



Based on the book by Danny Schnitzlein with illustrations by Matt Faulkner

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ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

Gary W. Blackman
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Executive Producers

The Monster Who Ate My Peas

Based on the book
THE MONSTER WHO ATE MY PEAS
by Danny Schnitzlein
Illustrated by Matt Faulkner

Published by Peachtree Publishers,
2010

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Book and Lyrics by Greg Gunning

Music by Richard DeRosa

Costume Design & Construction by
Fred Sorrentino

Set Illustrations by
Dan Helzer/Blitz Design



The **MONSTER** Who Ate My **PEAS**

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Study Buddy

Teacher Information

This study guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss ArtsPower's musical play, *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*. This guide contains background information and cross-curricular activities to complete both before and after the performance. You may reproduce and distribute this Study Buddy to your students.

Please read this page about ArtsPower's musical to your students before attending the performance.

The main characters appear in boldface type.

What Happens in *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*?

The Monster Who Ate My Peas is a musical based on the book by author Danny Schnitzlein and illustrator Matt Faulkner published in 2010.

Danny is a boy with a problem: he hates eating peas. Although Danny lives happily with his **Mom**, **Dad**, and pet dog **Ralph**, his parents demand that Danny eats his peas at the dinner table. Danny refuses and says, "I would rather eat dirt!" As much as he wished for those peas to disappear from his plate, nothing happened.

One night at dinner, Danny repeats his wish for the peas to go away. Just then, as if somebody had heard his wish, a **Monster** appears. The Monster didn't really scare Danny. In fact, the Monster told Danny that he could "help kids like you," by eating all the foods that most "small stomachs" don't like.

But the Monster wasn't going to eat Danny's peas for nothing. He demanded something that Danny had as payment each evening when he returned to eat the peas. But Danny was never happy to give the Monster any of his stuff. The Monster forces Danny into making a very difficult decision by demanding he hand over his most valued possession. Will Danny be able to save the one thing that is most important to him by eating his peas and sending the Monster away forever?

How to Be a Good Audience

In order to be a good audience member, remember to:

- ★ Listen quietly
- ★ Pay attention to the things the actors say and do — some things might make you happy, and some might be funny. Feel free to laugh at things you think are funny!
- ★ Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by not talking during the performance, unless you are requested to do so by the actors onstage.
- ★ If you enjoy the play, applaud at the end.
- ★ Please sit quietly and do not whisper or move around a lot during the show. You and the actors are in the same room, and noise from the audience could distract them.



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From Page to Stage

ArtsPower National Touring Theatre produces literature-based musicals and plays that tour to regional theatres, cultural centers, university auditoriums, and schools throughout the United States. "Literature-based" means that each book we choose to produce provides the story for the musical. Some of the book's characters, settings, and events remain the same in the musical. Some change.

Because reading a book is different than seeing a live performance on stage, the **playwright**, or the person who writes the lines that the actors speak, must change parts of the story or bring new qualities to the characters that are not found in the book. In other words, the playwright **adapts** the book into a musical play, or changes parts of it to turn the words on the page into a live performance.



LEARNING Activity

COMPARE IT!

Before the performance, read **THE MONSTER WHO ATE MY PEAS**. After the performance, compare and contrast the characters, settings, and events in each version.



LEARNING Activity

TALK ABOUT IT!

Look at the list of the people who create theatre on Page 5. Which job would you like? Why?

What Is a Musical?

Please read this to your students before attending the performance.

A **musical** is a story told through spoken words *and* songs by live actors onstage. The spoken words are called **lines**. The words that are sung are called **lyrics**. The music that was composed just for this show has been recorded. This music is called the show's **soundtrack**. For this performance, the soundtrack has been recorded on to a CD which is operated by the stage manager.

The musical *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* is presented onstage with actors who play some of the characters found in the book. The actors wear **costumes** and perform in front of their set.

ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

Please read this to your students before attending the performance.

Why is ArtsPower called a national touring theatre?

The four actors and one stage manager:

- present performances all over the United States.
- pack the set, costumes, and sound equipment in their van.
- set up, change, and pack the set.
- take care of costumes and props — objects such as a soccer ball, the garbage can, and other things handled by the actors.
- stay in hotels when they travel.
- sometimes present up to 10 performances in a week.

