



Elf: The Musical

Enrichment Guide

Compiled and edited by Ksenia Broda-Milian
with contributions from Avrel Festinger for the Arts Club Theatre,
Breanne Ritchie for The Grand Theatre, and Persephone Theatre

Table of Contents

The Role of the Audience	1
About the Creators	3
The Book.....	3
The Music	3
Characters	4
Content Overview	4
Plot Summary	4
Synopsis	5
Glossary and Mentions	7
Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List	9
Discussion and Writing Prompts	10
Suggested Classroom Activities	11
Curriculum Connections	15
Sources	17

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Inninewak, Anishinewak, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player/gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre or block the view of those behind you. Please do not wear strong scents like perfume or body spray. We thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

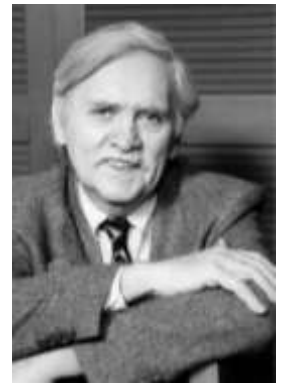
Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

About the Creators

The Book

A musical's book, or libretto, is the traditional script; the storyline and all the spoken dialogue between songs. This one was written by Bob Martin and Thomas Meehan. **Thomas Meehan** (1929-1917) is known for his humorous works, including collaborating with Mel Brooks on *The Producers*, *Young Frankenstein*, and screenplays *Spaceballs* and *To Be or Not to Be*. He also contributed humour to the New Yorker. His other Broadway shows include *Annie*, *Rocky*, *Cry-Baby*, *Chaplin*, *Bombay Dreams*, *I Remember Mama*, *Ain't Broadway Grand*, and *Annie Warbucks*. Meehan received multiple Tony Awards for his writing and was a member of the Council of the Dramatists Guild. **Bob Martin** has worked in Canadian theatre, film, and television for over 30 years. He was Artistic Director of Second City in Toronto where he also performed in and directed revues. He is co-creator of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, a hit musical in which he has also often performed as the main character. Martin has won many awards including an LA Drama Critics Circle Award, an L.A. Stage Alliance Ovation Award, a Drama Desk Award, a Theatre World Award, and a Tony Award. His TV projects include *Slings and Arrows*, *Michael: Tuesdays and Thursdays*, and *Sensitive Skin*. Martin reunited with *Elf*'s songwriters to create *The Prom*, which ran on Broadway and was nominated for seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical.



The Music

Other creators are responsible for the tunes and orchestration of the songs as well as the lyrics, or words that go with the music. Duo Mathew Sklar (composer) and Chad Beguelin (lyrics) did the music for this show. They have also collaborated on *The Prom*, *The Wedding Singer*, *The Rhythm Club*, and *Wicked City*. **Mathew Sklar** (born in 1973) has worked on Broadway since he was 18 playing keyboards for *Les Miserables*. He is an award-winning composer from New Jersey who was educated at The Julliard School of Music, Boston University, and New York University. Sklar has been a pianist, conductor, and dance music arranger for many productions including *Shrek*, *42nd Street*, *Miss Saigon*, *Nine* and *Caroline, or Change* and written his own original musicals. He has also contributed songs to Sesame Street, Wonder Pets!, and the NBC Broadcast of The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. **Chad Beguelin** is a Drama Desk and four-time Tony Award-nominated playwright and lyricist born in 1969. Besides his work with Sklar, he wrote the books for *Disney's Aladdin*, *On the Record*, and debuted Off-Broadway with *HARBOR*. He also worked as a staff writer for Disney's live action film department. Beguelin is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Dramatic Writing Program.



See the entire creative team and cast for Royal MTC's production, including their biographies, [on our website](#), where you can also download the Ovation program.

Characters

Buddy: Born human, raised at the North Pole as a Christmas elf, Buddy is eager to find his place in the world. He is a child at heart and has a curiosity that is endearing but gets him into trouble.

Jovie: Buddy's co-worker and love interest. She works at Macy's and has a bit of a cynical outlook on life and love because of the men she has dated. She is caught off guard by Buddy's genuinely big heart.

Walter Hobbs: Buddy's workaholic father. He is a children's book publisher, but lacks the childlike spirit that Buddy has. He is devoid of Christmas spirit, optimism, and light-heartedness.

