flick and Schwartz, my two best friends. At recess, a select group of us always gathered around a lamp-post in the corner of the playground to discuss the deep philosophers and share information based on the latest research. —Ralph

1. Write on the board, “to have good friends, you must be a good friend”. Ask the students to explain what that statement means to them, and whether they agree or disagree with it.

2. Ask students to list all of the ways that good friends should treat each other. List these answers on the board.

3. After the list is composed, go through the Good Friend Checklist with the students, and see if their answers correspond with the statements in the checklist:
   - Good friends listen to each other.
   - Good friends don’t put each other down or hurt each other’s feelings.
   - Good friends try to understand each other’s feelings and moods.
   - Good friends give each other compliments.
   - Good friends can disagree without hurting each other.
   - Good friends are dependable.
   - Good friends respect each other.
   - Good friends are trustworthy.
   - Good friends give each other room to change.
   - Good friends care about each other.

4. After discussing the students’ “good friend” statements, as well as talking through the Good Friend Checklist, pass out large, blank index cards to the class. Inform the students that these cards are recipe cards, and that they are going to be creating a recipe for friendship.
   a. This “Friendship Recipe” should teach someone else how to be a good friend. Include the “ingredients” that make up friendship, and the steps for being a good friend.
   b. The students can decorate their recipe card, once the recipe is finished.

5. Place the “Friendship Recipe” cards in a recipe box that can stay in a visible place in the classroom for the remainder of the year. Encourage students to look at the other friendship recipes.

Adapted from: www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/BeingFriends.html

RECOMMENDED READING

A Christmas Story: The Book That Inspired the Hilarious Classic Film
by Jean Shepherd

Rosy Cole’s Memoir Explosion
by Sheila Greenwald

My Own Two Feet: A Memoir
by Beverly Cleary

Celebrate the Winter Holidays: Sensational Activities & Helpful Background Information That Help Kids Learn About & Appreciate Five Important Holidays
by Elaine Israel

How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies: A Book That Takes the Nuisance Out of Name Calling and Other Nonsense
by Kate Cohen-Posey
Every neighborhood had them. The lines were clearly drawn—like a kid caste system—you were either a Bully, a Toady, or one of the nameless rabble of Victims. The bully of legend in Hohman, Indiana, was Scut Farkas. -Ralph

1. Hold a discussion with your class about bullies. Ask them to define a bully. What are some of the characteristics, or actions, of a bully? Can someone be a bully without meaning to be?

2. Ask the students if they believe the actions listed below are actions of a bully, or not. Allow the students time decide whether each statement represents bullying behavior, or not.

- Making fun of someone else’s looks.
- Chasing younger kids away from the swings on the play ground.
- Accidentally bumping into someone in the hall.
- Calling people names because of the color of their skin.
- Being bossy to other kids by telling them what to do and making them play games they don’t want to play.
- Teasing someone about the clothes s/he wears.
- Telling someone that the outfit s/he is wearing doesn’t look good on him/her.
- Refusing to share a table at lunch, even though there’s plenty of room.
- Telling someone that s/he is not being nice.
- Joking with people by “putting them down.”

3. Go through the How Not To Be A Bully checklist with the class.
   - Are my actions or words hurting someone else’s feelings?
   - Are my actions or words hurting someone else physically, or making that person feel afraid?
   - Would I want someone else to do this to me?
   - Am I unfairly taking my anger out on someone?
   - Am I trying to control someone against his or her will?

4. During lunch, recess, and after school, ask the students to act as Reporters, by observing and recording different situations, dialogues, or actions that demonstrate bullying behaviors. The next day in class, have the students share and discuss the results of their investigation.

5. Hold a brainstorming session with the class, to come up with ideas for how to reduce and prevent bullying behavior at your school. List these ideas and suggestions on the board. Have each student choose one bullying prevention tactic and create a comic strip based on it. Their comic strip should illustrate their chosen bully prevention tactic in action.

6. Compile all of the comic strips and make an Anti-Bully Comic Book that can be photocopied and distributed to other grade levels.

Adapted from www.goodcharacter.com/GROARK/Bullying.html
To us kids, the most important thing, next to “What am I getting for Christmas?” was “What am I getting my parents for Christmas?” The selection of presents was always done with greater secrecy than a State Department spy operation. –Ralph

The cost of living in 1938 was drastically different from the cost of living today. In 1938, a loaf of bread cost $0.09, a blanket cost about $5.00, and the average monthly rental of a single-family house was $28.00.

Ralphie has to buy presents for all of his family members, as well as for his teacher, and Secret Santa at school. Ralphie only has a specific amount of money he can spend on all of these gifts. Figure out these math problems to see if Ralphie will stay within his budget.

