Dear Educator,

This guide has been created to supplement your students’ experience of The Berenstain Bears On Stage and to extend its themes into your curriculum. We know your classroom time is precious, but we hope you will find some of the enclosed activities worthwhile and meaningful to your students. Page 1 deals with activities and questions to explore before your class sees the play. Page 2 gives a behind the scenes look at the playwright of the show. Page 3 gives activities to explore after seeing the play. Page 4 lists a bibliography of more books to read, more information about the theater company, and other drama outreach possibilities for your class. These are just suggested activities, please feel free to adapt them to best fit your grade level and curriculum.

It is our belief that theater arts are basic to education. We hope that you’ll find these activities educational and entertaining.

**PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES**

**THEATER ETIQUETTE**

**Drama**

**Discussion:** How is a play different than a movie or television show? Why is it important to watch quietly? When can you make noise in the audience? What are good noises to make? What should polite audience members not do?

**Activity**

Have the students act out two scenes. One scene where they act like rude theater audience members (maybe do it in slow motion). Then act out a scene where they act like perfect audience members.

**ANIMAL STORIES**

**Reading**

**Activity**

In many animal stories, the animals take on very human characteristics. In some stories the animals dress like humans, live in houses, go to school and drive cars. Read together one of the Berenstain Bears books (eg. *The Berenstain Bears and The Truth*, *The Berenstain Bears Get Stage Fright*).

**Discussion**

Ask your students in what ways the Berenstain Bears are more like humans than bears. How are their lives very similar to ours? How would real bears behave in certain situations? Where do they live? How do they eat? How do they communicate? In what ways do the Berenstain Bears keep their identity as bears?
Behind the Scenes Spotlight on.....

PLAYWRITING

an interview with Stan and Jan Berenstain, authors of the Berenstain Bear Books and the playwrights for The Berenstain Bears On Stage Musical

Co-authors Stan and Jan Berenstain published their first Berenstain Bears book in 1962. In forty-two years, the duo has created and illustrated more than 240 Berenstain Bears books, and sold more than 290,000,000 copies, making the Berenstain Bears the biggest-selling, children’s series in the history of publishing. Published in more than 20 countries and in over a dozen languages, the award-winning authors, Stan and Jan Berenstain certainly struck a chord in the hearts of their readers, (adults and children alike), with their timeless, gentle messages about the struggles of life and responsibility. Berenstain Bears have even had their own television shows on PBS, a CBS Saturday morning series, and a touring arts exhibition. This is the second time the Omaha Theater Company has produced a live theater version of the popular Berenstain Bears books.

What was your favorite subject in school? Why?
Jan: Mine was art! I loved drawing and painting.
Stan: Mine was art, also, because I was drawing and painting since I was a kid--and couldn’t stop!

Do you both write and illustrate?
Stan: We both do both. That’s always been the case. We drew before we wrote. We met in art school. The writing followed the drawing, and we continue to do both. We think up an idea for a story first, then think up a cover and draw that first. Beyond the covers and titles, we write the story together, then rough out the pictures in a general way. I generally do the rough sketch, and then Jan does the beautiful drawing on art paper, then we share the job of coloring it.

How long does it take you to write a book?
Jan: Our most popular books are the little books called First Time Books--little paperbacks. It takes a couple of months to create one of those books. What takes the longest is doing the drawings. Those books don’t have a lot of words. We enjoy the drawing, but it takes a long time.

How long have you been writing?
Jan: We’ve been writing pretty much since we were married about 54 years ago, but we weren’t writing for children. We were writing for adults. We’ve both been drawing since we were about 3 or 4 years old.

What message would you like to send to all children?
Stan: We’d both like to encourage them not to give up on developing their own individual special interests and skills so that they can enjoy accomplishment.

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POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to help students further explore themes from the show through discussion, drama, art, and writing.

CHARACTERS

Drama  
Discussion: Who were your favorite characters in the play? If you could play one of the characters, which one would you play?
Activity: Ask students to find an open space in the room and create a statue of their favorite character.
Side coaching: How can you show me with your body which character you are? What is your character doing? How do they feel at this moment?
Extension: Have the statues come to life by moving around the room.
Side coaching: How would you move if you were this character? How does your character feel right now? What would your voice sound like?

FAMILY

Statues  
Discussion: In the Berenstain Bears stories, the members of the family learn life lessons from each other, often helping each other solve problems. What kinds of things have you learned from your family? What things do you do together with your family that you couldn’t do alone? How do you help your family members?
Activity: Have the students use their bodies to build statues of families. Then ask them to show how you learn lessons from your family. Show what your family does to help you.

Art  
Activity: Ask the students to draw a picture of members of their family showing the ways that their family helps them, how they help their family or things they learn from their family.

ANIMAL STORIES

Drama  
Reading: Read together a different animal story. (Some possible suggestions include books from the Clifford the Big Red Dog series, Harry the Dirty Dog, Arthur or Dr. Seuss stories)
Discussion: Discuss with your students how these animals are and are not “humanized” through storytelling. What characteristics of their animal do they retain? What human traits do they adapt?
Activity: Have the students pick an animal that they want to become. Then, through a process of small changes help them to “humanize” that animal. Perhaps start with the voice. Have the student start by imitating the animal’s sound. How would you translate that into speaking?
Side Coaching: Would your animal talk in a high voice or a low voice? Would they be loud or soft? Would they talk fast or slow?
Extension: Then begin with movements. Have the student move across the room as much like the animal as possible. Then have them move across the room as a human, but try to retain at least one quality of how the animal moved.
Extension: Have students be stars in a talk show. They can be their own animal characters or ones from the animal stories. Put three chairs in front of the class and ask for volunteers to be interviewed as their characters. Model the role of the interviewer and ask questions of the characters. After modeling, allow the students to ask the characters questions.
Omaha Theater Company Educational Workshops

Pre-show Acting Workshop  Suggested Ages: Pre K (starting at age 4) through 4th grade
The actor/teachers can lead one hour interactive workshop in the schools in preparation for the students coming to see Berenstain Bears On Stage. The goals of this workshop are to introduce students to acting, the Berenstain Bears books and characters, and the production they will attend. The one hour workshop will include:
- creative drama activities
- exploring the basic acting tools (body, voice, and imagination)
- review basic theater etiquette
- act out one of the Berenstain Bear stories from the show

Introduction to Theater Workshop  Suggested Ages: 2-6
The actor/teachers can also lead an introduction to theater workshop. This hands on workshop will introduce students to:
- acting
- design
- directing
- playwriting
The students will also explore the set, costumes, and make-up designs from the show.

Introduction to Musical Theater  Suggested Ages: 4th-12th grade
An interactive workshop where students will learn the basics of singing, acting, and dancing in musical theater.

All these workshops are flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of the individual teachers and groups. Other curriculum specific topics may be available depending on the final casting for the tour.

To book a workshop contact Holden & Arts Associates, Inc. at PO BOX 50120 Austin TX 78763 512-477-1859
For further information contact Carla Podraza, OTC Tour Coordinator at (402) 345-9718 ext 124 or carlap@otcmail.org