

THE Shadow Box Theatre

at the YWCA  of Brooklyn

ho EARTH & ME

*A child once sat upon the Earth and said
Earth, speak to me
Tell me your secrets wondrous Earth
How do you make a tree*



**-TEACHERS GUIDE-
TO CREATIVE PROJECTS FOR CLASSROOM USE**

325 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10023 • Phone: (212) 724-0677
Fax: (212) 724-0767 • Email: sbt@shadowboxtheatre.org
www.shadowboxtheatre.org

Welcome to The Shadow Box Theatre's Arts in Education Program: It's as Easy as ABC

A -- Assembly Programs and Performances

1. Theatre-in-Residence Performances: The Shadow Box Theatre (SBT) offers full stage productions (7-10 performers), such as you have seen today, at our home-based theatre-in-residence at the YWCA, as well as at other major venues in the city. Reservations for these shows are made by individual teachers and Arts Coordinators through SBT's reservation office.

2. Assembly Programs in Your School:

- Full Stage Productions: You may book a full stage production to tour to your school for performances in your school auditorium. *Suggested* audience size: up to auditorium capacity.

- Story Book Theatre: For a more intimate experience you can book an interactive musical storytelling show (a storyteller and musician) to come to your classroom, library, or auditorium. Suggested audience size: up to 150 students. Our stories are derived from our picture books and audio tapes, which are based on our full stage productions.

B -- Books, Tapes, and CDs from See-More's Workshop

"Read-More with See-More!" This program of Read-Aloud picture books and accompanying Read-Along/Move-Along audio tapes or compact discs, based on the musical puppet productions of The Shadow Box Theatre, was developed at the request of many teachers who had come to our shows. SBT's objective was to increase literacy, as reading skills are enhanced by both seeing the words and hearing the words. The learning is reinforced when the children creatively act, sing and move to the story-based activities on the move-along side of the tape or CD, allowing them to re-experience the excitement of theatre.

Our newest book is *The Earth & Me*, a large-format book, beautifully illustrated in full color, with accompanying CD or tape. We have 8 other picture books with accompanying Read-Along/Move-Along audio tapes or CDs: *How The Turtle Got Its Shell* - An African Tale (one of the stories from *The African Drum*); *No Balloons Today* - A Zoo Story; *Ring Around A Rainbow* - A Health & Safety Adventure; *The Growing Rock* - A Native American Tale; *Lumpy Bumpy Pumpkin* - A Halloween Story; *Tobias Turkey* - A Thanksgiving Story; *Big Annie* - An American Tall Tale; *The Firefly Star* - A Hispanic Folk Tale. *Little is Big* is available as a charming Color-Me Story Book. In addition, we offer cast albums of *The African Drum*, *See-More's Surprise*, *The Earth & Me*, and *Play it Safe*. *Play It Safe* can also be purchased on video.

Our books, tapes, and CDs may be purchased from SBT directly or through Department of Education Vendor #SEE050. Our books are also found in libraries throughout the United States.

C -- Creative Arts Workshops

Our teaching artists are available for direct student instruction in school residencies, and for staff development workshops. We provide an interactive experience in which all students, from gifted to special education, participate in storytelling; music, art, movement and dance improvisation; puppetry; and performing. Our programs are consistent with the New York City Department of Education curriculum frameworks and the New York State Learning Standards.

Dept. of Education Theatre Vendor # SHA009 Dept. of Ed. Textbook Vendor #SEE050

Dept. of Education Contract # 6183447

Dept. of Ed. Textbook Contract # 7000278

Dept. of Education Project Arts Contract # 9201114

Dear Teacher:

When we ask students to demonstrate an understanding of a concept in science, what motivates them to want to learn the concept? The Shadow Box Theatre suggests that the arts are a profound motivator. The arts inspire children, helping to connect the world of ideas with their feelings. The arts are a creative stimulator, making the study of Life Sciences a personal one, and giving children a stake in the knowledge gained.

