

# ***The House at Pooh Corner***

A Study Guide

## **Production Personnel**

### Cast

<b>ANDREW G. COOPER:</b>	Tasker / Piglet / Tigger
<b>RANDI EDMUNDSON:</b>	Alice / Tasker / Eeyore / Rabbit / Kanga / Roo / Owl
<b>STEFANO GIULIANETTI:</b>	Alexander / Tasker / Winnie the Pooh
<b>DEIDRICH ORTON:</b>	Christopher Robin

### Production Team

<b>HEATHER CANT:</b>	Director
<b>RANDI EDMUNDSON:</b>	Music Director
<b>TRAVIS HATT:</b>	Set & Lighting Designer
<b>MARIAN TRUSCOTT:</b>	Costume Designer
<b>SHAWN KETTNER:</b>	Puppet Designer & Builder
<b>CATHY NOSATY:</b>	Original Composition
<b>MADISON HENRY:</b>	Stage Manager
<b>ERIK HAGAR:</b>	Design Apprentice



*The House at Pooh Corner* is a play based on a book written by A.A. Milne. The original play was written by Bettye Knapp. Western Canada Theatre's production of *The House at Pooh Corner* has been adapted by Kim Selody.

## A.A. Milne and Winnie the Pooh



Alan Alexander Milne (1882 – 1956) began his writing career after graduating from Cambridge University. After serving in World War I, he worked for many years as the assistant editor of the British humour magazine *Punch*. A successful playwright, his plays were produced in London and New York. In 1920, his wife Daphne gave birth to a son, Christopher Robin Milne. A.A. Milne’s career as a children’s author began with the publication of a collection of verses entitled *When We Were Very Young*, illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard.

Christopher Robin’s favourite toy was an 18 inch-high stuffed bear purchased at Harrod’s Department store for his first birthday. Named “Edward Bear” at first, the bear was renamed “Winnie” after a black bear in the London Zoo. As a young child, Christopher Robin had quite a friendship with the bear, and visited regularly to play games and give Winnie a special treat: condensed milk. Although Milne created a honey-loving bear for us, the real-life Winnie’s disliked honey, preferring the taste of condensed milk.

The “Pooh” part of Winnie’s name was added even later, “Pooh” having been the name of a swan in *When We Were Very Young*. Milne, his wife, and Christopher’s Nanny often made up stories with and for Christopher and his growing collection of stuffed toys. Daphne Milne encouraged her husband to publish the stories.

The Milne’s home was located at Cotchford Farm near Hartfield, East Sussex (about an hour’s drive from London). In the surrounding area were streams, forests, bridges, and the Five Hundred Acre Wood, which was the model for the Hundred Acre Wood of the books. *Winnie-the-Pooh*, illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard, was published in 1926. It was followed by *Now We Are Six* (1927) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928).



The original stuffed toys of Christopher Robin now on display at the New York Library.

## Characters

**Winnie-The-Pooh (Pooh)** is an anthropomorphic teddy bear and the main character in the book. He is naive but extremely friendly, very thoughtful and occasionally profound with great insight. He is always willing to help his friends and always gives of his best. Pooh is motivated easily by his love of honey. This pursuit of honey can often get him into trouble.

Pooh is a talented poet and his stories are frequently punctuated by his little ditties, or "Hums". He is comfortable in his creativity and rather humble about his talent, telling his friends that one does not find a "hum" but one must go to where a "hum" may find him. Pooh is Christopher Robin's best friend and vice versa.

**Christopher Robin** is the only human character in the book. He is a cheerful, friendly little boy who is loving and empathetic. He is admired and respected by all of the other characters and although he is just a child he is by far the wisest. Christopher Robin ages before our eyes and the play tells us the time has come for him to be off to school. Because of this he is not able to spend his days in Hundred Acre Wood anymore. In the final scene Christopher Robin and Pooh leave each other behind, promising to remember the other even when they are one hundred.

**Piglet** generally follows Pooh's lead and seems easily worried and a little timid, but is actually rather brave in crisis situations. When Pooh gives him encouragement Piglet really excels. He is kind, gentle and leans toward shyness. He is also extremely tidy and rather particular.