Emily Hobbs: Walter's wife. Emily is empathetic and practical. She thinks Buddy must be making things up at first, but is still willing to take him in. She wishes Walter would spend more time with their family.

Michael Hobbs: Buddy's half-sibling who is excited to have a new friend and brother. He is mature and has lost touch with childish whimsy, but unlike his parents, he doesn't take much convincing to have Christmas spirit.

Deb: Walter's assistant. Takes an instant liking to Buddy simply for the novelty of it. Though she aims to please and tries to bring joy to the office, she feels under appreciated.

Manager: Runs the toy department at Macy's. Just trying to do the job and get by.

Mr. Greenway: Walter's boss, who Walter will become if he continues down the path he is on. A tyrannical, workaholic who cares nothing about the people around him or who work for him.

Santa: Loves his job, and Christmas, but is a bit worn out. He likes to relax and watch the game when a rare opportunity arises. A natural storyteller.

Matthews: One of Walter's co-workers, desperate to keep his job, a schemer.

Chadwick: One of Walter's co-workers, desperate to keep his job, simple-minded.

Shawanda: An elf that works alongside Buddy.

Charlie: An elf who oversees the others.

An **ensemble** of elves, New Yorkers, office workers, etc.

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Reference to unplanned pregnancy, unknown parentage. The running time may be difficult for some children. Loud volume levels from live orchestra; possible haze, fog, or flashing lights.

Plot Summary

Written by Avrel Festinger for the Arts Club

Elf: The Musical follows Buddy who lives in the North Pole and works in Santa's workshop. Although the life of toy-making is wonderful, Buddy doesn't quite fit in with the other elves. He is slow at making toys and much taller than his coworkers. It is ultimately revealed that everyone's favorite elf isn't an elf at all, but rather a human! Buddy embarks on a journey to the faraway land of New York City to find his father. However, once he arrives, he discovers that

his father is on the naughty list, and his brother does not believe in Santa! Now, Buddy must re-teach his family as well as the city of New York, the true meaning of Christmas. Based on the 2003 movie, *Elf: The Musical* reminds us of what is truly important in life: family (and of course, presents).

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers. Adapted from synopses written by Avrel Festinger for the Arts Club and Breanne Ritchie for the Grand Theatre.

The show opens with Santa Claus watching a hockey game on TV on Christmas Day. He talks to the audience and begins to read a Christmas story about Buddy the Elf. We learn that Buddy was an orphan, crawled into Santa's sack of toys and was accidentally transported to the North Pole one Christmas Eve 28 years ago. The elves at the North Pole raised Buddy and so he believes he's an elf.

It is two weeks before Christmas. Charlie the elf wanders over to Buddy's workstation and Buddy sheepishly explains that he has not reached today's toy-making quota. Shawanda and Charlie talk about Buddy, and Shawanda lets slip that Buddy is not really an elf, but rather human. Buddy overhears this and runs to Santa for answers. Santa explains Buddy's story and that his father Walter Hobbs does not know he exists. He shares that Walter lives in New York City and works for a publishing company located in the Empire State Building. Buddy decides to go to New York to find his father.

Walter is having a hard time at work. The last Christmas children's book his company published was unsuccessful. Walter's son, Michael, and wife, Emily show up to his office, expecting to go Christmas shopping. Walter insists that he is too busy with work to go. Buddy arrives at Walter's office. Walter's secretary, Deb thinks that someone sent Buddy as a singing holiday telegram. Buddy tells Walter that he is his son and Walter kicks Buddy out of the building. The security guards ask Buddy where he is from. His answer, the North Pole, leads security to drop him off at "North Pole" at Macy's department store. A Macy's manager mistakes him as an employee in the toy department and announces that tomorrow Santa is coming to Macy's. With cheer and song, Buddy inspires the workers to get into the Christmas spirit as they decorate and prepare for Santa's arrival. Buddy meets Jovie, who also works in the toy department. He asks Jovie on a date.

The next morning, "Santa" arrives – but it is not the real Santa that Buddy knows; instead it is a actor playing Santa. Buddy loses his cool and the police escort him out, to the Hobbs household. Buddy says he will help Michael build a model turbine wind machine if Michael writes a letter to Santa. Walter comes home, and Emily tells him that Buddy is going to stay with them. The next morning, Emily shares that she did some investigating and has confirmed that Buddy is in fact Walter's son. Buddy goes into work with Walter. Mr. Greenway tells Walter that he is out of a job unless he comes up with a new Christmas book by December 24.

