

# A Study Guide to Dream Tale Puppets' *JACK AND THE BEANSTALK*



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At Dream Tale Puppets we believe in the transformative power of the arts, and in the strong value of theatre and its creative processes as tools for human development and education. We approach children and adults alike as allies in our artistic and creative inquires and practices and we are devoted to sharing our curiosity, experiences and joy.

We appreciate your interest and partnership and we hope this Study Guide will help you in integrating our show into your classroom teaching program.

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## A SUMMARY OF THE STORY

Jack is a young village boy living with his mother and a milk cow who is their only source of income. When the cow stops giving milk, Jack's mother asks him to take the cow to market to sell. On the way, he meets an old man who offers "magic beans" in exchange for the cow. The man says that the beans will change Jack's life forever. The boy makes the trade. When he arrives home without any money, his mother becomes furious, throws the beans out of the window and sends Jack to bed.

The beans fall to the ground and a gigantic beanstalk grows overnight. When Jack sees it in the morning he climbs up and up to a land high in the sky. There he comes to a castle that is the home of a giant. At the castle gate he meets the giant's wife. Jack asks for food and the giant's wife takes him in. When the giant returns, he senses that a human is nearby and calls:

Fee-fi-fo-fum!  
I smell the blood of an Englishman,  
Be he alive, or be he dead,  
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

The giant woman hides Jack in the oven and brings the pot of the stew for the giant. After the stew is eaten, Jack overhears the giant counting money. Then, while the giant sleeps, the boy steals a bag of gold coins and makes his escape down the beanstalk. His mother does not want to accept stolen coins, but Jack insists that the coins did not belong to the giant, who had stolen them from travelers.

After a while, Jack again climbs the beanstalk. He meets giant's wife, who hides him when the giant returns home. Jack learns that the giant has a magic hen that lays golden eggs. While the giant sleeps, Jack takes the hen and climbs down the beanstalk.

Soon he returns to the land in the sky and sneaks into the castle. While the giant sleeps, Jack steals a harp that plays by itself. However, the harp calls to the giant for help, waking him. The giant runs after Jack and follows him down the beanstalk. The boy runs into his house and calls to his mother to bring an axe. Jack chops the beanstalk down. The

giant falls down and breaks his neck. After that Jack and his mother live happily ever after with their riches.

## WHERE DOES THE "JACK AND THE BEANSTALK" STORY COME FROM?

"Jack and the Beanstalk" is an old English folk tale. Like all folk tales it was created in times when people in villages did not know how to read, but gathered and listened to storytellers. Younger storytellers learned the stories from their elders and passed them on to their listeners. Often such gatherings were arranged on long winter nights when peasants came together to work on spinning, weaving, sewing, and embroidering. It is also a fairy tale, a kind of folk tale that has a magical character, objects or magical events in it.

When scholars trace the origins of folk tales they often discover that these tales contain elements present in old stories of people from many parts of the world. For example, the beanstalk in "Jack and the Beanstalk" is like the "world tree" found in many other stories. The "world tree" is a very high plant that connects our world with a magical world in the sky.

Many fairy tales tell about a young hero or heroine becoming an adult. He or she overcomes obstacles, travels to another land, and wins riches or the crown of a kingdom. People enacted such stories as part of a celebration of new adults in their communities, often performing or dancing parts of the stories using masks and puppets.

In the nineteenth century learned people in European towns become interested in folk culture -- the stories, songs, and customs of villagers. "Jack and the Beanstalk" was first published in 1807 as part of an inexpensive collection of "sixpenny" books for children. In 1842 the story was rewritten and popularized by Henry Cole in "The Home Treasury" collection. An 1890 version rewritten by folklorist and historian Joseph Jacobs is still popular today, along with many revised

versions used in movies, television shows and theatre plays.

## **ABOUT PUPPETS**

A puppet is a figure that is moved by a person, usually an actor, to create a character in a theatrical performance, movie, television show and for other performances. Puppets are used to tell stories, entertain, celebrate holidays, and to teach lessons.

Puppets have been used for thousands of years, by people all over the world. In China, India and Indonesia, shadow puppets were probably the first kinds of puppets. Puppeteers made shadows walk and dance on a cloth screen by holding very thin leather figures on or close to the screen. When they shone a light from behind the leather figures, shadows appeared on the screen. The effect was a lot like a movie --but made by puppets.