Your class has just seen the Shadow Box Theatre's multi-media production, *The Earth and Me*. This beautiful work -- with its powerful music and lyrics, dramatic dance, and exciting visuals that include puppets and screen projections -- makes **curriculum connections to science standards** for:

- NYC Performance Standards -- Life Sciences (S2c)
- NY State Learning Standards -- the Living Environment (S4)
- Benchmarks for Science Literacy -- the Living Environment and the Interdependency of Life (3/5d).

As a follow-up to the performance, use this Teachers' Guide to Creative Projects for Classroom Use as a motivator for **units on ecology, the environment, and the diversity and interdependence of life**. Our Teachers' Study Guide dramatically and poetically illuminates the great lessons to be learned from Life Sciences, as noted in the Standards -- how all things are interdependent, and how human decisions and activities have profoundly impacted the physical and living environment.

The Earth & Me evolved from a poem by the author Sandra Robbins. The poem's message is one of healing through friendship and cooperation. The Child learns that human decisions about protecting the environment depend on harmony and peace among human beings. Many questions are raised during the play's one-hour life upon the stage: How was the Earth created? Is the Earth alive? What different species live on our earth? Why and how are they different? How can animals help us? Are we hurting the earth and its creatures? How do species become endangered? How can we help the Earth? How do we create harmony? How does learning about and sharing another culture's concepts and understanding people's differences and similarities help to keep us and our earth safe and flourishing? How does creating harmony among people help maintain the delicate balance on earth?

There are several ways we could answer these questions. There is the objective, or scientific, answer; the social, or cultural, answer; and the inward, or personal, answer. This guide addresses some of these questions with creative ideas and activities for student exploration. They should be regarded as beginning places, concepts or metaphors that can be expanded or refocused to adjust to the individual character and learning level of each classroom. For example, if a class is involved in a science unit exploring birds, our "Magic Seeds – The Bear" could be reworked to become a game starting with "the seed" of a bird in its egg and its development to flight. The same is true of all the ideas in the guide. Use them as a place to leap from; encourage your students to let their creativity flow. The touchstone for all the activities in this guide is best summed up by the words of Chief Seattle: **All things are interconnected. What befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth. We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the earth, we do to ourselves.**

“The Earth & Me”

A production of The Shadow Box Theatre
by Sandra Robbins

Synopsis

The Earth & Me is an inspirational, poetic -- and entertaining -- journey in music, song, puppetry, dance and screen projections that shows children the important role they can play in preserving and protecting the planet. The play’s message is one of finding ways to live and work together in peace, as the child learns that the delicate balance on Earth is dependent on harmony among human beings.

In the play, a Child asks the Earth to tell its story:

**A child once sat upon the Earth and said
Earth, speak to me
Tell me your secrets wondrous Earth
How do you make a tree?**

The Earth responds with the story of its birth in the galaxy, the seeding of the earth, and the rise of the wonderful variety of life upon the planet, culminating in the appearance of human beings. The various life forms and animal groups are represented musically and visually -- through dancers, shadow puppets, three-dimensional puppets, and screen projections. We see fish that swim like jewels, birds and insects that stretch their wings and fly, and reptiles that sun themselves on the rocks, while the Earth is protected by mythic Guardian spirits -- Dolphin, Bear, Turtle, Butterfly and Eagle.

The appearance of humans is shown to have enriched as well as threatened the life of the planet. With their fine minds and gift of hands, they brought great good to the Earth, but they also caused pollution, destruction and war. And as humans fought, they forgot to protect the Earth.

Having heard the story of the Earth, the Child laments what came to pass. At this point, the animal Guardians reappear and, with the child, the process of change begins, with new seeds, new births, new beginnings, renewed hope. *The Earth & Me* ends with a promise made by the Child to honor and protect the Earth. The Child realizes that “hand in hand” with others, even children can work toward harmony and peace to preserve the Earth’s delicate balance.