Jovie and Buddy go on their date. Buddy encourages her to think back on her childhood Christmas memories and she confesses that she has always wanted to have Christmas Eve dinner at the Tavern on the Green. Buddy promises that he will make Jovie's dream come true.

Back at the office, Walter and his associates are brainstorming Christmas stories. Mathews shares that he has access to an unpublished Christopher Smith book that they can use. While no-one is watching, Buddy shreds the manuscript, to make snow to cheer his father up. In a rage, Walter tells Buddy to go home, get his stuff, and leave for good.

Act 2

After the fight with his dad, Buddy leaves a farewell note for Walter, Michael, and Emily. He walks around the city and ultimately enters a Chinese restaurant. He is surrounded by actor Santas, who lament that nobody cares about Santa Claus anymore. Suddenly, Buddy remembers his Christmas Eve plans with Jovie, who has been waiting for hours outside Tavern on the Green. He gives Jovie her Christmas present, a snow globe. While Jovie accepts the gift, she is still upset with Buddy and walks away.

Emily and Michael read Buddy's note. As Michael stares out the window, he notices Santa Claus flying through the sky. Emily sees this too, and the two realize that Buddy was right: Santa is real! They rush to Walter's office, but he doesn't have time to speak with them and is too focused on his deadline to listen to them about Buddy going missing. Mr. Greenway shows up to the office awaiting Walter's pitch. Soon, Buddy arrives. As Walter falters and fumbles, Buddy pitches the tale of his own adventures as a new Christmas story. Mr. Greenway likes the story but suggests that they change the character of Buddy into a horse. He also tells Walter that they will both have to work on Christmas Day. Walter quits.

The Hobbs family leave the office and run into Santa, who explains that his sleigh won't fly, because not enough people believe in him anymore. Buddy uses Santa's iPad to remind New Yorkers of their childhood gifts, and reawakens their belief in Santa. Jovie joins Buddy in singing a Christmas song. The crowd's newfound Christmas spirit fuels Santa's sleigh.

In the epilogue, Santa welcomes Michael, Walter, Emily, Buddy, his now wife Jovie and their baby into his home for Christmas dinner. The rest of the characters return for a final song!

Glossary and Mentions

Al Gore – A former vice president of the USA who is a prominent environmentalist. He was the subject of an award-winning documentary about climate change called *An Inconvenient Truth*. Santa says that he watched one global warming show months ago and now his TV thinks he's Al Gore.

Annie – A famous character in a comic strip, musical, and movie adaptations who has no parents and lives in an orphanage.

Apathetic – Having or showing no interest, concern, or emotion.

Beth Israel – A teaching hospital in Manhattan. This is where Emily sends hair to be tested for a DNA match.

Brooks Brothers – An American luxury clothing brand that has existed since the 1800s.

Carte blanche – Complete freedom.

Charlie Rose – An American journalist, interviewer, and broadcaster who is known for interviewing important figures. Not a show typically watched by 12-year-olds!

Cliché – an idea that is overused, boring, commonplace; not fresh or original.

Cooling your heels – to wait a long time.

Donny Osmond – An American singer, dancer, and actor who was a “teen idol” in the 1970s and is still a popular performer today. Someone who grew up in the 70s would have loved a Donny-themed Christmas present!

Etch-A-Sketch – A mechanical drawing toy that works with magnetism; you shake it to erase the drawing.

Fluffernutter – A sandwich filled with peanut butter and marshmallow fluff.

Folderol – An ornament or accessory without a use.

Grand Theft Auto – A bestselling action-adventure video game series with activities including stealing cars and shooting.

Jaded – Made dull, apathetic, or cynical.

Jenny Craig – A diet and weight loss plan company. Deb chooses to have an indulgent hot chocolate and proclaims “screw you, Jenny Craig!” as she enjoys a treat that is not on her plan.

Juicy Fruit – A type of gum; swallowing 100 pieces would give you a tummy ache like Buddy says.

Macy's – An American department store.

Meshugena – Yiddish slang for something crazy.

Mormons – When talking about Mormons knocking on the door, Emily is referring to missionaries from the Church of Latter Day Saints who go door to door to speak about their religion.

Oprah – a famous talk show host, media executive, nominated actress, and philanthropist known for her lifestyle brand.

Passe – Behind the times; out of fashion.

PETA – An animal rights organization, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. In the play they have protested Santa's use of reindeer so he has switched to powering his sleigh with Christmas spirit instead.

