



WCT'S 2023/2024 SEASON STUDY GUIDE: *Shrek The Musical*

Based on the DreamWorks Animation Motion Picture and the book by WILLIAM STEIG

Book and Lyrics by DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIRE

Music by JEANINE TESORI

Originally produced on Broadway by DreamWorks Theatricals and Neal Street Productions



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Play Synopsis

"Once upon a time, there was a little ogre named Shrek..." Welcome to a magical land of classic fairy-tale characters... but in this fairy-tale, things are a little different than what you've read in the storybooks! The prince isn't charming. The princess is feisty. Donkeys have attitude. And our unlikely hero is a reclusive green ogre who lives in a swamp. You thought love was only true in fairy tales? Join Shrek, Donkey, Princess Fiona, and all your favourite fairy-tale characters as they learn to let their freak flags fly and find love in unlikely places. There's more to this story than meets the ears.

Character Breakdown

Shrek – The main protagonist. He is a grumpy ogre who lives in a swamp, and doesn't want to be friends or see anyone.

Donkey – Donkey is Shrek's self-proclaimed best friend. He is very loud, funny, and is a magical donkey that can talk.

Fiona – The princess locked away in a tower. Even though she is locked away, the audience quickly realizes she is spunky, charismatic, and is eager for adventure.

Lord Farquaad – The villain of the story. Lord Farquaad rules Duloc, and is the reason for all the fairy tale creatures being displaced at the beginning of the musical. He hires Shrek to rescue Fiona for him so that he can marry her.

Gingy – A gingerbread cookie. Gingy is small but mighty, and is one of the fairy tale creatures that was displaced and taken by Lord Farquaad.

Pinocchio – Pinocchio is the classic wooden puppet character, who wants to be a real boy. His nose grows when he lies, and he is a very mischievous character.

Dragon – Dragon guards Fiona's castle, and is a force to be reckoned with, but is lonely and wants companionship.

Big Bad Wolf – The Big Bad Wolf is the villain from Red Riding Hood, however in this story he is also just a simple magical creature that was displaced by Lord Farquaad.

Fairytales Creatures – There are several other fairy tale creatures that are featured in the play, such as the three blind mice, the three little pigs, the fairy godmother, and more.

There are also other secondary characters that you will see throughout the show, like Lord Farquaad’s knights, Duloc citizens, and more!

Playwrights

David Lindsay-Abaire wrote the script and lyrics for *Shrek the Musical*. He is an American Playwright born in 1969 in Boston, Massachusetts. He has received many awards for his works, including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2007 for his play *Rabbit Hole*, which also earned several Tony Award nominations. David graduated from Sarah Lawrence College with a major in theatre, then gained a place on the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at New York’s Juilliard School. While there, he studied under playwrights Christopher Durang and Marsha Norman. In 2016, he returned to Juilliard as the co-director of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program.



Jeanine Tesori wrote the music for *Shrek the Musical*. Jeanine grew up in Port Washington and was at first going to school to be a nurse, but then changed her major to music at Barnard College. She has spent many years on and off-Broadway as a pianist, arranger, and conductor, as well as written her own musical, *Violet*. She is an incredibly accomplished musician, and is currently one of the most honored and celebrated female musical theatre composers in history, having written five Broadway musicals and having earned five Tony nominations.

Fun Facts

- Brian D'Arcy James, who played Shrek in the original Broadway production, won a Tony Award for his performance.
- The musical and film are based on the 1990 children's book 'Shrek!' by William Steig.
- The "Shrek the Musical" costumes are some of the most elaborate in Broadway history, with over 100 costumes used in the production.
- The original Broadway production of "Shrek the Musical" ran for over a year and received eight Tony Award nominations.
- Shrek is on the Hollywood Walk of Fame
- The word "Shrek" is derived from "Shrek Lekh" in Yiddish which could mean awful or terrible.

ACTIVITIES

Engaging in the Core Competencies:

Communication, Thinking, Personal and Social

Activity #1:

Download the music from the Broadway production. Have your class break into groups and choose a song, or piece of a song to learn. Groups can learn the lyrics and sing it, or create some choreography to go with the piece. Have the groups perform for one another.

Have groups discuss what they think the song is about and how it may fit into Shrek. After seeing the show, discuss the similarities and differences they experienced!

Activity #2: Bringing Fairy Tales to Life!

After the show have your class make a list of all of the fairy tale creatures they saw in the show. Divide the class into small groups of 4 or 5. Have each group choose a fairy tale to perform.

This is a great opportunity to talk to your class about story structure and what makes a good story!

Have each group write out the important moments of their fairy tale (beginning, middle, end could be the approach or characters and problem/solutions works too!). Have them recreate the fairy tale on stage. Be sure to talk about important lines and the message or theme of each.

Perform them for the class!

