

# Theatre IV Classroom Study Guide



## Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

*Book and lyrics by Bruce Miller*

*Music by Ron Barnett*

### Synopsis of the Play

Once upon a time in a land far away . . . a Grimm brothers fairy tale was presented by Theatre IV. This adaptation of the classic *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs* features a faithful script with loveable characters and wonderful puppets. As in the original, the Evil Queen sends the Huntsman to kill Snow White when it is evident that the Evil Queen is no longer the most beautiful in the land. The Huntsman warns Snow White and sends her off into the forest to safety. Soon Snow White meets the Seven Dwarfs who befriend the scared young princess. Eventually the Evil Queen realizes that Snow White is indeed alive and sets off into the woods dressed as a peasant women to poison Snow White with a tainted apple. The Dwarfs find the fallen princess and make a glass casket for her. At last a Prince comes and gives the fair princess a kiss that dislodges the bite of poison apple and brings Snow White to life. The Evil Queen is confronted by the King, Prince and Snow White, leaving a "Happily Ever After" ending.



### The Brothers Grimm

**S**now White and the Seven Dwarfs is just one of hundreds of old German folk tales collected and published by two scholarly brothers in the early 19th century.

Between 1807 and 1814, the Grimm brothers, Jakob and Wilhelm, collected the tales mainly from friends and acquaintances who lived in and around Kassel, Germany. They worried that fewer and fewer people could tell the tales accurately, since many of the tales were passed down orally from generation to generation. Their goal was to preserve the tales in written form as an expression of the German culture and spirit. Jakob wrote, "It is high time that these old traditions were collected and rescued before they perish like dew in the hot sun or fire in a stream, and fall silent forever in the unrest of our days." The first volume of Grimm's Fairy Tales was published in 1812 and by the last edition of 1857, 210 tales had been collected.



The most famous Grimm's Fairy Tales include "Little Red Riding Hood," "Snow White," "Rumpelstiltskin," "Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," and "Rapunzel." If not for the visionary scholarship of the Brothers Grimm, we might not know any of these stories today.

Both Grimm brothers were born in Hanau, Jakob in 1785 and Wilhelm in 1786. They were educated at the University of Marburg, where they became interested in philology, the study of language as it relates to human culture and history. Jakob published an important book called *Deutsche Grammatik* (German Grammar), which for the first time set forth a strictly scientific grammar for all the Germanic languages. This work, in which language is considered not as something static but as something ever growing and closely bound up with the life and destiny of the people who speak it, proved revolutionary in the field of philology. The brothers also contributed pioneering work to a German dictionary which was not completed until after their deaths.

The brothers worked together in complete harmony. They spent all their lives under one roof, sharing books and other property, a happy partnership that even Wilhelm's marriage did not change. Wilhelm, the sicklier of the two, died in 1859 and Jakob died in 1863.

### Mirrors

A mirror can be considered any polished surface that reflects light and images. Typically, a mirror is a sheet of glass that is coated with aluminum or silver on its back-side. There is historic documentation that mirrors were used as far back as Greco-Roman times. Throughout history, mirrors were used as helpful household objects and also as decoration. The earliest mirrors were hand mirrors. In the late 17th century mirrors became popular as part of the decoration of rooms. Early frames were usually ivory, silver, ebony, or tortoiseshell. In the 19th century new and cheaper techniques for mirror production were invented, and with these techniques became the incorporation of mirrors into pieces of furniture and architectural design.



### Selected Bibliography

- Grimm's Fairy Tales - National Geographic* - Includes texts of 12 fairy tales, with audio for selected stories. <http://www.nationalgeographic.org/grimm/>
- Grimm Brothers' Home Page - University of Pittsburgh* - Resources, chronology and links to the stories. <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>
- Fairy Tales - Origins and Evolution* - Gives history and background of the story and authors. Contains links and bibliography. <http://www.darkgoddess.com/fairy/>
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. London: Paragon. 1994.
- Haase, Donald. *The Reception of Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1993.
- Jones, Steven Swann. *The Fairy Tale: the Magic Mirror of Imagination*. New York: Twayne. 1995.
- Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1994.
- Zipes, Jack. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2000.