Phi Beta Kappa – A prestigious American academic honour society; Susan Welles was a member which the other characters interpret as her being very intelligent.

Quota – A number or amount that someone is bound to contribute; the elves each have to meet a quota by making a certain number of toys in a certain amount of time.

Rock of Gibraltar – A huge rock at the entrance of the Mediterranean Sea that symbolizes strength; something dependable and unchanging. Buddy thinks of Walter as his own Rock of Gibraltar.

Schlepp – To drag or carry something heavy and awkward.

Snuggie – A blanket with sleeves.

Souvlaki – A Greek food of pieces of meat cooked on a skewer.

Spasm – An involuntary muscle contraction.

Tavern on the Green – A landmark restaurant in New York's Central Park enjoyed by many celebrities.

Tingle – A sensation that you can feel – ringing, stinging, prickling, and/or thrilling.

TiVo – A digital video recorder.

Vigor and vim – Energy and enthusiasm.

Xanax – Santa says that all the constant rhyming of the elves makes him need Xanax, which is a prescription medicine for overwhelming anxiety or panic. Santa probably means he needs something to help his nervous system calm down when the elves are too much for him to handle.

Walgreens – A chain of pharmacy stores; like Shopper's Drug Mart in Canada. A character hopes it's still open on Christmas Eve to get his wife's present there.

Workaholic – Someone who seems to never stop doing their job, who seems "addicted" to work.

Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List

Explore More Christmas Season

Virtually Christmas / David Baddiel. Discover the spirit of Christmas in this charming story where all the things that make Christmastime special have been replaced by decidedly un-magical robots. Friends Etta and Monty race against time to find the real Santa and restore the true meaning of the festive season. J FICTION BADDIEL

The Boy Who Slept Through Christmas: A Musical Novel / Matt Lucas. Sing along to this musical book and meet Leo, who, after his perfect Christmas goes all wrong, wishes it all away. But when Leo wakes up on Christmas day to find his wish came true and every trace of Christmas has been wished away, he and his friends set out to undo his wish and bring back Christmas. Includes QR codes and lyrics for 20 original songs. J FICTION LUCAS

Max Fernsby and the Infinite toys / Gerry Swallow. Go on an adventure with Max, who has Santa's magic red bag fall into his lap, dropped by two joy-riding elves shortly before Christmas. Now Max and the elves need to get the bag back to Santa before Christmas, and before a greedy businessman steals the magical bag for himself! J FICTION SWALLOW

Explore More Christmas Cheer, for Grown-Ups

The Christmas Countdown / Holly Cassidy. Warm up with this novel where a recently heartbroken woman is tasked by her meddling sister to complete an Advent calendar of challenges to get her into the Christmas spirit, and perhaps strike up an unlikely romance along the way. FICTION ROM CASSIDY

Bright Lights, Big Christmas / Mary Kay Andrews. Meet Kerry, who descends from the family Christmas tree farm to help her older brother sell Christmas trees in on a street corner in Greenwich Village. Looking for a second chance, Kerry might just find it among the magic of Christmas in the big city, her charming new neighbours, and one handsome recently divorced single dad in particular. FICTION ANDREWS

The Christmas Wish / Lindsey Kelk. Hunker down with this take a Groundhog Day-like time loop where newly single lawyer Gwen keeps repeating her family Christmas day in the countryside. Trying to figure out how to escape this situation, the one bright spot, and potential romance, is her childhood boy-next-door crush, Dev. FICTION ROM KELK



There are 1.4 million books, movies, audiobooks, eBooks and more at the Winnipeg Public Library, and all you need to borrow them is your library card. There are 20 locations throughout the city and there's an online catalogue for requesting items for pick-up at your library of convenience. An e-Library has thousands of eBooks, eAudiobooks and more! All free with your card.

Visit us at Winnipeg.ca/library

Discussion and Writing Prompts

Adapted from the Arts Club unless *, signifying adaptation from the Grand Theatre.

