

Theatre IV's  
**CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE**



The Adventures of

***Pinocchio***

Book and Lyrics by Bruce Miller  
Music by Michael Strong



Theatre IV is a not-for-profit organization  
and gratefully acknowledge support from the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

# Pinocchio

## PLAY SYNOPSIS

As the story begins, we meet Master Cherry, a cabinetmaker who has found a talking log. Not knowing what to do with a talking log, Master Cherry gives it to kindly old Gepetto who carves it into a puppet - a marionette, to be precise - and names his creation Pinocchio. Like magic, Pinocchio moves without strings.

Gepetto teaches his "son" to walk, and Pinocchio immediately uses his new mobility to sneak away from the sleeping Gepetto. Clearly, this is a spirited, willful, curious, and somewhat disobedient little puppet. "I wish I were a real little boy and not a wooden puppet," Pinocchio exclaims on his way out the door, but he soon finds himself lost, cold and hungry. Luckily, his father finds him and leads him home to safety.

The next morning, as Pinocchio walks to school he encounters some fellow marionettes that perform with Fire Eater's Touring Puppet Theatre. He readily trades his ABC book for a chance to see their show. The show is interrupted, by a very old marionette named Angelina who warns Pinocchio that he is being tested and had better run away before the Fire Eater tries to bind him in strings. Pinocchio runs but unfortunately he runs right into the Fire Eater himself.

The Fire Eater wants to burn Pinocchio as kindling, but when the marionette expresses love for his father and shows bravery in defending old Angelina from being burned in his place, the Fire Eater relents and rewards Pinocchio with five gold pieces. Intending to spend the money well, he meets a fox and a cat who lead him to an Inn and trick him into spending three gold pieces on an extravagant meal. Disguised, they steal the rest of his money in the Field of Wonders and leave Pinocchio tied and dangling from a tree.

Pinocchio is saved by the beautiful Blue Fairy, but lies about the series of events that led to his predicament. His growing nose gives his lies away. The Fairy explains that she has given him the ability to speak and walk like a real little boy, but he must pass the test of responsibility before she can completely transform him into a human being. He must grow up. She also tells Pinocchio that Gepetto is in serious trouble: the old man has been washed out to sea after falling asleep on the beach while searching for his son. Pinocchio sets out to rescue him.

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While swimming away from shore, he is swallowed by a giant dogfish. Luckily, the same dogfish had also swallowed Geppetto. Father and son are joyfully reunited and begin to plan their escape from the fish's stomach. They sing a "Dogfish Lullaby," and when the big fish yawns, they crawl out through his mouth. They swim to shore, into the waiting arms of the Blue Fairy and their friends from Fire Eater's Puppet Theatre.

Pinocchio has passed the test, and now his wish can come true. He learns that the Blue Fairy is actually his mother, and she magically completes his transformation into a real little boy, saying "Today you have saved your father, and filled your mother's heart with pride. You have performed one miracle, and now I shall perform another." The cast gathers around Pinocchio to sing the Finale.

## BACKGROUND: THE STORY

In 1880, the Italian journalist and author Carlo Lorenzini was asked to send a children's story to a new magazine. Writing under the pen name Carlo Collodi, he submitted what was to become the first chapter of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, along with a note: "I send you this bit of childishness. Do with it as you see fit; but if you print it, pay me well so I may be spurred on to continue it." And so Collodi wrote his most famous work, chapter by chapter, frequently not even glancing back to see what he had last written about the spirited marionette who yearns to be a real little boy.

In the century that followed, of course, *Pinocchio* became one of the most beloved stories in children's literature. As it happened, Collodi's publisher made a fortune from it but the author himself died too early to witness its international success. Collodi's tale has been adapted, illustrated and animated by hundreds of interpreters over the years, including Walt Disney in the well-known 1939 animated feature film version. It has been translated into almost every living language and one dead one: Latin.

## BACKGROUND: ITALY

It is not surprising that Pinocchio's adventures eventually lead him to the sea because water has a very important place in Italy's geography and in the lives of the Italian people. The Italian peninsula is about 730 miles long and surrounded on three sides by water. Its shape is long and narrow, giving the country an

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enormous coastline of about 6,000 miles and ensuring that no one there lives more than 75 miles from the sea. Fishing is an important part of the Italian economy; while the many beautiful beaches help to attract tourism, also a major industry. In a way, Italy owes much of its rich and varied culture to the surrounding sea; from the earliest days of sea travel, Italy has been a stopping-off point for travelers on the Mediterranean who brought important influences from Europe (especially nearby Greece), northern Africa and the Middle East.