1. Ralphie wants to buy his Secret Santa, Esther Jane, a toy tarantula for Christmas. He thinks she will really like this gift! At the toy store, Ralphie sees a copy of Boys Life magazine, which he wants to buy for himself. Ralphie only has $0.25 to spend at the toy store. The tarantula costs $0.18 and the copy of Boys Life costs $0.10. How much will the toy tarantula and the magazine cost? Does Ralphie have enough money to buy them both?

2. Ralphie wants to buy his brother, Randy, some tinker toys for Christmas. Each tinker toy costs $0.20 Ralphie has $0.75 to spend on his brother’s gift. How many tinker toys can he buy with $0.75? Will Ralphie have any money left over? If so, how much?

3. Ralphie has $2.30 to spend on both of his parents for Christmas. Ralphie wants to split his money equally between his mother and his father. How much can Ralphie spend on each of his parents?

4. Ralphie has a budget of $5.00 to spend on gifts for his entire family. He wants to buy his mother a necklace for $1.20, a book on cars for his father for $1.45, and tinker toys for his brother for $.80. Does Ralphie have enough money to buy his family all of these presents? If so, how much will he have left to buy presents for his Secret Santa and teacher?

5. Ralphie wants to buy his teacher a large fruit basket for Christmas. The grocery store charges $0.11 per pound for a fruit basket. Ralphie wants to buy his teacher a 4-pound fruit basket. He also wants to buy her a beautiful Christmas card for $.25. How much is Ralphie going to spend on his teacher’s gift?
OLD MAN: What’s that?
MOTHER: Dinner for tonight.
OLD MAN: What’re we having?
MOTHER: Meatloaf and red cabbage.
OLD MAN: (winces) Ugh.

The Parker family eats a generous helping of meatloaf and red cabbage for dinner every week. With the help of an adult, try this healthy and hearty meal at home for a Parker family dinner!

For the Meatloaf you need:
5 pounds ground beef
4 eggs
1 large package stuffing mix
1 tablespoon grated garlic
1 cup chopped onion
1 (20 ounce) can tomato juice
2 tablespoons freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons salt
1 cup ketchup

Directions:
1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Mix all ingredients, except ketchup, together in a large bowl.
3. Place the mixture in a large cake or bread pan. Spread a layer of ketchup, as thick as desired, over the loaf. Bake for 45 minutes to an hour, until fully cooked through.

For the Red Cabbage you need:
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 small onion, sliced
1 red cabbage, shredded
1/3 cup white or apple cider vinegar
2 rounded tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon mustard seed
salt and pepper

Directions:
1. Heat a skillet over medium high heat.
2. Add oil and onion and sauté for 2 minutes.
3. Add cabbage, and turn in pan, sautéing it until it wilts—3 to 5 minutes.
4. Add vinegar to the pan and turn the cabbage in it.
5. Sprinkle sugar over the cabbage and turn again.
6. Season with mustard seed, salt and pepper, and reduce heat a bit.
7. Let cabbage continue to cook 10 minutes, or until ready to serve, stirring occasionally.

Recipes taken from The Food Network at: foodtv.com
After seeing the play, quiz each other to see if you can remember who said the following lines, when they said it, and why they said it!

Christmas was on its way. Lovely, beautiful, glorious Christmas, around which the entire kid year revolved.

Randy, how does the little piggy go? Now show me how the piggies eat!

Our hillbilly neighbors, The Bumpuses, had at least 785 smelly hound dogs, and they ignored every other human being on earth but my Old Man.

Preparing for school during an Indiana winter was like getting ready for extended deep-sea diving.

Ouch! That’s my sore arm!

I want a legendary official Red Ryder 200-shot Carbine Action Range Model Air Rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock.

“Fra-jee-lee.” See there? Must be Italian. Yeah, that’s it! Imported all the way from Italy!

Why this isn’t prose! It’s poetry! Sheer poetry! I am transported! It out-Shakespeares Shakespeare! The history of theme writing begins here!

What are you gonna do? Cry now? Come on, cry baby, cry for me!

Here’s a Christmas card I got you. I got it myself. It’s not from my parents. I bought it with my allowance.

You look like a deranged Easter bunny!

Oh my gosh! I shot my eye out!

Life is like that. Sometimes, at the height of our reveries, when your joy is at its zenith, when all is right with the world, the most unthinkable disaster descends upon us.
POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the playwright chose to have Ralphie as an adult narrate the play? How does this convention add to the storytelling nature of the play? Do you think the story is true, or fictional tale? Why?

2. What does Ralphie want more than anything for Christmas? What reasons does he give for wanting it? How does he go about trying to achieve this goal?

3. Who is the bully in the play? How do you know he is a bully? How do Ralphie and his friends deal with the bully? What happens to the bully, towards the end of the play? What lesson does he learn?

4. At one point in the play, a group of kids gather around a flagpole on the playground. What is Flick dared to do? Why do you think he does it? Could he have gotten hurt? How could he have gotten out of the situation without going through with the dare?

5. What “major award” does Ralphie’s father win? Why do you think it is so important to him? How does Ralphie’s mother feel about the award? How does it get broken? Is it an accident? How is this conflict finally resolved?