If you are in a time crunch, rather than performing the whole play, ask the groups to identify 3 moments in the fairy tale that are the most important. Have them create 3 tableaus representing those moments.

Tableaus are still pictures. Great tableaus have the following:

- 1) *Levels* – actors at varying levels of height to help create a dynamic picture
- 2) *Relationships* – actors using eye contact or body language to tell us how they feel about another character on stage
- 3) *Dynamic action* – postures that are exciting to look at! What draws our eye to the picture? Bodies should be used from the toe to the top of the head. Do the actors look engaged?
- 4) *Focus* – do we as the audience know where to look? There should be a focal point that will tell us what part of the story we are in.

Activity #3 – Wordsearch!

Name: _____ Date: _____

SHREK

K J Q K I F Q U D T J J L Q Q H H
K E R H S C A S T L E N I T B W F
D T H D A A U Q R A F U U Z P L I
N O G A R D B V O U X V S N I U B
R Q P I K I N G B D R F S C Q A X
I N M D A N O I F J O H J U S R K
S I A R H U L T Z K J N P R W E J
J V W R H O T F W J N Y K S Y W E
T C S P L V P M A U E U C E J O M
L S A F W W I E J I J J W O Y L O
C P Y Z D E J Q S B R D C V I F I
X E E K Z D S P L Y N Y N S S N Q
Q L K I T D R Q P O H R T E I U N
E L B A W I U E A L D L I A R S C
K V T J X N Z Y A W N O C G L T J
U U C N I G F C L M N U V K C E K
D A C E G J B I E B S W D R O H S

KING	CURSE	SPELL	SWAMP
WEDDING	SUNFLOWER	DREAMS	HOPES
FAIRY TALES	CASTLE	FARQUAAD	DRAGON
FIONA	DONKEY	SHREK	

Activity #4: Colouring Pages!





Activity #5: Ogres and Shape-Shifters

An **ogre**, or **ogress**, is a large and hideous human-like creature, often found in fairy tales. They are usually portrayed as somewhat unintelligent and clumsy. Sometimes, they are depicted as preying on human victims. The word is derived from the Latin word 'orca,' which means 'demon.' Traditionally, ogres have often been pictured as tall, round creatures with a lot of hair. Ogres represent something that is peculiar and different, and in literature, folklore, and art, they may reflect the desire to embrace those who are different. In modern cultures, the image of the ogre has become less threatening. Familiar stories that feature ogres include "Puss in Boots", the Giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk," the one-eyed Cyclops of Greek Mythology, the Beast in "Beauty and the Beast," and the 'oni' ('OH-nee') of Japanese folklore.

Shape-Shifters are characters that can change their form, either intentionally or by some outside force, and they are common in mythology and fantasy literature. In *Shrek the Musical*, Fiona transforms into a hideous ogress at sundown. There is a scientific term called "lunar effect" that refers to the idea that the cycle of the moon affects animal behavior. Of course, there are nocturnal and diurnal animals – animals that function primarily at night or primarily during the day. People's awareness of these natural phenomena could be the initial source for the idea of characters that transform at night or 13 when exposed to the moon. Sometimes the shape-shifting is a result of a spell or charm, and only happens once, but sometimes it is a basic character trait. The word for the transformation of a human being into an animal or conversely of an animal into human form is called "therianthropy" (teh-ree-ANN-throw-pee). Shape-shifters are common in familiar stories, such as "The Little Mermaid," "Beauty and the Beast," "The Princess and the Frog," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and The Chronicles of Narnia.

Give each student a piece of blank paper. Divide it in half length wise. On the left side, have them draw themselves. On the right side, have them draw what they wished they would turn into if they were a shape-shifter. Partner up to have the students describe their new shape to a friend!

Have extra time? Have each child create a story or activity that their new shape does. This can be orally with their partner or written down. When the moon rises, what does this mysterious character do before the sun comes up?!!

Post Show Discussion and Ideas

1. At the beginning of the musical Shrek is very angry and wants to be alone and never be bothered by anyone. However, as the story continues, and he meets new friends and falls in love, he's still grouchy but we learn he has a warm heart that does want companionship. If he never met Fiona, Donkey, or any other fairy tale creatures, do you think he would have stayed angry and content in his isolation? Do you think he would have eventually ventured outside of his swamp and sought out friendship?
2. What are the major themes of Shrek? What did your students take away from the show? Who was their favourite character and why?
3. At your next hang out or family games night, try out some Swamp-tastic treats below!
 - a. Ants on a Log – celery filled with peanut butter and topped with raisins.
 - b. Happily Ever After Potion – a punch with orange juice, ginger ale. Optional add: edible glitter!
 - c. Gingerbread cookies – don't forget the gumdrop buttons!
 - d. Worms in Dirt – chocolate pudding with cookie crumbs, topped with gummy worms.

