

Study Guide for Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella

Directed by Leslie Price

*Study Guide prepared by Leslie Price for the Children's Theatre of Western Springs
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About the play

Cinderella is certainly a story with which many audiences, readers, and performers are familiar. The classic rags to riches tale appeals to people of all ages because it inspires us all to believe that good things eventually happen to good people. Our production is no exception. In this version, you'll find Cinderella, the Fairy Godmother, the King, the Queen, the Prince, the Stepmother, and those unlikable Stepsisters. You'll find a pumpkin coach, some mice that become horses, an opulent ball, and (spoiler alert!) a very happy ending.

So what makes the Rodgers and Hammerstein version different from the *Cinderella* you already know and love? Well, most of us grew up with Walt Disney's animated film of *Cinderella*. When we think of that movie, we remember how the mice and birds made Cinderella's dress; we remember how mean the Stepmother and Stepsisters were to our poor heroine; and we remember those infectious songs like "Bippity Boppity Boo" and "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes." While those are undoubtedly great movie moments, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein have created very different (although equally great and memorable) moments for the stage.

On our stage, you'll find Cinderella in the same predicament as always—slaving away for a Stepmother who fails to see what a wonderful girl her stepdaughter is. Those Stepsisters are as unlikable as ever, and the only thing Cinderella has to look forward to are those moments when her imagination takes her away from the unpleasantness of her life. In this version, however, you'll be introduced to a host of new songs to fall in love with including favorites like "In My Own Little Corner" and "Do I Love You Because You're Beautiful?" You'll get to know the Prince and his family just a little bit better than before. You'll find that the Fairy Godmother is a little more reluctant to use her magical powers. However when that magic does happen, it's more amazing than even Cinderella could imagine. The fairytale world of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* will transport kids and adults alike into a place where dreams can come true, Prince Charming really exists, and the beauty that matters most is found in your heart.

Who Were Rodgers and Hammerstein?

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein were an American songwriting duo who wrote a string of popular Broadway musicals throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Both men had successful careers prior to joining forces, however, neither of them could have predicted the success their teaming would have.

The first musical on which Rodgers and Hammerstein collaborated was *Oklahoma!* Oscar Hammerstein had planned to develop this project with another partner—Lorenz Hart. However, Hart was unavailable when the time came to start work, and Hammerstein readily agreed to join the undertaking: Hammerstein would write the lyrics and Rodgers would write the music. As they launched into what would become a turning point in American theatre, Rodgers and Hammerstein began to think about musical theatre in a new way. While musicals had always told some sort of story, this duo began thinking about how the music and lyrics could *help* tell the story rather than being a distraction from it. They created characters that had real emotions and seemed true to life. They developed storytelling techniques that forced the audience to use their imaginations and intellect. Most importantly, Rodgers and Hammerstein were careful to select performers whose acting skills were just as strong as their singing skills. All of these elements combined to create musicals that were more than just a diversion—Rodgers and Hammerstein wanted to create theatre that was as powerful as it was entertaining.

After their huge success with *Oklahoma!*, Rodgers and Hammerstein went on to write nine musicals for the theatre (including *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, and *The Sound of Music*), one musical for film (*State Fair*), and one musical for television (*Cinderella*). Over the course of their partnership, they won dozens of Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, two Grammys, and two Emmys. They worked together for nearly twenty years until Oscar Hammerstein's death in 1960.

Although both men are no longer living, their contributions to American theatre live on in many ways. Without these pioneers, musicals like *Rent*, *Sunday in the Park With George*, *Cabaret*, and *Chicago* would probably never have met with much success. In modern musicals, we see the legacy of Rodgers and Hammerstein live on as contemporary composers and lyricists take risks with musical, lyrical, and storytelling choices. We see producers and directors continuing to place emphasis on acting as well as singing and dancing. We see audiences who are willing to accept unusual directorial and musical choices. Most importantly, we still see many, many theatres reviving the work of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein so that a new generation of theatergoers has the privilege of wrapping themselves up in that beautiful music and gorgeous imagery as they're transported on an amazing journey of the imagination.

Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella

The version of *Cinderella* you're about to see was originally written for television. Although Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote primarily for the stage, they were enticed to write this project because they knew legendary actress Julie Andrews was going to play the title role.