For Middle Years Students:

- What is your favourite part of the winter holidays?
- Describe your perfect holiday. What do you picture? Who is with you? What are you doing? Why is this your perfect holiday?
- Can the holidays be both a happy and difficult time for people? Why?
- Have you ever felt like you did not belong somewhere? Are you comfortable sharing an example? How did that feel?
- What does it mean to you to be “a fish out of water?”
- *Post-show*: Have you seen the movie version of *Elf* before? If yes, how does it compare to the musical version?
- *Post-show*: Storytelling is a popular theme in *Elf: The Musical*. What are the different ways storytelling or stories are featured in the musical? Why do you think it’s such an important part of the show?
- *Post-show*: If you could sum up *Elf: The Musical* in one word, what would it be? Why?
- *Post-show*: What do you think the moral of *Elf* is? What did the musical teach you?
- *Post-show*: How does Buddy share his upbeat and positive spirit with others? What are first and final reactions by the people of New York City? How could you spread positivity? (Adapted from Grand Theatre.)

For Senior Years Students or older folks:

- What is your favourite part of the winter holidays?
- Do you agree that holidays can be both a joyful and difficult time? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what makes the perfect holiday and why?
- What makes up identity/what makes us who we are?
- What does belonging mean to you?
- What does it mean to you to be “a fish out of water?”
- If you’re comfortable, share an example of a time you struggled with your identity or sense of belonging. How did it feel?
- What does belief mean to you? How has your sense of belief changed as you’ve aged?
- Discuss the role of beliefs in society; the need for something greater than you. Ask students to journal about their personal experiences with imaginary or spiritual beliefs and reflect upon them in the context of their upbringing and current lives.*
- *Post-Show*: What are the different ways storytelling or stories are featured in *Elf*? Why do you think storytelling is such a prominent part of the show?
- *Post-show*: What do you think the writers and creative team of this production wanted to leave you with? Do you agree? Do you think they achieved this?
- *Post-Show*: Consider the fact that Buddy is on the outside. He doesn’t fit, figuratively or literally, in The North Pole. By the end of *Elf*, Buddy’s open, giving, and infectious spirit has changed the people of NYC. Why do we as humans create masks, shields, and layers to seemingly protect ourselves even when deep down we might want to believe?*

Suggested Classroom Activities

Must Be Santa: Have students compare and contrast the world histories of Santa Claus, St. Nick, and Kris Kringle, Sinterklaas, etc. Research the origins of the folklore associated. Where did these symbols and characters come from and why? How have they changed over time?

Ways to celebrate: Research a winter holiday tradition from outside your family. What are the specific rituals and history behind this practice (be thorough in your investigation)? Are there any shared values in this celebration with the reasons you observe your holiday festivities? If you were to adopt any aspect of this celebration into your own life, what would it be and why? Suggestions could include Sinterklass Eve, Los Posados, Hanukkah, Omisoka, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Boxing Day, Winter Solstice, Yule, Christmas, or Kwanzaa. Students can produce a written reflection, poster, or other product of your choosing.

Wanting to Believe: In groups, research the genre of children's literature featuring adolescents and power of belief. How does *Elf* fit into this category?

Movement Contrasts: Play The Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky, encouraging your students move about the space in two contrasting ways: the graceful skating rink Rockefeller Centre vs. the hustle and bustle of New York City streets OR the peaceful falling snowflakes of the North Pole vs. the rapid busy elves in Santa's workshop! **Hint for primary classes:* hand out silk scarves for the young students to help express their interpretations of the music. For older students, you could [explore Laban's definitions of movement or Efforts](#) and assign qualities to the various ensembles/scenarios.

- The Efforts are broken down into the motion factors of space, time, weight, and flow: essentially, the ways that your body moves through the world.
 - Laban further developed two elements for each Effort to describe their qualities: space (or direction) is either direct or indirect; time (or speed) is either quick or sustained; weight is either heavy or light; and flow is either bound or free.

Memory Lane Lyrics: In *Elf*, Buddy tries to reignite the Christmas Spirit within Jovie. He does this by singing about childhood, exclaiming “Remember who you were back then? Let those moments live again”. In this activity, students will write their own lyrics to Buddy’s song. They can either write about their own childhood memories or make some up. These can be memories about Christmas, other holidays, or childhood generally. Students should pay attention to the song’s rhyme pattern and try their best to copy it.

*Modification for Drama classes: After writing one set of lyrics, place students in small groups to write their second set of lyrics collaboratively. Instead of a reflection, in their groups, students can then create a tableau based on their lyrics.