THE FORMATION OF THE EARTH

**In the beginning there was stillness
In the beginning there was motion
My blazing ball of fire quieted
The waters covered me**

Throughout history, people have attempted to describe how the earth might have been formed. Cultures have developed creation stories of great beauty and power in their attempt to express the wonders of creation. There is a Chinese tale that describes the creation of the earth by dragons out of the great void of chaos. The Old Testament describes how God created the earth in one day by passing his hands over the firmament. Scientists say the earth is over six billion years old and was created by a spinning whirlpool of gas and molten rocks from the sun.

Have your students investigate creation stories from various cultures. How do Native Americans say the earth was created? Do African cultures tell another story? How do Polynesians or Japanese describe creation? What are the differences and similarities? Help your students develop the concept that through sharing and understanding the symbolism of the stories of other cultures, we learn to work together individually and globally – “hand in hand.”

Creative Projects: • Have your students individually or collectively develop and write their own creation story. Tell the stories aloud; add sound, music and movement. Let imagination be your guide. • Create and illustrate a book, or do a class mural of creation stories from cultures around the world. • Do an art project that depicts creation concepts from modern science.

ECOSYSTEMS

**The land blossomed with the rainbow’s light
Reflected in the colors of the creatures
That walked upon the land
That swam in my waters
That flew in my sky**

Nothing lives in isolation. All around us is our environment. We live in a community, of not just people, but of all the living things that create a web of life. When a community is combined with an environment, it is called an ecosystem. An ecosystem is made up of many different kinds of life sharing their environment. There are five kinds of animals; do you know what they are? (*Fish, mammals, reptiles, birds, and insects*)

There are also five kingdoms of life. Do you know what they are?

<i>Animals</i> - ANIMALIA	<i>Plants</i> - PLANTAE
<i>Algae, slime molds and other weird stuff with nuclei</i> - PROTOCTISTA	<i>Bacteria</i> - MONERA
<i>Mushrooms, yeast, and some molds</i> - FUNGI	

Choose an ecosystem such as: **Desert, Ocean, Forest, City, Lake, Jungle, Village, or Alien Planet** and make a picture, mural, or collage of it. This can be an individual or group project.

For the ecosystem you select, draw pictures of all five kinds of animals and at least one member of each kingdom that belongs there. Think about using all five senses to describe your project. For example, while presenting the project you can add live or taped sound, live movement, or

even smells! How do the different creatures that live in this ecosystem share their environment? How do they live in harmony? How do they maintain the delicate balance?

SOUNDSCAPE

My ears listened to the sound of the grass growing, of the waves rolling, of the wind blowing

Sound is a constant part of our environment. Its vibration plays an important role in maintaining harmony. The following is an example of a creative game about soundscapes for your classroom.

“Would you like to play a game? This game is called **Soundscape**. We’re going to create an environment, a landscape of sound. To play this game you might want to close your eyes, but you don’t have to. The rules of the game are simple. First, I say, ‘My ears listened to the sound, for example, *of the wind blowing*,’ then you all make the sound of *the wind blowing*. Let’s hear it. Any questions? Great, let’s practice. My ears listened to the sound of *the waves rolling*. Now you make the sound. Perfect. Who would like to be the next speaker -- the one who says the ‘my ears listened...’ part? Please raise your hands. Laura? Go ahead. Wait. You need to start with, ‘My ears listened to the sound of...,’ and then say the soundscape you’d like to hear. (pause) Excellent! Who’d like to go next?”

Variations: Create an entire landscape of sound. First choose an environment, such as the woods, desert, ocean, or city, and next imagine what sounds would be in it. For example, in the woods: birds, wolves, creaking trees, wind, rain, thunder, insects, etc. In the city: traffic, sirens, school yard, people talking, dogs barking, etc. Finally, have the students create the sounds they have imagined, one by one, until the entire landscape has been brought to life by sound. You can have the students perform their soundscapes for each other in a charade game and see whether they can identify the soundscape.

Have students work in groups and create their own soundscapes. Pay attention to how the different sounds enhance the landscape or feel out of harmony with it. What makes a sound landscape harmonious or not? Explore the different levels of sound, the rhythmic patterns, sound interaction. What helps us to listen or what makes our ears “turn off,” individually or collectively?