6. What happens to the Parker’s Christmas dinner? Who do you feel is to blame for what happened? What do the Parkers eventually do for their holiday dinner? How does Ralphie feel about the situation?

7. What present does Ralphie get Esther Jane for Christmas? Does she react to the gift the way that he thinks she will? How would you react if you received the same present for Christmas from someone you cared for? What gift does Esther Jane give Ralphie in return?

8. What happens on Christmas morning when Ralphie goes outside to play with his special present? How does he deal with the consequences of what happens to him? What does he tell his mother? Do you think she believes him? Why, or why not?
To us kids, the most important thing, next to “What am I getting for Christmas?” was “What am I getting my parents for Christmas?” The selection of presents was always done with greater secrecy than a State Department spy operation. –Ralph

The cost of living in 1938 was drastically different from the cost of living today. In 1938, a loaf of bread cost $0.09, a blanket cost about $5.00, and the average monthly rental of a single-family house was $28.00.

Ralphie has to buy presents for all of his family members, as well as for his teacher, and Secret Santa at school. Ralphie only has a specific amount of money he can spend on all of these gifts. Figure out these math problems to see if Ralphie will stay within his budget.

1. Ralphie wants to buy his Secret Santa, Esther Jane, a toy tarantula for Christmas. He thinks she will really like this gift! At the toy store, Ralphie sees a copy of Boys Life magazine, which he wants to buy for himself. Ralphie only has $0.25 to spend at the toy store. The tarantula costs $0.18 and the copy of Boys Life costs $0.10. How much will the toy tarantula and the magazine cost? Does Ralphie have enough money to buy them both?
   The cost of the tarantula and the magazine is $0.28 (28 cents). Ralphie does not have enough money to buy them both.

2. Ralphie wants to buy his brother, Randy, some tinker toys for Christmas. Each tinker toy costs $0.20 Ralphie has $0.75 to spend on his brother’s gift. How many tinker toys can he buy with $0.75? Will Ralphie have any money left over? If so, how much?
   Ralphie can buy Randy 3 tinker toys for $0.60. Ralphie will have $0.15 left.

3. Ralphie has $2.30 to spend on both of his parents for Christmas. Ralphie wants to split his money equally between his mother and his father. How much can Ralphie spend on each of his parents?
   Ralphie can spend $1.15 on each of his parents’ Christmas gifts.

4. Ralphie has a budget of $5.00 to spend on gifts for his entire family. He wants to buy his mother a necklace for $1.20, a book on cars for his father for $1.45, and tinker toys for his brother for $.80. Does Ralphie have enough money to buy his family all of these presents? If so, how much will he have left to buy presents for his Secret Santa and teacher?
   Ralphie’s presents for his family will cost him $3.45. He will have $1.55 left to spend on presents for his Secret Santa and teacher.

5. Ralphie wants to buy his teacher a large fruit basket for Christmas. The grocery store charges $0.11 per pound for a fruit basket. Ralphie wants to buy his teacher a 4-pound fruit basket. He also wants to buy her a beautiful Christmas card for $.25. How much is Ralphie going to spend on his teacher’s gift?
   Ralphie is going to spend $0.69 on his teacher’s Christmas gift.
After seeing the play, quiz each other to see if you can remember who said the following lines, when they said it, and why they said it!

Christmas was on its way. Lovely, beautiful, glorious Christmas, around which the entire kid year revolved.

  Ralph

Randy, how does the little piggy go? Now show me how the piggies eat!

  Mother

Our hillbilly neighbors, The Bumpuses, had at least 785 smelly hound dogs, and they ignored every other human being on earth but my Old Man.

  Ralph

Preparing for school during an Indiana winter was like getting ready for extended deep-sea diving.

  Ralph

Ouch! That’s my sore arm!

  Flick

I want a legendary official Red Ryder 200-shot Carbine Action Range Model Air Rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock.

  Ralphie

“Fra-jee-lee.” See there? Must be Italian. Yeah, that’s it! Imported all the way from Italy!

  Old Man

Why this isn’t prose! It’s poetry! Sheer poetry! I am transported! It out-Shakespeares Shakespeare! The history of theme writing begins here!

  Miss Shields

What are you gonna do? Cry now? Come on, cry baby, cry for me!

  Scut Farkas

Here’s a Christmas card I got you. I got it myself. It’s not from my parents. I bought it with my allowance.

  Esther Jane

You look like a deranged Easter bunny!

  Old Man

Oh my gosh! I shot my eye out!

  Ralphie

Life is like that. Sometimes, at the height of our reveries, when your joy is at its zenith, when all is right with the world, the most unthinkable disaster descends upon us.

  Ralph
Venn Diagram
Everyday Life v.s. Holiday Life

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Write about a favorite holiday memory you have in the space inside the ornament. Then, decorate your ornament and cut it out so it can be hung up around your classroom!