

Go, Dog. Go!

By P. D. Eastman
Adapted by Stephen Dietz
and Allison Gregory

Synopsis

Recommended for
everyone age 4
and older

P. D. Eastman's classic children's book comes to life on stage in an exploration of movement, color, and space.

The dogs delve into life with gusto, creating a visual spectacle for the audience to feast upon. They snorkel. They howl at the moon. They ride a Ferris Wheel. They sing and dance and climb trees.



The play's bustle and commotion pauses every so often for a moment or two of reflection, and then sweeps us again into the whirlwind of these lovable and goofy dogs.

RESOURCE LIST

Prepared by Shauna Yusko, King County Library System

FOR CHILDREN

Bark, George

Jules Feiffer

Harry the Dirty Dog

Gene Zion

Martha Speaks

Susan Meddaugh

How to Talk to Your Dog

Jean Craighead George

Henry and Mudge

Cynthia Rylant

Biscuit

Alyssa Capucilli

Hop on Pop

Dr. Seuss

Dog Days: Rhymes Around the Year

Jack Prelutsky

Smasher

Dick King-Smith

SPOTLIGHT

Cosmo Zooms

Arthur Howard

All the dogs on Pumpkin Lane have a special talent, except poor Cosmo. One day he starts his nap on a skateboard and finds himself taking the ride of his life—and discovering his own talent.

FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS

Ribs

Beverly Cleary

Dog Crafts

Linda Hendry

Bob Books: For beginning readers

Bobby Lynn Maslen

Teach a Child To Read With Children's Books

Mark B. Thogmartin

Eyewitness. Dog (video recording)

Dorling Kindersley Vision

Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey (video recording)

Walt Disney Pictures

SPOTLIGHT

Bunnica: A Rabbit Tale of Mystery

Deborah and James Howe

Told from the point of view of the Monroe's dog Harold, this humorous read-aloud tale starts when the family adopts a bunny that has fangs and nocturnal habits. Chester the cat is sure the rabbit is a vampire bunny and sets out to prove it to the family with hilarious results.

The World Around Us



Adapting a picture book, such as *Go, Dog. Go!*, for the stage is a useful means of integrating play with learning. Children learn through exploration and discovery; what better way to nurture the intellectual, creative, and physical growth of a child than by allowing him/her to make connections between play and real life.

As M.S. Barranger tells us in the book *Theatre: A Way of Seeing*, "Drama is an imitation of human events." As children play at being astronauts, doctors, teachers, or firefighters they are trying on roles they may be interested in pursuing in later life. Theatre works in a similar way: it presents characters and roles for its audience to examine. In this way art does imitate life.

Exposure to the theatre is an important developmental experience for children. Being able to see this "imitation of human events" not only shows children the use and scope of creativity, but also allows kids to directly identify with characters who are dealing with real-life issues acted out before them. In their book *Theatre, Children and Youth*, Jed Davis and Mary Jane Evans assert, "Children or youth audience members, through identifying with the performance in a role modeling process may learn behavior patterns, moral concepts, and attitudes as well as facts."

Virginia Tanner's article, "Thoughts on the Creative Process," illustrates that participating in guided activities can also provide valuable lessons for children. A student of Ms. Tanner's brought in a book about rockets, and he wanted to incorporate the book into their class. Ms. Tanner, who, among other things, was a teacher of creative dance, used that opportunity to employ dramatic motion to teach the children about spatial relations, organization, and speed. Through her exercise, having the kids act as rocket ships cruising about the "space" of the floor, she was able to do three things: give the boy a sense of ownership of his educational experience, foster the kids' creative selves, and teach life lessons.

CHILDREN & DRAMA

Ms. Tanner's example demonstrates one of the keystones to the utilization of creativity as instruction—structure. It might seem anathema to link creativity to structure and discipline, however, it is through such organization and regulation that one can find the freedom to be creative. Ms. Tanner

asserts that our creative impulses need "the constant urging of the mind and body to reach out in new directions to find more than one way to solve a problem, so that within the structure of each new venture the individual may gain more knowledge, understanding and truth. These are the rudiments of working creatively with people." Having no guidelines and no sense of direction can often be stifling to a child. But the well-ordered support and nurturing of creativity is vital to the growth of a child's sense of self and his/her growing awareness of the world.

Above: Children engaging in guided dramatic exercises in the classroom can learn valuable life lessons. Photo from Theatre, Children and Youth.

ACTIVITY

- Clear a space in the middle of the room and designate this as the playing area. Now, have your students line up on one side of the room. You stand outside the playing area and call out "Go." The students should walk through the playing area, making sure they don't bump into each other. When you call out "Stop" they must stop instantly. Once they are going again you can call out "Drop," when they must drop to the floor, or "Melt," when they should melt as slowly as possible. You can call out "Stop" in the middle of melting as well. You can also add other words like "Jump" or "Skip" to add to the ways they can move throughout the area.



ARTS—communicate; connect

EALRS COMMUNICATION—listen and observe; work in a group

PHYSICAL COMEDY

A Matter of Personality

GO, DOG, GO!

Physical comedy and clowning have been around for millennia; and as Physical Comedian John Towsen asserts, "it clearly represents one of the grand traditions of the living theatre." This art form can also act as a catalyst for deeper understanding of the human psyche, as we can see in the play *Go, Dog, Go!*, which relies on physicality to introduce its characters and their emotions to the audience. "Put simply, physical comedy is the art of revealing what is vulnerable, imperfect, and laughable about man," says Towsen, "not through argument, not through discourse, not through verbal wit, but primarily through the body, through the moving picture that is worth a thousand laughs."

That is why comedy, especially clowning, is such an enduring art form. As novelist Henry Miller wrote, "(clowns) reenact the errors, the follies, the stupidities,



Clowns present human foibles in absurd situations allowing us to laugh at ourselves without feeling embarrassment.
Photo from Theatre, Children and Youth

all the misunderstandings which plague human kind." There is comfort in being able to see, and laugh at, another person up against the same obstacles that we face every day in our lives—knowing that we aren't alone in our human mistakes and shortcomings.

Physical comedy also spans the ages; many of the great comedians of our time have taken their cues from their comedic predecessors. "Charlie Chaplin's silent films, shown in a theater with an audience, still have the same effect that they had in 1915," says Comedian Dan Kamin, in an interview with John Hayes of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Again, it is the universality of human nature and experience that makes the same gags work today just as they did almost 100 years ago. Movement and physicality become the tradition through which we pass down these legends.

"The importance of movement as a universal language ...explains the power of physical communication," asserts Boston University Associate Professor Judith Chaffee. The way we move not only links us to our forebears but also defines who we are. Kamin tells us, "People put on movement styles like they put on fashion." Think about the children in your classroom. How do the outgoing ones comport themselves compared to the shyer students? Do they sit up taller, keep their heads up higher, and walk more purposefully? Kamin says, "Movement is your fingerprint. It reveals your personality."

Physical comedy is the paradoxical coupling of individuality and universality, humanity and absurdity. And as Bruce "Charlie the Juggling Clown" Johnson reminds us, "Comedy is not a science with formulas to follow. It is an art. It is an interaction between a performer and an audience. It is a matter of taste." It is a matter of personality.

ACTIVITY

- Invite your students do their own clown routines. Pair them up and let them decide on a few characteristics that will make their clowns unique. Have each pair of clowns practice and perform the following scene: Two old friends see each other, they move to give each other a hug but miss each other...three times. They then decide to shake hands, but as one clown puts his/her hand out the other puts his hand down, this happens...three times. The clowns must then find an ending for their scene and exit.



EALRS

ARTS—communicate