THE BUTTERFLY MODEL

What are ideas? If an idea is a thought, how do we make ideas something we can touch and feel? Here is one way. It is called the butterfly model.

The Butterfly is an insect of change. It has four main stages of life: **Egg, Larva, Cocoon, and Butterfly**. Let each stage represent a different level in the transformation of an idea, as follows:

EGG: This is the beginning; an idea has arrived.

LARVA: This is birth. You have decided to bring the idea to life.

COCOON: This is development. Plans are made, unmade, remade. Possibilities are explored. A pathway is developed.

BUTTERFLY: This is action. Plans are set in motion. The idea is given a life of its own and allowed the chance of flight, the freedom of success.

Here is an example of the butterfly model:

EGG: I'm looking for a way to help the Earth. I could recycle, clean up litter, give money to an organization, write a play about it, share information, plant trees, save energy, or paint a picture.

LARVA: I decide I want to plant a tree.

COCOON: I find a good place that needs a tree. I go to the nursery and find the right tree that will grow well where I want to plant it. I find out how to prepare the Earth to be ready for the tree. I find the money I need to buy the tree.

BUTTERFLY: I prepare the Earth. I buy the tree, I plant it and take care of it.

Make a pledge to help the Earth and its creatures live in harmony. Use the butterfly model to bring your pledge to life. The pledge can be as an individual, or as part of a group, but it is important to follow all the steps of the model to help transform the Earth and maintain its "delicate balance."

TRANSFORMATION

For every change there was a reason. There was no right there was no wrong

Everything transforms. Change is the only thing we can count on to always be there. Transformation is one of the key structures of *The Earth & Me*, because without change, the Earth and everything on it would not exist. It is also the key to our survival as a species. The following series of games called **Magic Seeds** teaches some of the basic concepts of transformation. You can expand upon this game using many different ecosystems and life forms that live in them.

Imagine you are magic seeds, you can become anything you imagine. Imagine that!

To play these games you need a small open space large enough for all the students to sit down without touching. The following are examples of how the games could be led, and you can start each sequence with this same basic beginning Tell your students: "Everyone sit down without touching each other. We are now going to play a game called **Magic Seeds** where you get to move around, but you cannot touch anyone. If I see anybody touching or bumping anybody else, you are out of the game. OK, everybody curl up into balls and close your eyes. You are now seeds. Now be very quiet; seeds are very quiet."

1. MAGIC SEEDS -- Flowers

And from my depths came seeds, came seeds, and the seeds took form

Magic seeds -- you are now seeds of flowers. Imagine you are covered with dirt, and it is very dark. You were very warm and dry, but now you are getting wet from the rain falling from the sky into the Earth. Now send out roots deep into the ground. And now you are sending small shoots towards the sky. Now the shoot is out in the air, and it is getting stronger. Now you are spreading out above the ground and growing leaves, and maybe thorns. Now you are becoming flowers, beautiful colored flowers filling the room with a rainbow of light. Now your petals are falling off, and you are growing seeds. Now you are blowing your seeds into the air, or perhaps you are giving them to animals, or maybe you're just dropping them into the dirt around you.

Now you are slowly sinking back into the ground, so your new seeds have space to grow. Now you are going to sleep and dreaming about the Earth.

Discussion Questions: What part of your body did you use to be a shoot? Which part did you use to be the roots? Which part was the flower petals? Did anyone else use anything different? How did your flower move? What color was your flower? What kind of flower were you? What did you do with your seeds? How did you get rid of them? What was your dream about when you fell asleep? What does the word “change” mean? What does “transformation” mean?

You can use this concept for anything that grows out of the Earth, for example, trees, bushes, mountains. Or follow the transformation of water (rain to oceans, to lakes and rivers, to streams, to reservoirs and wells, to use in homes and businesses...and eventually back to rain).