- Part 1: Brainstorm. Make a list of cheerful memories. These don’t have to be holiday related, but they can be. Once you have come up with one-two examples each, you can move onto part two. Prompts to help with brainstorm: What is a memory that always cheers you up? Think about your favourite holiday. Who was there? What did it look like?
- Part 2: Lyric writing. Use the following lyric pattern to write your own. Create 2 sets of lyrics.
 - **Original lyrics:**
And if you’re short on cheer (A)
Think about that year (A)
You woke up to find a brand new snow had fallen (B)
The ornaments you made (C)
Way back in second grade (C)
 - Memory 1:
And if you’re short on cheer
Think about that year
You _____

- **Part 3: Reflection.** In a paragraph response, or as a class, answer the following questions
 - Why do you think Buddy wanted Jovie to think about her childhood?
 - Do you think there is something special about memories? Why?
 - How did you feel when you thought back to some of your memories?
 - Do you know what nostalgia is? How does nostalgia connect to memory?

Singing Loud for All to Hear (From Persephone Theatre):

- Activate and assess students' prior knowledge of songs and experience with singing while preparing them for the next steps. These questions are just a starting point:
 - How many of you like to sing?
 - Do you ever make up your own songs?
 - When and where are you most likely to sing? Shower? In a chorus or choir? Christmas caroling?
 - Do you have a favorite holiday song? Why is it your favorite? How does it make you feel?
 - What's the funniest song you know?
 - What songs do you know that tell a story?
- Has anyone here ever changed the lyrics to a song for fun?
 - If students are willing, invite one or two sing their altered lyrics.
 - You could also introduce parody songs, such as those by Weird Al Yankovic to illustrate this concept.
 - Ask students if they would like to try to change the lyric to a song.
- In the large group, ask students to contribute holiday song titles that most of the students will already know.
- Song selected, have a quick sing along to jog everyone's memory
- Ask students how they might change a few of the words and give the song new meaning. Humor is encouraged here! Focusing on the rhyming words helps.
- Invite students to sing their new lyrics or have the whole group sing with them. Try several ideas.
- Ask students how someone coming to their city from the North Pole for the first time might perform their new lyrics differently. Try it!

Main Activity:

Divide students into groups of 3-5. They are now a songwriting team and they are going to write new lyrics to a well-known holiday song. Allow each team to select their song or teacher may assign them. Be sure to provide a printed copy of the lyrics available for students' use.

- Ask students to read lyrics aloud and/or sing the song in their groups.
- Randomly assign song ideas by distributing slips of paper – one per group – with a song idea on it. The ideas listed here can all be found in *ELF The Musical*:
 - A song about how decorating for Christmas brings good cheer at the holidays
 - A song that is a letter to Santa
 - A song about being a Santa for others
 - A song about Buddy the Elf
- Take students through a process of generating material for their writing:
 - When students have received a song idea, have them discuss the topic. What do they know about it? What images come to mind? Can they build a story around it?

- How can they begin to alter the lyrics to the original song to create their assigned song topic? Can they make it funny?
- How can they include the feeling of experiencing something for the very first time?
- Ask groups to select their favorite idea from their discussion.
 - Remind students that songs are like mini stories and should have a beginning, middle and end!
- Have students move into rewriting the lyric to their song. Remind students to notice how the rhymes fall in the original song and do their best to rhyme in the same places. Students may also choose to write their own melodies if it will help them sing their story.

Sharing and Reflection

- Each group presents their songs to the class. Encourage students to be bold and sing out!
- This sharing should include reflection questions about their process and choice making. Some suggested reflection questions include:
 - What were some of the challenges you faced doing this assignment?
 - How did you work through these challenges?
 - Were you able to tell a story through a song?
 - What would you change if you could do it again?

Fish out of water (and into drama class):

Divide the class into groups of four to improvise the following scenarios:

- 1) A tiger in a coffee shop.
- 2) An office worker working as a farmer.
- 3) A grade (5/6/7) student suddenly in a grade 12 class.
- 4) A dancer working as a dentist.
- 5) A pop star performs in an opera.

Three students will act as the “regular” people and the fourth student will act as the fish out of water. For example, in scenario one, one student will act as the tiger while the others act as the coffee shopworkers. Groups should rotate scenarios, spending 2-3 minutes on each scene.

Greenway Press Challenge: Have your students pitch a children’s book idea. What holiday story would be the next best seller? Have them create an elevator pitch and story board. You can take this further and write and illustrate these stories as picture books. For drama classes, use tableaux to create scenes from your stories that represent the beginning, middle, and end.