## Theatre IV's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

### BACKGROUND: PUPPETS

Theatre IV's production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is filled with wonderful puppets. More traditional puppets--the kind we might encounter in a contemporary American "puppet show" (like *Sesame Street* or *Bear in the Big Blue House*)-- can be divided into several categories. Here are some examples of different types of puppets that you may see either in our production, on television, in movies, or in other stage shows.



**Hand puppets:** A common type of puppet worn like a glove on the operator's hand. The puppet's gestures are limited to the movement of the operator's fingers and wrist. A hand puppet may be made from solid materials (wood, plastic wood, papier mâché) or pliable ones (fabric, foam rubber, latex); it is usually legless or with stuffed legs, which merely hang limply. Pip and Pop from *Bear in the Big Blue House* are hand puppets.

**Rod-hand puppet:** This is a mixed-style puppet that requires the operator's hand inside the body while the limbs are moved with rods. Many of the Muppets--like Kermit and Elmo--are rod-hand puppets.



**Marionette:** This puppet is operated from above the stage by strings and is often the most complex type of puppet. A simple marionette may have nine strings - one to each leg, one to each hand, one to each shoulder, one to each ear (for head movements) and one to the base of the spine (for bowing). But some marionettes may have three times as many strings, so operating them requires great skill. The bodies may be made of wood, fabric, paper, foam rubber, etc. Pinocchio is the best-known example of a marionette.

**Body Puppet:** A puppet that is worn by the manipulator, whose full body, including his or her face, may be covered. A hole, usually covered with a net, allows the manipulator to see. Body puppets are so called when they are used in puppet productions, although they could be considered costumes. Some have elaborate electronic controls to move the eyes or other parts of the body. Bear from *Bear in the Big Blue House* and Big Bird from *Sesame Street* are body puppets.



### **Activities and Discussions**

1. In Theatre IV's production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the dwarfs are played by puppets. What other stories can you think of that involve puppets? What popular television shows feature puppets?

2. Make your own puppet show! In small class groups, read a story and assign characters for each student to act out. Make puppets for your characters out of small paper bags, socks, yarn, construction paper, paper plates, markers, or any other items you can imagine. Act out the story for the class then display the puppet after your performances.

3. Can you think of another well-known Grimm's fairy tale that centers on a beautiful young princess and an evil stepmother? What similarities can you make between that story and *Snow White*?

4. Walt Disney adapted the same story of *Snow White* on which Theatre IV based its production. As you can tell, each version contains differences that make it unique. The dwarfs in the Disney film adaptation are very different from the seven dwarfs in the Theatre IV production. What changes in the story could you think of to make the story your own? What many different personalities could you attribute to each dwarf?

5. Mirrors are widely used for practical as well as decorative purposes. Get together in a small group and list the ways mirrors are used as well as where you have seen them. Have all the groups present their ideas and talk about the different options you discovered.

### Postscript:

**T**heatre IV is proud to present our original production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Theatre IV's artistic director, Bruce Miller, wrote the book and lyrics, Ron Barnett wrote the music.

During the performance, flash photography is prohibited for the safety of the performers. Video and audiotaping are prohibited due to copyright restrictions.

Theatre IV is the second largest theatre for young audiences in the nation and has been offering innovative, educational theatre to young audiences since 1975. Each season, Theatre IV's plays are presented to over 1,000,000 children and adults across the United States. Theatre IV is led by its co-founders: artistic director Bruce Miller and managing director Phil Whiteway. Under their direction, the company has received many awards including the Sara Spencer Award for "the most outstanding contribution to children's theatre in the Southeastern U.S.," the Concern for Kids Award from the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs, and an official Commendation from Governor Charles S. Robb and Mayor Roy A. West for "leadership in the creation of Black Theatre Month in Virginia."

Theatre IV is very grateful for the support it received during the 2000-2001 season, including assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

Please send us your comments and questions about this, or any of our productions. The mailing address is:

**THEATRE IV**  
**114 West Broad Street**  
**Richmond, VA 23220**

## WORD HUNT

Find the following words listed below from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by seeking horizontally, vertically, diagonally, both forward and backward.

S N A R A P P L E

P E D O Q L X B E

U L W R U F G T P

P U A R O V I O R

P Q R I O H I T I

E U F M W S K E N

T E S W O Y B K C

S E O N O J L S E

I N F U D D L A G

S Q U E S H W C T

APPLE  
PRINCE

QUEEN  
POISON

DWARFS  
SNOW WHITE

PUPPETS  
WOODS