2. MAGIC SEEDS -- Butterflies

The Insects

Gather pollen on their wings

Drink sweet nectar while they sing

The Insects

Magic seeds -- now you are caterpillars crawling on a branch. You find a big juicy leaf, and you eat it slowly. It is very big, and very good. Um ummm delicious. Now you are very full, so full you can't move. You open your mouth -- there is silk-like string coming out of your mouth. You wrap it around your tail and your body and your head. You are completely covered in string; you are in a cocoon. You fall asleep. As you sleep, you dream about change. Slowly your body changes. It grows, it develops. It goes through a metamorphosis. Now you are awake, and the cocoon is all around you. It is uncomfortable. You use your mouth and your arms to break out of the cocoon. Look at your arms -- they aren't arms at all, they're wings. Beautiful, wet, butterfly wings. Hold them out to dry. Feel the wind on your feelers, open your iridescent eyes and look at the world. Begin to fly. Flap your wings, and rise up on the wind. Be careful not to bump into anything. Look for some flower nectar to drink. You find some. It tastes wonderful. Look for other butterflies. Land softly next to another butterfly. Look into their eyes, gently touch their feelers and talk to them. Magic seeds. Magic seeds, now you are...

Discussion Questions: What is it like to crawl without arms or legs? What did the leaf taste like? What did the string taste like? What did you dream in the cocoon? What did you see when you opened your eyes as a butterfly? How did you fly as a butterfly? What color were your wings? What did you say to the other butterflies?

To expand this concept you can explore other metamorphic creatures, like tadpole becoming frog.

3. MAGIC SEEDS -- The Bear

Their feet

Adjusting to the soft loam

Adjusting to the rocks

Adjusting to the green meadow

And to the shifting sands

Magic seeds! Magic seeds, now you are a four-legged creature...a sleeping mother bear, just waking up from a long winter nap in your den with a new baby cub. Be the new baby and see the world for the first time. Slowly get up and look around. You realize that you are hungry. You begin to walk, looking for food. First you walk on the hard rock by your cave. Now you're walking on the soft loam or soil by the river. You follow the river, and catch fish. Now you're

walking on the shifting white sand by the ocean; it's very hot. Ouch! Now you're walking in soft wet mud; it is sticky. Now you're climbing, bear-like, up a tall and craggy mountain. Now your feet are crunching through thick fresh snow. It is very cold. Now you are down in a valley, walking in thick soft green grass in a meadow. You see a beautiful bush of blackberries. You begin pulling them off with your paws and eating them. They are delicious.

Students can play this as partners, one being the mother, one the baby. Think about how the mother helps her baby to grow and develop. This idea can be applied to all species, such as for birds or reptiles emerging from eggs, etc. Let your imagination and curiosity be your guide.

SCIENCE PROJECT

All animals have different features that help them to survive in their environment. What features would help an animal in the ocean? Or on a mountain top? In the dark? In the snow? Create an animal that could survive anywhere. Draw a picture of it. List and describe all of its features.

ANIMAL GUARDIANS

**Sweet Dolphin please show me the way
Brown Bear please show me how
Wise Turtle you can have your say
How can we change it now?
Come fly with me Bright Butterfly
Help make the flowers bloom
On wings so strong Brave Eagle fly
We have to change it soon.**

In *Hand in Hand*, the dolphin, bear, turtle, butterfly, and eagle are spirit guardians, or protectors of the Earth. In conceiving of these archetypes as guardians of the Earth, the play's author, Sandra Robbins, researched Native American teachings. The following descriptions come from the book "Medicine Cards: The Discovery of Power through the Ways of Animals":

Dolphin - Manna - *Dolphin is the keeper of the sacred breath of life, the only thing that humans cannot go without for more than a few minutes. Manna is life force. Imitate dolphin and ride the waves of laughter, spreading joy in the world.*

Eagle - Spirit - *Eagle medicine is the power of the Great Spirit, the connection to the divine. It is the ability to live in the realm of spirit and yet remain connected and balanced within the realm of the Earth.*

Turtle - Mother Earth - *In Native American teachings, Turtle is the oldest symbol for Planet Earth. In honoring the Earth we are asked by Turtle to give back to the mother as she has given to us.*