Cinderella premiered on CBS on March 31, 1957 with an audience of 107,000,000 viewers—the largest television audience to date. Shortly thereafter, *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* made an easy transition to the stage opening at the London Coliseum in December 1958. Stage presentations of the musical continued for many years to follow.

In 1965, CBS decided to restage *Cinderella*. The original 1957 version was produced before the age of videotape, so it was limited to one performance only. (For years, theatre historians feared the Julie Andrews production was “lost.” Since then, a kinescope recording has been found and is now available on DVD.) The 1965 production would be taped and thus be available for repeated broadcasts. The new cast featured Lesley Ann Warren as Cinderella and Ginger Rogers as the Queen.

Most recently, *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* was remade as a Wonderful World of Disney Special with popular singer Brandy playing the beloved princess and Whitney Houston playing the Fairy Godmother.

In all of its incarnations, *Cinderella* has proven to be a beloved classic for many families. The music is as timeless as the story, and *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* is sure to live on for decades to come.

Where Did The Story of Cinderella Begin?

Although the Cinderella most of us know and love seems very European or American, she got her start in China in a book called *Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang* by Tuan Ch'eng-Shih, a book which comes from the Tang Dynasty.

The Chinese version of Cinderella dates back to 860 A.D., however the more familiar European adaptation was first recorded by Italian storyteller Giambattista Basile in 1634. Before long, the story of Cinderella made its way to France and was adapted by French writer Charles Perrault in 1697. The Perrault adaptation is probably the best-known version of the story and is the only version to include a glass slipper. (Other variations of the Cinderella tale omit the slipper all together or include a slipper made of gold or another material.)

In some versions of the story, woodland creatures aid Cinderella. In some, her stepsisters go to extreme (and gory) means of making the enchanted slipper fit on their feet. In others, the Fairy Godmother and midnight curfew are absent. Regardless of the variation, the ending is always pretty much the same: Cinderella finds her prince and lives happily ever after.

Lesson Plans

Fairytales have lasted for centuries for a reason: they have a lot to teach us about right and wrong, human behavior, and maintaining one's faith in humanity. Because *Cinderella* is a story that is so familiar to so many students, it's a great jumping off point for study in many areas. Here are a few ideas. We hope you enjoy them!

Language Arts

Plenty of Princesses: Cinderella is a classic story of a princess in the making. She's kind, sweet, hard working, and ready to meet her prince. Not all princesses *need* princes, however. Take a look at these stories about princesses who are sweet on the outside and tough as nails on the inside:

- *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch
- *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman (or the film version directed by Rob Reiner)
- *Once Upon a Mattress* music by Mary Rodgers and lyrics by Marshall Barer
- *Princesses Are Not Quitters!* by Kate Lum and Sue Hellard
- *Princess Smartypants* by Babette Cole

Mild and Meek as a Metaphor (or Simile!): One of the most famous songs from *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella* is "In My Own Little Corner." In that song, Cinderella uses the simile "I'm as mild and as meek as a mouse" to describe herself. See what similes and metaphors you can come up with to describe yourself. After you describe how you *really* are, try out some similes and metaphors that describe how you see yourself in an imaginary adventure. Be as bold and descriptive as possible. Don't be afraid to create outlandish comparisons!

Vocabulary: *Cinderella* isn't in a foreign language, but some of the words you'll hear may not be familiar to you. Before the show, you may want to look up these vocabulary words:

<i>exchequer</i>	<i>prima donna</i>	<i>steward</i>	<i>sturgeon</i>
<i>lorgnette</i>	<i>reticule</i>	<i>poppycock</i>	<i>moppets</i>
<i>simpering</i>	<i>coy</i>	<i>steed</i>	<i>bumpkin</i>
<i>daft</i>	<i>footman</i>	<i>namesake</i>	<i>reeling</i>

If the Shoe Doesn't Fit: Think about what would have happened if the Prince hadn't found Cinderella or if another girl had worn the same shoe size and tried on that glass slipper first. Do you think the Prince and Cinderella would have ended up together eventually in spite of that? Write your own ending for *Cinderella* in which things don't work out so neatly. Are other people getting in the way of our couple's happiness? Does Cinderella change her mind? Do the Prince and Cinderella have some bad luck? Use your imagination, and have fun!

Science

Versatile Veggies: Of course pumpkins can't really turn into coaches, but you can turn fruits and veggies into all sorts of things. Take a look at these resources to learn about everything from how a tomato turns into tomato soup to how a pumpkin turns into a jack 'o lantern.