Alternative: Buddy Up! Have middle or senior years collaborate with early years students. Partner an older student with a younger one where the younger students share their story ideas. Older students take notes, incorporate these ideas into a story with a progression of beginning, middle, and end, and illustrate them. Then the classes read to each other. As a bonus, older students can create a colouring page or bookmark for the younger ones to decorate and remember the story by.

Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *Elf – The Musical* and discussing it or participating in the suggested or similar activities, will fit into Manitoba curricula in the following subjects:

Manitoba Drama Curriculum

Early/Middle Years outcomes

- DR-M2 The learner develops competencies for using elements of drama/theatre in a variety of contexts
- DR-M3 The learner demonstrates an understanding of and a facility with theatrical elements that contribute to the dramatic arts.
- DR-CR1 The learner generates ideas from a variety of sources for creating drama/theatre.
- DR-CR2 The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/theatre.
- DR-CR3 The learner revises, refines, and shares drama/theatre ideas and creative work.
- DR-C3 The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.
- DR-R1 The learner generates initial reactions to dramatic arts experiences.
- DR-R2 The learner observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.
- DR-R3 The learner analyzes and interprets dramatic arts experiences.
- DR-R4 The learner constructs meaning and applies new understandings from dramatic arts experiences.

Senior Years outcomes

- DR-M2 The learner develops competencies for using elements of drama/theatre in a variety of contexts
- DR-M3 The learner develops competencies for using a range of dramatic forms and styles
- DR-R1 The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.
- DR-R2 The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.
- DR-R3 The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-CR1 The learner generates ideas from a variety of sources for creating drama/theatre.
- DR-CR2 The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/theatre.
- DR-CR3 The learner revises, refines, and shares drama/theatre ideas and creative work.
- DR-C1 The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.
- DR-C3 The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

Manitoba Music Curriculum

Early/Middle Years outcomes

M–M1	The learner develops skills for singing, playing, improvising, and moving.
M–M3	The learner develops competencies for using elements of music in a variety of contexts.
M–CR1	The learner generates ideas for creating music from a variety of sources.
M–CR2	The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating music.
M–CR3	The learner revises, refines, and shares music ideas and creative work.
M–C3	The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music in the lives of individuals and communities.
M–R1	The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.
M–R2	The learner listens to, observes, and describes music experiences.
M–R3	The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.

Senior Years outcomes

M–M2	The learner develops skills listening competencies for making music.
M–M3	The learner develops competencies for using elements of music in a variety of contexts.
M–CR1	The learner generates ideas for creating music from a variety of sources.
M–CR2	The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating music.
M–CR3	The learner revises, refines, and shares music ideas and creative work.
M–C2	The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of music.
M–C3	The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music in the lives of individuals and communities.
M–R1	The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.
M–R2	The learner critically listens to, observes, and describes music experiences.
M–R3	The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.

Manitoba English Curriculum

(https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/framework/full_doc.pdf)

As the English Curriculum in Manitoba is in flux, we have not designated SLO numbers to these outcomes, but they all show up in both the 2000 curriculum and the most recent drafts of the new curriculum.

- research and study topics and ideas
- interpret and integrate information and ideas from multiple texts and sources
- manage information and ideas
- recognize and analyze inequities, viewpoints, and bias in texts and ideas
- become aware of the ways that one engages with text
- recognize, apply and adapt rules and conventions

Sources

Glossary definitions from Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>, unless otherwise listed here.

<https://www.mtishows.com/elf-the-musical>

<https://www.tivo.com/>

<https://www.tavernonthegreen.com/>

<https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101971767>

<https://www.pbk.org/>

<https://ldsblogs.com/997/when-mormon-missionaries-knock-on-your-d>

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3926513/jewish/What-Does-Meshuga-Meshuggah-Mean.htm

<https://www.marsfoodservices.com/product/juicy-fruit>

<https://www.jennycraig.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Theft_Auto

<https://barefootinthepines.com/fluffernutter-sandwich-recipe/>

<https://www.walgreens.com/topic/duane-reade/duane-reade.jsp>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etch_A_Sketch

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/drugs/19498-alprazolam-tablets>

<https://charlierose.com/about>

https://www.brooksbrothers.com/on/demandware.store/Sites-brooksbrothers-Site/en_US/Heritage-Show

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Sinai_Beth_Israel

<https://www.biography.com/movies-tv/oprah-winfrey>

<https://donny.com/who-is-donny/>

Thank you to Canada Life for generously supporting student tickets!