Scene Breakdown

Spoilers ahead, please skip if you don't want to read spoilers before seeing the show!

Act 1

Two ogre parents send their seven-year-old son Shrek out of their house and into the world to make his living. They warn him that because of his looks, he will be shunned by the world, and an angry mob will be the last thing he will see before he dies.

Some years later, an embittered, grown-up Shrek is living contentedly alone in a swamp. However, his solitude is disrupted when a refugee caravan of fairytale creatures show up on his property. They explain of their banishment from the Kingdom of Duloc, by order of the evil Lord Farquaad, who sentenced them into penal transportation for being freaks, under penalty of death if they ever return.

Although hesitant, Shrek decides to travel to see Farquaad and try to regain his swamp, along with getting the Fairytale Creatures their homes back, with much encouragement from Pinocchio and the gang.

Along the way, Shrek rescues a talkative Donkey from some of Farquaad's guards. In return for rescuing him, and offering his friendship, Donkey insists on tagging along to show Shrek the way to Duloc, to which he reluctantly agrees.

Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of Duloc, Farquaad is torturing The Gingerbread Man into revealing the whereabouts of other Fairytale Creatures that are still hiding in his Kingdom so he can have them arrested as well. Just as Gingy was going to reveal what he knows, the Captain of the guards arrives and announces that they have found the Magic Mirror.

Farquaad asked the mirror if Duloc was the most perfect kingdom of them all. The mirror told him that he's not truly a king yet, but he can become one if he marries a princess. The mirror introduces three different princesses for Lord Farquaad to choose from: Cinderella, Snow White, and Princess Fiona; at the suggestion from his henchman, Thelonious, Farquaad chooses Princess Fiona, who is currently trapped in a castle surrounded by lava and guarded by a terrible fire-breathing dragon. Accepting this as a task, Farquaad decides to marry her to become king, and rushes out to plan a raffle to see which knight would be worthy enough to embark on a quest to retrieve Fiona before the Mirror can tell him what happens to her at night.

The Mirror then shows the audience the story of Fiona's childhood.

A seven-year-old Fiona dreams of the brave knight who, as her storybooks tell her, will one day rescue her from her tower and end her mysterious curse with "True Love's First Kiss". As she grows into a teenager, and then a headstrong woman, she becomes a little bit stir-crazy, but she never loses her faith in her fairytales.

Shrek and Donkey arrive in Duloc where Farquaad expresses his love for his kingdom, accompanied by his cheerful cookie-cut army of Duloc Dancers. They approach Farquaad, with him being impressed by Shrek's size and appearance. Farquaad demands that Shrek must rescue Fiona, and in return, he will give Shrek the deed to his swamp.

The two unlikely friends set off to find Fiona, with Shrek becoming increasingly annoyed with Donkey as time progresses.

After crossing the rickety old bridge and arriving at the castle, Shrek sets off alone to rescue Fiona while Donkey encounters Dragon who initially wants to eat him, but then decides to spare him by keeping him for herself after Donkey manages to charm her. When Shrek finds Fiona, his lack of interest in playing out her desired, romantic rescue scene annoys her, and he drags her off by force. The two of them reunite with Donkey, and all three attempt to escape while being chased by the angry Dragon and her skeleton minions. Shrek traps Dragon and they get to a safe point.

Fiona then insists that Shrek reveal his identity and is shocked that her rescuer is an ogre and not the Prince Charming her stories indicated. Shrek explains that he is merely her champion; instead, she is to marry Farquaad. The trio begin their journey back to Duloc, but Fiona becomes apprehensive as the sun begins to set. She insists that they rest for the night and that she spend the night alone in a nearby cave. Donkey and Shrek remain awake, with Donkey asking Shrek who he would be, if he did not have to be an ogre anymore. As Shrek opens up to Donkey on who he would wish to be, it is revealed that Fiona transforms into an ogress after sunset, as part of her curse, and as she stands apart, alone, and listens, she empathizes with Shrek's feelings.

Act 2

The next day, Princess Fiona rises early and sings with a bluebird and dances with a deer (before making the bird explode and throwing the deer off a cliff). She assists the Pied Piper in his rat-charming duties. Shrek brings down her mood by attempting to give subtle hints about her groom-to-be ("Men of Farquaad's stature are in *short* supply", "He's very good at *small* talk", etc.) and mocking her tragic childhood circumstances.

The two begin a contest of trying to one-up each other to outdo the others' backstory, but end up revealing their respective pasts. Both admit to being thrown out by their parents; this connection, as well as bonding over a love of disgusting bodily noises, kindles friendship.

Back in Duloc, Lord Farquaad was in his bathtub planning his wedding, and he reveals his own sordid heritage after The Magic Mirror insists that Farquaad should invite his father, but Farquaad refuses, explaining how he abandoned him in the woods as a child.