Italy's total land area is about 116,000 square miles, making it approximately the same size as the state of Arizona. Mountains and a few large rivers crisscross the country. The northern mountains called the Alps form the boundary with Europe, while the Apennines run down the center of the country for 300 miles, dividing east from west. The Apennines contain Italy's two active volcanoes. Scattered throughout the Mediterranean are a number of Italian islands, the two largest being Sardinia and Sicily.

Rome is the capital of Italy and is both the center of Italian government and the world center of the Catholic Church. Other important Italian cities include Florence (home of *Pinocchio* author Carlo Collodi and some of the world's greatest art museums) and the Canal City of Venice, where long rowboats, called gondolas, are used instead of taxicabs.

## FAMOUS ITALIANS IN HISTORY

### *Scientists*

*Galileo* (1564 - 1642), astronomer and mathematician

*Maria Montessori* (1870 - 1952), educator, founder of Montessori schools

### *Political Leaders*

*Julius Caesar* (c. 102 B.C. - 44 B.C.), Roman conqueror; July named in his honor

*Lorenzo Medici* (1449 - 1492), prince and patron of the arts

### *Explorers*

*Marco Polo* (c. 1254 - 1324)

*Christopher Columbus* (c. 1451 - 1506)

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## **Writers**

*Dante Alighieri* (1265 - 1321), first major poet to write in the Italian language

*Luigi Pirandello* (1867 - 1936), playwright

## **Musicians**

*Antonius Stradivarius* (1644 - 1737), maker of violins, violas and cellos

*Giacomo Puccini* (1858 - 1924), opera composer

*Luisa Tetrazzini* (1871 - 1940), operatic soprano

## **Artists**

*Leonardo da Vinci* (1452 - 1519), inventor, sculptor, painter (*Mona Lisa*)

*Michelangelo* (1457 - 1564), architect, sculptor, painter (Sistine Chapel ceiling)

## **BACKGROUND: PUPPETS**

It is believed that the earliest puppets appeared in Asia and were used to tell religious stories. The first puppets may have been created to take the place of human actors in sacred dramas when religious taboos prevented mortals from impersonating gods. Gradually, puppets came to be used for entertainment purposes as well. India, Java, Japan, Thailand, and China all developed unique puppet theater traditions, drawing inspiration from the religion, history, legends, and classical literature of their cultures.

The European traditions of puppet theater developed later, and tended to be more raucous and hearty than their delicate and refined Asian predecessors. The Italian puppet tradition is a good example. By the middle of the 16th century, puppet shows in the *commedia dell'arte* style were a popular form of entertainment in Italy. The *commedia* was an improvised style of broad comedy that relied on well worn plots and stock characters such as the buffoon, the young lover, the crafty servant, and the old doctor. Travelling puppet shows, much like Fire Eater's Puppet Theatre in Theatre IV's *Pinocchio*, were performed in marketplaces, fairs and festivals--anywhere an audience might gather and pay a few coins for some light entertainment.

The definition for puppets has evolved to mean any object that is animated for a dramatic purpose by a human operator. The world is filled with a wonderful variety of nontraditional puppets that fit this broad definition: Native

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American masks, human-size *bunraku* puppets of Japan, giant dragons featured in Chinese street processions, ventriloquists' dummies, and parade balloons. More traditional puppets--the kind we might encounter in a contemporary American "puppet show" (like *Sesame Street* or *Bear in the Big Blue House*)-- can be divided into several categories:



**Hand puppets:** A common type of puppet worn like a glove on the operator's hand. The puppet's gestures are limited to the movement of the operator's fingers and wrist. A hand puppet may be made from solid materials (wood, plastic wood, papier mâché) or pliable ones (fabric, foam rubber, latex); it is usually legless or with stuffed legs, which merely hang limply. Pip and Pop from *Bear in the Big Blue House* are hand puppets.

**Rod puppets:** Operated from below the stage surface, the figures are full-length and supported by a metal or wooden rod running inside the body to the head. Separate thin rods may be used to move the arms, (and more rarely, the legs) from outside the body and costume. Each rod puppet requires at least one, and sometimes two or three people to operate it.



**Rod-hand puppet:** This is a mixed-style puppet that requires the operator's hand inside the body while the limbs are moved with rods. Many of the Muppets--like Kermit and Elmo--are rod-hand puppets.