- *Growing Vegetable Soup* written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert.
- *The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin
- *It's a Fruit, It's a Vegetable, It's a Pumpkin* by Allan Fowler
- *Oliver's Fruit Salad* by Vivian French
- *Sugaring Season: Making Maple Syrup* by Diane L. Burns & Cheryl Walsch Bellville
- *Cranberries: Fruit of the Bogs* by Diane L. Burns & Cheryl Walsch Bellville
- *Play With Your Food* by Joost Elffers

When You're Driving Through the Moonlight: Cinderella and her Stepmother and Stepsisters sing a song about what it's like to drive through the moonlight. Fortunately the moon must have been pretty full to cast such a beautiful light on a momentous evening in Cinderella's life. She was so busy thinking of the Ball that she probably wasn't thinking about the science of that beautiful glow. Do you know what makes the moon glow? Do a bit of research into the science of our moon, its phases, and its importance to our planet. Here are some resources to get you started:

- *The Moon* by Seymour Simon
 - A great book for upper elementary students featuring NASA photographs of the moon and simple yet informative text.
- *The Moon Book* by Gail Gibbons
 - This book for grades 1 through 3 explores the earth's only natural satellite with colorful pictures and engaging text
- *The Moon* by Robert Louis Stevenson
 - Yes, it has the same title as a book mentioned earlier, but this lovely (and very different) book contains Stevenson's classic poem accompanied by illustrations that will delight youngsters in Pre K through 1st grade.
- <http://www.nineplanets.org/>
 - This is a resource featuring information about the moon and about our entire solar system
- <http://www.solarviews.com/eng/moon.htm>
 - Features information on the moon, humans' ideas about it through history, and the Apollo space program
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moon>
 - A basic overview of the Moon and its traits.

Science continued

The Science of Magic: Sure it would be cool if Fairy Godmothers and magic really did exist. In the meantime, try these “magic tricks” that incorporate potions straight from your kitchen cupboard.

Make an Erupting Volcano:

You can do this in the sink just to see the “lava” or you can make the volcano as directed below

- **Supplies Needed:** cardboard, plaster of Paris, 4 oz. Plastic cups, red food coloring, water, baking soda, dishwashing liquid, vinegar
- **Making the Volcano**
 - On a baking sheet or other easily cleaned surface, shape cardboard into broad cone shape using a 4 oz. Cup to form the “crater” at the top of the volcano
 - Use the plaster of Paris over the cone to form the volcano. Do not get plaster in the crater. Allow volcano to dry completely
 - Paint or decorate volcano as desired. If you would like your volcano to stand up to repeated eruptions, use non-water soluble paints.
- **Making the Eruptions**
 - Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar with dishwashing liquid, water, and red coloring in plastic cup
 - Put 1 tsp. Baking soda in empty plastic cup. Place this cup inside the volcano crater.
 - Quickly pour the vinegar mixture into the baking soda cup in the crater. Enjoy the lava as the volcano erupts!

Magic Beans

- **Supplies Needed:** Vase or wide-mouthed clear jar, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar, 3 tsp. baking soda, food coloring, beans (or rice, pasta, even buttons work!)
- **How to make it:**
 - Fill container with water
 - Add 3 to 4 drops food coloring
 - Add vinegar then baking soda
 - Drop in rice, buttons, pasta, or beans and watch them rise and fall

Social Studies

Real Life Rags to Riches: One of the things that makes audiences cheer for Cinderella is that she is the heroine of a classic rags to riches story. With a little help from her Fairy Godmother and a lot of faith in herself, Cinderella manages to overcome her difficult beginnings and start a new, happier life.

There are many real live folks who have their own rags to riches stories. Some of them are pretty famous and some folks might be in your own neighborhood. Research someone who has managed to overcome their difficult beginnings and has found success on their own terms. And remember—you don't have to have lots of money in the bank to be successful! Wealth is found in all sorts of places.

Some famous folks with rags to riches stories include: Oprah Winfrey, Martha Stewart, the members of The Beatles, Steve Jobs, Abraham Lincoln, and J.K. Rowling. See who else you can think of that has come a long way from their modest upbringings. Don't forget to think about the people in your own families and neighborhoods!