Marionettes are puppets that are moved by strings attached to different parts of the puppet. The puppeteer holds a control above the puppet. By pulling a string, the puppeteer can make the puppet's head, leg, arm, or tail move. Many European countries have marionette theaters with elaborately costumed puppets that perform traditional stories and ballets. Sometimes one marionette has as many as thirty strings!

Hand puppets take their shape from the puppeteer's hand. They range from the simple "sock" puppets made from decorated socks, to very intricate puppets such as those used in the 'theater of the palm of the hand' style in China and Taiwan. Those puppets, which can perform delicate movements such as writing with a calligraphy brush, as well as acrobatic flips and spins, are used in performances of history stories and legends. In the English-speaking world, the hand puppet characters and portable shows of Punch and Judy have been performed for children and adults for centuries.

In the United States, Jim Henson and the Children's Television Workshop created the very popular "Sesame Street" educational television show using hand puppets, which

they called "muppets." The Henson company also made many films using "muppet" characters.

A mask is an object normally worn on the face, typically for protection, disguise, performance or entertainment. In theatre, a mask worn by an actor often represents the face of a character from the play. Masks have been used since prehistoric times. We can see pictures of dancers in masks painted by prehistoric people on the walls of caves in France and Spain.

## **STYLE OF THE SHOW**

Live actor and actor with several different types of puppets perform together in Dream Tale Puppets' "Jack and the Beanstalk." Jack, his Mother and the Man in a green hat are hand puppets. The Cow and Harp could be called figurines or statuettes. They are like many simple toys, without movable parts. The Hen is a marionette, controlled by strings. The Giant's wife is portrayed by the same actor who operates the puppets. To portray the Giant's wife he wears a bonnet and changes the way he walks and moves. The Giant is created by the same actor, wearing a mask and, again, altering his movements. This kind of puppetry where a number of styles of puppets and live actors perform in full view of the audience is increasingly popular today.

To create the sets for the show we cut a piece of plywood into a bean shape. By adding three poles we made this plywood into a table. It also serves as the stage for the hand puppets. We mount green flags on the poles to represent the fully-grown beanstalk.

The meaning and function of the particular features of the sets change as the show and story develop. When the beanstalk has grown it serves as a curtain so the actor can exit and enter as another character. The space in front of the set represents the gate to the Giant's castle as well as its interior. The area in front of the sets and around them is Jack's way to the market and part of his route down the beanstalk.

In Dream Tale Puppet's "Jack and the Beanstalk," the audience sees how the

puppets are operated and how the actor uses the bonnet and mask to portray characters. You may see an analogy between the ways actors create characters and the way children play and imagine objects as characters in the make-believe world they create during play. When creating the show we were inspired by the ways children play.

In our show we have two performers. One gives life to characters through motion; another gives the characters their voices and narrates parts of the story. We call this style of performing "Story and Puppet Time." It is much like storytelling, enhanced by the addition of puppets and an actor. It is not unusual in puppet theatre that voices are given by other performers or means. Some puppeteers hire voice actors to prepare pre-recorded voices and sounds which they play during the show. Also, in traditional Japanese puppet theatre, called Bunraku, puppeteers operate puppets, but do not speak. Their words are read and chanted by a voice actor trained in chanting and altering voices, known as the chanter.

## MEET DREAM TALE PUPPETS

Dream Tale Puppets was founded in 2003 by Jacek Zuzanski, puppeteer, stage director and theater teacher who, before coming to the United States in 2001, studied, practiced and taught theatre and art in his native country, Poland. Preschool teacher and storyteller Mary Almeida co-founded the troupe with Jacek.

Working at the Cape Cod Children's Museum, they created a series of short shows in which Mary gave voices to characters from well-known tales while Jacek operated the puppets. Two of these short shows - "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Three Little Pigs" - made a program called "Story and Puppet Time". Since this time, Dream Tale Puppets has produced two more shows: "Rumpelstilskin" and "Jack and the Beanstalk." We perform in schools, libraries, cultural centers and private functions.

Today Dream Tale Puppets is a little community of artists. We work and learn

together, and each member of the theater works on other projects individually or with other theaters or art organizations. We perform, teach, design, build puppets, and write plays. And we like very much to meet other communities of artists and learners, including school communities, perform for them and work together.