As Shrek and Fiona's newfound camaraderie grows into love, Donkey insists, with the help of the Three Blind Mice from his imagination, that Shrek should gather his courage and admit his feelings to Fiona. Shrek, finally beginning to come out of his caustic, protective shell, tries to find the words to explain his feelings to Fiona.

While Shrek is out finding a flower for Fiona, Donkey discovers that Fiona turns into an ogress at night, and she confesses that she was cursed as a child, which is why she was locked away in the tower. Only a kiss from her true love will return her to her proper form, and she asks Donkey to promise never to tell. Shrek arrives near the end of the conversation and misunderstands Fiona's description of herself as an ugly beast, and thinks she is talking about him. Hurt by her presumed opinion, Shrek storms off.

The next day, transformed back to her human form, Fiona decides to tell Shrek about her curse. When she tries to explain, Shrek rebuffs her with his "ugly beast" overhearing, causing Fiona in turn to misunderstand. Then Farquaad arrives to claim Fiona and tells Shrek he has cleared the swamp of the Fairytale Creatures, and now belongs to Shrek again. While not very impressed with Farquaad, Fiona agrees to marry him and insists that they have the wedding before sunset. As Farquaad and Fiona ride back to Duloc, Donkey tries to explain the misunderstanding to Shrek (who is too angry and upset to listen), and Shrek rejects him as well, declaring that he will return to his swamp alone and build a wall to shield himself from the world.

Meanwhile, the Fairytale Creatures are on their way to a landfill which is to be their new home, since they were forced to relocate from the swamp. After dealing with the fact that Shrek broke his promise to them, however, Gingy rants that Farquaad's treatment of them is intolerable; just because they are freaks does not mean they deserve to be hated, so he rallies most of the other fairytale creatures into staging a coup d'état against Farquaad's rule. Unfortunately, a bitter Pinocchio (remembering they are not allowed back to Duloc) who doesn't want his friends to get killed, suggests that they should just keep going and wait until everything gets better, all the while wishing to be a real boy.

Exasperated by Pinocchio's turndown, Gingy convinces him to join the protest, inspiring him to accept who he is, as all of them have accepted who they are. They gather new confidence and strength in themselves, as they declare that they'll raise their "Freak Flag" high against their tormentors. Now realizing that they have become something more than friends, and have become a family, Pinocchio now leads his gang back to Duloc to overthrow Farquaad once and for all.

Shrek has returned to his once again private swamp, but he misses Fiona. Donkey shows up attempting to seal off his half of the swamp with stone boulders, which Shrek rebuffs. In turn, Donkey angrily berates Shrek for his reclusive and stubborn habits, even to the point of driving off Fiona. An angered Shrek reveals he heard her talking about a hideous creature the night before, and Donkey retorts that they were not talking about him, but of "someone else". When a confused Shrek inquires who it was, Donkey, wanting to keep his promise, and still cross with Shrek, refuses to talk. When Shrek apologizes and extends his friendship, Donkey forgives him.

The two then go back to Duloc, where Shrek objects to this marriage before Farquaad can kiss Fiona, and Fiona convinces him to let Shrek speak with her. Shrek finally finds the words to express his feelings for Fiona, and he declares his love for her. However, his declaration of love is mocked by Farquaad. Caught between love and her desire to break the curse, Fiona tries to

escape the event. Just then, the Fairytale Creatures storm into the wedding and protest their banishment.

They are also accompanied by Grumpy, one of the Seven Dwarfs, who reveals that he is Farquaad's father, and he kicked Farquaad out at the age of 28 when he wouldn't move out of the basement. The sun sets, causing Fiona to turn into an ogress in front of everyone. Leading to Shrek to realize that Fiona was referring to herself when she was talking to Donkey. Farquaad, furious and disgusted over the change, orders for Shrek to be drawn and quartered along with the Fairytale Creatures and Fiona banished back to her tower. As Farquaad proclaims himself the new King, Shrek whistles for the Dragon, who has now escaped the castle (and is the reason Shrek and Donkey got to the wedding just in time). Dragon then crashes through the window with Donkey and incinerates Farquaad with her fiery breath.

With Farquaad dead, Shrek and Fiona admit their love for each other and share true love's first kiss. Fiona's curse is broken, and she takes her true form: an ogress. At first, she is ashamed of her looks, but Shrek declares that she is still beautiful. The two ogres begin a new life together (along with Donkey, Dragon, and the Fairytale Creatures) as everyone celebrates their liberation against Farquaad's rule. In the end, Shrek and Fiona (in association with Donkey and Dragon) host their post-wedding party.

More information:

For more information about upcoming WCT shows, please visit our website at www.wctlive.ca

Information for this study guide was taken from Wikipedia, Stage Agent, Perfect Party Ideas, Music Theatre International, WikiShrek, Dreamworks Animation.