Princesses vs. Progress: The story of *Cinderella* is set during a time when women were expected to get married, have children, and spend the rest of their lives taking care of their families. In fact, the Stepmother even says to Joy and Portia that they'll be getting married by the end of the year no matter what happens at the Ball!

Nowadays, women have many more choices. They can go to college and graduate school, have careers, have families, or do all of the above! That's quite a change from the days when parents were obsessed with making sure each daughter got married.

Actually, things have changed a lot even since our parents were growing up. Girls are doing all sorts of things that are new and exciting. Interview your parents, grandparents and other adults about what the expectations for young women used to be. Then talk to other kids you know and see what their opinions are about the past and the present. What's better now? What's worse? Do you think it's better now that girls have so many more choices or do all of those choices just make it hard to pick the best path? Be sure to talk to boys as well to get their thoughts on the progress girls have made over the years!

Cinderella Around the World: Cinderella got her start in China. Since then she's made her way around the world a couple of times. Read (or watch) some different versions of *Cinderella* and compare and contrast them. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Some good versions to study include "Mutzmag" (the Appalachian version), "Yen-Shen" (the Chinese version), "Aschenputtel" (the German version), and "The Little Glass Slipper" (the French version).

Visual Arts

Costumes and Colors: Costumes are a very important part of any show. They not only help the audience distinguish one character from another, costumes give audience members clues about what each character is like. And if *that's* not enough, costumes also make a play visually interesting. Try these exercises that deal with costumes for *Cinderella*:

- **What if Cinderella took place during a different time period?** How would the costumes look if you set it in the present day or in the future? What if it were set during caveman days? Choose a time period and design costumes for Cinderella, the Stepsisters, the Prince, the Stepmother, and the King and Queen. Think about how the story might change, too!
- **How does the color of a character's costume affect the audience's impression of that character?** People often note that blue and purple are royal colors, brown is a color worn by simpler folks, and yellow can denote cowardice. As you watch the show, note which characters are wearing which colors. If they had on another hue, would you have a different impression of them?

Performing Arts

Happy Feet: Dancing is not only a big part of our musical production of *Cinderella*, it's an important part of the story itself. After all, a Ball is just another name for a dance.

In a musical or in any play, movement is as important to the story as the words are. Through their bodies, actors can show the audience if a character is happy, sad, scared, angry, nervous, or shy. Try this game to see how your body can do the same.

Gather a group of friends or students in a big open space. Designate one person as the leader. That person will call out different emotions or adjectives the players can show with their feet, and the players will move accordingly. Some good examples include: happy feet, sad feet, sneaky feet, slippery feet, angry feet, tired feet, excited feet, nervous feet, and bashful feet. You can get crazy and include silly things like marshmallow feet and elephant feet, too! Be as creative as you wish!

Learning about Lyrics: Rodgers and Hammerstein were famous for their beautiful melodies and lyrics full of imagery. Listen to one of the songs from *Cinderella* and see if you notice how the lyrics and the music work together to tell the story. If you listen only to the musical notes, do you get a sense of what the mood is and what the story might be? If you read the lyrics, do you know exactly what happens in the scene? When you put them together, do you think it strengthens the storytelling or doesn't it matter?

Come See the Show

Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella opens with a special Preview performance on November 29 and runs through Dec. 10. We hope you'll come and see it with your friends and family. Here are some things to keep in mind when you go to the theatre for this show or any other—even on Broadway!

- **Get your tickets in advance!**
- **Arrive at the theatre early.** You want to have plenty of time to use the restroom, find your seats, and get settled before the show.
- **Don't plan to eat or drink in the theatre.** Not only is it messy, it's distracting to the actors and to the audience members around you.
- **Applaud at the ends of songs if you like.** It tells the actors you appreciate what they are doing.
- **Do not talk!** This is behavior is rude to the actors and to the people around you.
- **Laugh if something onstage is funny.** That's why the jokes are there!
- **Don't "Boo!":** It's rude, and it makes people feel bad.
- **During intermission** feel free to stretch and use the restroom or get a drink of water. Come back to your seat in plenty of time for Act 2!
- **Send us a review!** Write a review of the show you've seen, and tell us what you thought. Did you like the show? Did you hate the show? Did you have a favorite character or moment? We want to know! Send reviews to:

Leslie Price
Children's Theatre Director
Children's Theatre of Western Springs
4384 Hampton Ave.
Western Springs, IL 60558

Resources

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