## MORE RESOURCES

### Reading "Jack and the Beanstalk":

These websites offer a variety of versions of the traditional story:

<http://www.authorama.com/english-fairy-tales-15.html>

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0328jack.html>  
Eight versions gathered by Profesor D. L. Ashliman

<https://www.surlalunefairytales.com/h-r/jack-beanstalk/jack-beanstalk-tale.html>  
Annotated version

<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/jackbeanstalk/history.html>

This site offers comments and discussion on the history of the story

Your school library may have these picture book editions:

Kellogg, Steven. *Jack and the Beanstalk*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1991 (beautiful illustrations).

Walker, Richard (author), Sharkey, Niamh (illustrator). *Jack and the Beanstalk*. New York: Barefoot Books, 1999 (imaginative pictures).

Faulkner, Matt. *Jack and the Beanstalk*. New York: Scholastic Books, Inc, 1986

E. Nesbit (author), Tavares, Matt (illustrator). *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2006.

Dahl, Roald. *Revolting Rhymes*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, 1982 (collections of poems in whimsical verse, including Jack and the Beanstalk)

Also of interest:

Tatar, Maria. *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2002 (includes Joseph Jacobs' version of the tale with notes on the first published versions; comments on motifs and literary characteristics; and comparisons to other versions).

For independent readers:

Braun, Eric (author), and Bernardini, Cristian (illustrator). *Trust Me, Jack's Beanstalk Stinks!: The Story of Jack and the Beanstalk as Told by the Giant*. Mankato, MN: Picture Window Books, 2011

Osborne, Mary Pope (author), and Potter, Giselle (illustrator). *Kate and the Beanstalk*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2000 (with female heroine Kate in the lead role).

### Learning about puppetry:

We hope you will visit our website:

[www.dreamtalepuppets.com](http://www.dreamtalepuppets.com).

Puppeteers of America and UNIMA-USA (the North American Center of Union Internationale de la Marionnette) provide a lot of useful resources:

<https://www.puppeteers.org>

<http://www.unima-usa.org>

A terrific book on using puppetry with students:

Rump, Nan. *Puppets and Masks: Stagecraft and Storytelling*. Worcester, MA: Davis Publications, 1996.

## THEATER MANNERS

As puppeteers and actors, our work is to create another world that grows while our show is happening. It is a theater world, which

has slightly different social customs than your students may be used to.

Please help our theater world grow by asking children to be quiet while the show is in progress. If they talk to each other or to you, other audience members will be distracted from the show.

When doors open and shut we feel it takes away a little of our theater magic. Please give your students the opportunity to use the restroom, get water, and complete other necessary tasks before the show. That way they will feel free to engage in our story.

We understand that sometimes a child or teacher will need to leave the room during the show, for whatever reason. Thank you for your help in building our theater world by preparing students to enter it.

And thank you for your own attention and concentration. We're glad to create theater with you.

## VOCABULARY

**actor** – one who performs as a character in theatrical production

**audience** – people who assemble to hear and see something

**dialogue** – conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or movie, also spelled as “dialog”

**puppet** – a figure controlled and manipulated by puppeteer

**prop** – an object used in a theatrical production

**play** – a text for theatrical performance usually written as dialogue between characters

**stage** – a platform or area where actors perform theatrical productions

**costume** – (in theatre) clothing of a particular style, worn by the actor (or puppet) to portray a character in a theatre performance.

**mask** – (in theatre) an image of a face worn by an actor in order to symbolize the character being portrayed

**set** - (in theatre) the scenery, furniture, etc. used on a stage in the place where a show is being made

## **CLASS ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS SUGGESTIONS**

We hope that this study guide and the suggestions and sample questions that follow it will be useful to you as you prepare for class activities and discussion related to CCSS and Art Standards for grades K-4. Some relevant CCSS and Art Standards are quoted here as well.

### **Activities before the show**

Students will benefit from being introduced to the story before they see our show.

Our “More Resources” section has suggestions for on-line and print sources of “Jack and the Beanstalk.”

Children who have a chance to read the story or hear it read and then watch the show will notice differences between the literary and theatrical interpretations. In particular, using a picture book version of the tale in class could inspire interesting discussions about what they see in the play, and what they saw in the book.

Similarly, discussing characters and what they might look like, as well as asking children to draw or paint pictures of the characters before seeing the show, would help in making the story meaningful for children.