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**Shadow puppet:** Visible to the audience only as a shadow projected onto a screen, the shadow puppet itself is most often a two-dimensional cutout manipulated between the screen and a bright light. Shadow puppets are often made of cardboard or stiffened parchment.



**Marionette:** This puppet is operated from above the stage by strings and is often the most complex type of puppet. A simple marionette may have nine strings - one to each leg, one to each hand, one to each shoulder, one to each ear (for head movements) and one to the base of the spine (for bowing). But some marionettes may have three times as many strings, so operating them requires great skill. The bodies may be made of wood, fabric, paper, foam rubber, etc. Pinocchio, of course, is the best-known example of a marionette.

**Body Puppet:** A puppet that is worn by the manipulator, whose full body, including his or her face, may be covered. A hole, usually covered with a net, allows the manipulator to see. Body puppets are so called when they are used in puppet productions, although they could be considered costumes. Some have elaborate electronic controls to move the eyes or other parts of the body. Bear from *Bear in the Big Blue House* and Big Bird from *Sesame Street* are body puppets.



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## ACTIVITIES:

1. You are probably familiar with at least one version of the Pinocchio story-- perhaps the Disney film or a favorite picture book. What are your favorite parts of the story? How many different ways can you and your classmates come up with about how live actors might present those characters and events on a stage. How might you show a nose growing? How would the puppet-boy turn into a real child? Remember that there are often many ways to tell the same story, and Theatre IV's *Pinocchio* may be different in some surprising and fun ways from the versions you already know.

2. The Italian language is beautiful to hear. You may be surprised to learn that you already know many Italian words. Many common English words have been taken directly from the lilting Italian language: spaghetti, pizza, confetti, graffiti, solo, piano, and opera, to name just a few. Challenge your fellow classmates to come up with several examples of other Italian words that have become part of the English language.

3. Pinocchio wishes to become a real little boy so he can do all the things that little boys do. In the magical world of the story, and the play, his wish comes true. What kind of magical wishes do you ever have? Do you want to be a bird so you can fly? A fish so you can explore the sea? Just for fun, discuss how our lives might change if one of our wishes suddenly came true. Would you miss being a regular person? Do you think Pinocchio might regret becoming a real little boy and wish he were a puppet again? Why or why not?

4. To prove that Pinocchio is growing up he must pass the Blue Fairy's test; he must show responsibility, courage and kindness before she will grant his wish. What kinds of 'tests' do we encounter as we are growing up? How do we show our parents and teachers that we are ready for more 'grown-up' responsibility? List some chores and privileges that you did not have when you were younger, and list some things you will not be able to do for a few years.



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5. When Pinocchio tells a lie, his nose grows. What happens in real life when you tell a lie? What are the consequences? Why do people tell lies? Is lying always wrong?

6. For a fun and physical challenge, play "marionettes." Divide into pairs and decide who will be the marionette and who will be the puppeteer. Stand face to face, with the puppeteer slightly above on a step or sturdy footstool. The strings can be real and tied to the puppet's wrist and knees, or they can be make-believe. Either way, remember that the puppeteer controls every puppet movement and this takes practice and teamwork.

7. Mount your own puppet show to discuss another class topic. Pick a story the class has read or a recent social studies or history topic. Write a script about your story or topic. Make simple puppets out of paper lunch bags, old socks, wooden spoons, whatever you may have available. You can make a stage and scenery by using a small table and a cut out box. Act out your script using your new puppets.

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## POSTSCRIPT:

Theatre IV is proud to present our original production of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Theatre IV's artistic director, Bruce Miller, wrote the book and lyrics, Michael Strong wrote the music.

During the performance, flash photography is prohibited for the safety of the performers. Video and audiotaping are prohibited due to copyright restrictions. This performance will be approximately one hour long and has no intermission.

Theatre IV is the second largest theatre for young audiences in the nation and has been offering innovative, educational theatre to young audiences since 1975. Each season, Theatre IV's plays are presented to over 1,000,000 children and adults across the United States. Theatre IV is led by its co-founders: artistic director Bruce Miller and managing director Phil Whiteway. Under their direction, the company has received many awards including the Sara Spencer Award for "the most outstanding contribution to children's theatre in the Southeastern U.S.," the concern for Kids Award from the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs, and an official Commendation from Governor Charles S. Robb and Mayor Roy A. West for "leadership in the creation of Black Theatre Month in Virginia."

Theatre IV is very grateful for the support it received during the 1998-1999 season, including assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

Please send us your comments and questions about this, or any of our productions. The mailing address is Theatre IV, 114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220.