**Eeyore** is an eternal pessimist who is always glum. He has trouble keeping his tail attached to his tail-end. Eeyore lives in a house made out of sticks which blows away and his newly re-built home is the eponymous "House At Pooh Corner". Eeyore is cautious and although not one to follow the crowd rarely speaks up or voices opposition because he does not believe that anyone will listen to him. Despite his negativity Eeyore is much loved by his friends.

**Kanga** is a female kangaroo and doting mother to her son, Roo. When they first meet her everything thinks she is going to be rather fierce but they quickly realize she is friendly and become fast friends with her. When Tigger arrives in the forest she welcomes him into her home, finds food that he likes and allows him to stay, treating him like a second son. This is typical of Kangaroo who is generous with an open, giving heart. She is patient and motherly and always ready to listen or give advice as needed. Kanga is almost over-protective when it comes to Roo.

**Rabbit** is a friendly character given to occasional irritability. He is always confident that he is the smartest inhabitant of Hundred Acre Wood and consequently believes that his way is the best

way to do absolutely anything at all. He has a tendency towards obsessive-compulsive organization and rule-keeping and is very orderly. Although bossy, he loves his friends very much. Rabbit was not based on one of Christopher Robin Milne's toys but came from AA Milne's imagination.

**Tigger** is happy and exuberant and has a personality as bouncy as he is. He can be irresponsible and can get into trouble if not kept firmly in line. Tigger loves bouncing, mostly onto others. He is exceedingly energetic, very outgoing and loves to have fun. Tigger is very confident and believes that any task or challenge is "what Tiggers do best."

**Owl** is the oldest male character in the book and is worldly and wise. Extremely talkative, he is a leader and respected mentor although he can sometimes be a trifle stuffy. He has a tendency to be a scatterbrain but both he and all of his friends believe him to be the most intelligent in the group. His speeches can ramble on for hours and Owl will get very testy if he is interrupted. He lives in a tree known as The Chestnuts, an old world residence of great charm much as Owl is an old world, charming resident.

**Roo** is energetic and playful, he is always cheerful and adores his best friend Tigger whom he looks up to a great deal almost like an older brother. He is the youngest character in the book.

## Activities in the Classroom

### *Activity #1: Which Pooh are You?*

Have an open discussion with your class about each character they saw in the play. Have them give descriptive words for each (use the above list as a reference). What did they like and dislike about the characters? It will be helpful to write the characters on the board, so they can reference it for the following activity.

Have each student pick one character that best represents their own personality. They can base this on the words that the class shared, or the character they saw on stage. Have them draw that character to the best of their ability.

The play focuses on the homes of the characters (or lack thereof). Have the students then draw the home of that animal.

### *Activity #2: Bringing our Toys to Life*

Winnie the Pooh was a toy that was brought to life by A.A. Milne. Pooh was his son, Christopher Robin's, most precious stuffed animal. Ask your class if they have ever thought of one of their toys as real. Did they speak to you? Did you talk back to them? Did you pretend they were real or tell them your secrets? Why did you do this? Why was it important for you to share feelings or thoughts with your toys? Did you find it helpful when you needed someone to talk to?

Have the class bring that toy to class for a show and tell style activity. Have them tell the class about their toy and why it is important to them, when they got it and what they like to do with the toy.

Have the group separate into pairs. Tell the students that their toys have now come to life! Have them introduce their toys and ask questions of each other. Convince the students that this exercise is best played when they truly believe they are real. Have them speak how they feel their toy would (high, low, fast, slow, studdering, musical, timid, confident). Ask the group why their toys speak the way they do? Why are they shy? Once they have established the character, have the class walk about introducing their toys to the other toys.

## FUN CLASSROOM GAME!

**Toyshop:** Tell the students that the classroom is a toy shop. They can choose to be any toy in that shop. They each have an “on” and “off” button. When the “on” button is pressed, they can act as the toy. Press the “on” button on the toys to see them play.

Each night the toykeeper (that’s you!) leaves the shop. When she/he does, the toys come to life!! You can do this by actually leaving the classroom (watch noise levels! Things can get crazy!). Abruptly come back in, swearing that you heard noises coming from your shop. That can’t be right? You shut all the toys off!! Double check to make sure that you did indeed shut them off. Make a speech to the toys that while you love them all, they should under no circumstance create a disturbance in the neighborhood. They are to be on their best behavior when the store is closed. Yawn, say goodnight and leave again. Feel free to enter and exit as many times as long as the game remains fun and not chaotic. Remark on the fact that you are sure that the toy dog was not near the barbie and that the lego man was standing the last time you came in!