The CCSS for Grades 3-4 we suggest as being relevant to this experience would require using a written version of the tale as a reference for activities with children.

### **Sample questions to facilitate discussion after reading the story and/or after the show related to CCSS listed below**

Can you ask a question with the word “Who”?  
What about a question with the word “What”?  
Where? When? Why? How?”  
Who were the characters in the story? Do you recognize them in the pictures?  
How would you describe each character?  
How would you describe his or her appearance; behavior?

The actor uses several different ways to perform each character. Did you see him with a puppet? Wearing a costume? A mask?  
What else?

What did each character want? Why?  
Where did the story take place? Why do you think so?

Did events in the story happen in one location or many? What are two main locations? How are these two locations connected? Who is traveling from one place to another? How?  
What did Jack want in the story? How about his mom? What did the Man in the green hat want from Jack? Why?

Was it easy for the character to get what he or she wanted? Why or why not?

How did characters get what they wanted? What made getting what they wanted possible? Was it easy?

### **Samples of questions to ask after the show or to facilitate discussion related to the Art Standards listed below.**

What did you see in “Jack and the Beanstalk”?

Everyone you saw on stage is an actor. How many actors did you see?

Did both actors perform in the same way? Did they both operate puppets? Did they both give voices to the puppets?

Did they both wear masks and change costumes? Why did the actor use masks or change costumes? Did he portray a new character this way?

Can you walk like a giant? What about walking or running like Jack? What do you notice about the different ways these characters move?

Were the puppets’ movements different from the movements people make? How?

What is a stage? How was a stage created for this show?

In which scene did you see puppets of Jack and his Mother performing on top of the table as if it were a stage platform?

In which scene did the Giant’s Wife and Jack perform in front of the set?

Did you notice props in this show? Can you list a few? Would you call the figurine puppets

representing the Cow and the Harp props?  
Why or why not?

Was music used in the show? When?

Who was talking? Was it the puppet characters or the actor? How did you know when a character was talking? Did movement help you to know? What did you notice about the voices used for each character?

Each character has something they want in this story. Can you tell what they want?

Think of things you have wanted, or that you want now. Do you think what you want is similar in any way to what the characters in the story want? Why or why not?

### Writing activities

These are just suggestions. We believe the show could inspire a broad range of writing tasks and exercises. Please feel free to send us children's letters or copies, pictures or other children's work. We will be happy to receive such correspondence and we promise to respond.

### THEATRICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE TALE

The show is a theatrical interpretation of the tale. How different is it from a tale you read? Which uses written words to tell the story? Which uses actors and actions? How are these two ways of telling a story different?

### LETTER TO PUPPETEERS

We welcome all topics in children's letters. Here are a few questions to get started:  
Did you like the story? How about the show?  
What do you like the most?  
Were you scared?  
Do you have a character you like most? Or dislike most? Why?  
What was most interesting in the way the actors performed? What was surprising?  
Have you seen a puppet show before?  
Where? How different or similar was it to our performance?  
What did you learn from the show?

### MOTIVES IN TALES AND IN LIFE

Choose one character from the story and write about what he or she wants and whether the character got what he/she wanted as the story developed. How is what they want similar to what you and/or your friends want? How is it different?

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THE PROGRAMS

**Grade PreK:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 1: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

**Grade PreK:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 3: With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in the story.

**Grade K:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 1: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

**Grade K:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 3: With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in the story.

**Grade 1:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

**Grade 1:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details #3: Describe Characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

**Grade 2:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 1: Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

**Grade 2:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 3: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

**Grade 3:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of the text, referring explicitly to the text as a basis for the answers

**Grade 3:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 3: Describe characters in a story (e.g. their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

**Grade 4:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

**Grade 4:** Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details # 3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g. a character's thoughts, words or actions).

## **ART STANDARDS**

**Grade PreK – 4:** Theatre: Content Standard 6: Connections: Describe visual, aural, oral and kinetic elements in theatre, dance, music and visual arts.

**Grade PreK – 4:** Theatre: Content Standard 7: Analysis, Criticism and Meaning: Explain how the wants and needs of characters are similar to and different from their own.

**Grade PreK – 4:** Visual Arts: Content Standard 6: Connections: Describe how the visual arts are combined with other arts in multimedia work.