Bear - Introspection - *With Bear enter the safety of the womb-cave, attune to the energies of the eternal mother and receive nourishment from the great void where all solutions and answers live in harmony with the questions that fill our realities.*

Butterfly - Transformation - *Butterfly is the never ending cycle of transformation. The egg stage...the beginning, the idea is born; larva stage...to create the idea in the physical world; cocoon stage...going within, developing the project; leaving of the chrysalis and birth...sharing your joy of creation with the world.*

CREATING YOUR ANIMAL GUARDIAN

Many different cultures have animal guardians. Imagine if you were an animal guardian. What would you look like? How would you act? What would you tell the children of the Earth? Write a poem as if you were an animal guardian talking to small children. Tell them your secrets; tell them what they can do to help Mother Earth.

If you could have a guardian, what animal would it be? You can have the children close their eyes and lead them through a guided imaginary exercise to find their guardians. Would it be real or a spirit? What would it look like? How would it help you? Draw a picture of your animal guardian. Now create a landscape for your guardian to be in. Make a list, describing what powers your guardian would have, and how your guardian would help you.

Teachers -- you can explore this project to your students' fullest imaginations. For example, you can have them find guardians other than animals. Guardians can come in all different kinds of images and sounds and feelings. In reality, whom do the children consider their guardians? At home? In school? Friends? Mentors? Have the children share their experiences with respect and sensitivity for each person's different ideas. How could their guardians help them in times of stress or trauma, like 9/11? Let their guardians, as in the show, help them by working **hand in hand**. Your students can tell or write a story, a song, or a poem about themselves and their guardian. Let their imaginations guide them.

HARMONY

**We sang and worked in harmony
We danced and played in harmony
We lived and loved in harmony
They reaped the harvest with me**

In the play the Earth says, "*We lived and loved in harmony.*" What does she mean by that? What does harmony mean? How can people live in harmony with the Earth and with each other? What things do people do that are not in harmony with the Earth and each other? List three things that you do that are not in harmony. List five things you do that are in harmony. List ten things you could do to create more harmony for yourself, for others, and for the Earth, its environment, and its creatures. How do they all affect each other?

**Acid rain falls, Acid rain falls
Dead fish are at my feet**

What is acid rain? What causes it? Where does it come from? Why is it bad for the Earth? What does it do to fish? If you were the Ruler of the Earth, and you wanted to stop acid rain, how would you do it? Write a story where you become Ruler of the Earth and stop acid rain or anything else that injures the Earth.

**And now it is up to me dear Earth
For every time a child is born
There is a new beginning
A new beginning
And a hope**

What does this poem mean? Why are children a new beginning? Why do they bring hope? How do they create hope? What do you think the future will be for the Earth and its life forms? How can we affect the future? Why is it important to work together? What is the meaning of the line in the play, "*Hand in hand we all will stand*"? How do we keep the delicate balance of nature? What does it mean to children when we say "*through love we'll ask for peace*"?

Here are some concrete suggestions for sharing concepts and ideas. Develop a network of pen pals -- who write (or email!) each other -- with classmates, other classes, other schools. Include children from other cultures and countries who live in New York, or in other states, or even in other countries. To make this happen, use resources like friends or family that children may have who live in other states or countries, or who came from other cultures. Maybe their parents can help make contacts in their home countries. Another suggestion is to invite parents who come from different countries to come in and share their culture with the class. You can also call organizations like UNICEF, Green Peace, etc. for ideas.

At the end of the show, we see maps and flags from all over the world. Help your children think globally about how we can all learn to live **hand in hand** with each other. Start with the microcosm (the individual/the class) and develop strategies for working together in school. Work up to the macrocosm (the world/the universe). Have the class create a multi-media art project (drama, movement, visual arts) of the best possible future for the Earth and all its life forms, and make a list of things they can do **hand in hand** to help make that future come true.

**Hand in hand
We all will stand
Across the land
Yes hand in hand
And ask for peace
And ask for peace
And ask
For peace
Peace
Peace!**