Kids love this game as it encourages imagination, play and they love to trick the toy keeper! You can add another element and have a couple kids walk in during the stores open hours. They can press “on” on the toys and see what they can do. They can also then purchase them!

### *Activity #3: Off to School and Growing Up*

Saying farewell, being lost, and growing up are three themes that are prevalent in *The House at Pooh Corner*. Christopher Robin is saying goodbye to his friends at the Hundred Acre Wood because he is set to go off to school soon. Christopher Robin is aware that he won’t have the opportunity to see Pooh as much as he did before. He knows he is growing up: “Whatever happens, you will understand, won’t you?”

Ask your students if they can remember a time when they realized they were growing up? Or when they felt “too old” for something (perhaps their training wheels, their teddy bear or blanket at night, their favorite article of clothing that they were now too big for). How did it make them feel to have to give up something that was precious to them? Or perhaps, they gave it up without a fight at all and it is not until now that they realize they haven’t played with that toy in a long time? What are the feelings we get from objects that become close to us? Why are our favorite blankets, toys, clothes important to us?

### Activity #4: Going on an “Expotition”

In *The House at Pooh Corner*, the character of Nanny explains that Tasker, Alexander and she are on an “expotition to find Christopher Robin and Pooh and his friends”. Send your students on their own expedition!!

Separate the class into groups of 3 or 4. Have them pick a destination spot on the school premise (outside is your best bet so as not to disturb other classes). Suggest to them spots that are furthest on the premise and are landmarked (ie. a tree, a hydrant, a playground piece or goalpost. Or if you are so inclined, the students could build something out of things in the environment to mark a space). As a group they must travel to that place. Along the way they should take notes as to what they pass (underfoot and to their left and right), and how far they have travelled.

Once they have tracked out the path, they must return to class and create a map. The map must be detailed enough that another group could follow it. This map may include what the explorers might need to have on them (compass, digging tools, rubber boots, magnifying glass; this really depends on how in depth you want to make the hunt). It should also depict what the explorers will pass (a playground, the grade 6 room, a parking spot, a tree). Have them go and place an item at the destination (stickers, small treats, a special note).

Have the groups exchange maps. Now the class are explorers and need to find the treasure! Be sure to check over the maps before the class heads out. If you cannot find it, odds are the map needs to be tweaked. You could use one group as guinea pigs and have the next group do the hunt. The guinea pig group can give feedback to the original map makers to ensure that the prize is found.

Happy Hunting!

### Activity #5: A Post-Show Discussion

1. Discuss the play with your class. What did they like, what did they find challenging? Why? Ask for specifics. Who was your favourite character and why?
2. Friendship is another major theme in this play. What are some of the instances where we saw wonderful displays of friendship amongst the characters?
3. Did you like the set? What did you think of the homes for each of the characters?
4. What did you think of the puppets for the show? Why do you think the playwright would ask that puppets represent the characters and not actors in costume? Did you enjoy the voices the actors used?
5. Did you like the music in the show? How did you like Pooh’s musicality? What were you thinking of when Pooh was humming his little tunes?

6. Have you ever seen or heard a Winnie the Pooh story before? If so, how did the play compare? Were the characters portrayed the way you thought they would be? In the end, which did you prefer, the storybook characters, the cartoon characters or the characters on the stage? How does our ideas of stories change when they are live in front of us compared to on a TV or in a book?

### *Curriculum Connections*

Drama	Exploring, Drama Forms Performance Context Exploring and Creating
Arts Education	Social Context
Music	Thoughts, Images and Feelings Context
Language Arts	Oral Language, Reading and Viewing, Speaking and Listening

## **Works Sited**

[www.cloudfront.net](http://www.cloudfront.net)

[www.gradesaver.com/the-house-at-pooh-corner](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-house-at-pooh-corner)

[www.pooh-corner.org](http://www.pooh-corner.org)

Selody, Kim. *The House at Pooh Corner*. Adapted from the play by Bettye Knapp. Taken from the book, *The House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne. Dutton Books for Young Readers, 1988.