Actors as Characters

In the theatre, actors who play characters tell the story on stage. In *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*, four actors play a total of six characters or roles.

Doubling

Two of the actors in *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* play more than one role. This is called **doubling**. The actors who double must change their voices and body movements when taking on their other character. You will know that actors are doubling — have become new characters — when he or she changes the ways he or she speaks and moves.

During rehearsals, the director worked with actors who double to change characters by having them:

- seem younger or older
- speak differently
- move their bodies differently



Learning Activity

DELIVERING LINES

“Oh, Danny. Don’t forget. Eat your peas!”

Try speaking these lines as a:

- 1) young boy
- 2) a cranky old man
- 3) a teenaged girl
- 4) a nervous actor

During the performance, look for the changes the actors make when they double.

Why do you think traveling theatre companies like ArtsPower have actors double in roles?



Cast

Danny

A young boy

Dad/Monster

Danny’s Dad
who doubles as the
Monster

Mom/Narrator

Danny’s Mom
who doubles as the
Narrator

Ralph

Danny’s dog



Learning Activity

WHO IS DANNY?

After you have seen the performance, talk about the words below that you think describe Danny:

SCARED

TOO DRAMATIC

ANGRY

HAPPY

ANNOYED

BRAVE



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Creating Theatre

Please read this page to your students before attending the performance.

Creating a musical theatre production like *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* takes a lot of time and creative energy from a group of people.

Many people work together to turn a book into a musical. Changes and additions are developed by the theatre company, ArtsPower National Touring Theatre, that help transform the book into an hour-long musical.

- The **playwright** writes lines that the actors speak.
- The **lyricist** writes the words to the songs that the actors sing.
- The **designers** create sets, costumes, and lighting.
- The **stage manager** oversees all backstage elements of a show.
- The **composer** writes the music.
- The **actors** audition for parts and memorize lines and songs.
- The **director** rehearses the actors and makes artistic decisions.
- The **producers** raise the money to create the show and manage all aspects of the production and its tour throughout the United States.

The Creative Team



Author Danny Schnitzlein received the Young Hoosier Book Award for *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* and was nominated for reader's choice awards in five states. Danny also writes scripts and songs for children's educational television. He enjoys playing guitar and ukulele, reading, painting, and movies. www.dannyschnitzlein.com



Playwright, lyricist, and director Greg Gunning, who is also ArtsPower's Artistic Director, has written or co-written the books (or dialogue) to all of ArtsPower's theatre productions. Greg's script for *Lily's Crossing*, based on the Newbery Honor book by Patricia Reilly Giff, is included in "The Signet Book of Short Plays," compiled by Penguin Books.



Illustrator Matt Faulkner has written and illustrated a number of children's books. In addition, he is a contributing illustrator to such national periodicals as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and Forbes. Matt teaches illustration at the Art Academy University in San Francisco. www.mattfaulkner.com



Composer and arranger Richard DeRosa is presently an associate professor and director of jazz composition and arranging studies at the University of North Texas. Richard has composed and orchestrated the scores to all but three ArtsPower productions. <http://jazz.unt.edu/derosa>



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Study Buddy

Words, Music, and Sets

Please read this page to your students before attending the performance.

Lyrics

There is no musical without music and lyrics. Lyrics are the words to the songs. Playwright Greg Gunning wrote the lyrics to all the songs in *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*. What do these lyrics that Danny sings tell you about his character?

My parents keep saying:
"Danny, please eat your peas."
But even the sight
Makes me weak in the knees.

I could die if I eat them.
I keep telling them – please,
No way,
I just can't eat those peas.

Music

Richard DeRosa is the composer who wrote and arranged the music for *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*. Richard used an electronic keyboard and synthesized music – sounds generated by a special computer – to record the soundtrack. During the performance, the actors sing live to the prerecorded soundtrack on CD that the stage manager operates from off stage.



Learning Activity

GOOD LISTENING!

When you attend the performance, listen to the music throughout the show.

- Did all of the music you heard have lyrics to it?
- Did you sometimes hear music when the actors were talking but not singing?
- Did the music and lyrics help to tell the story?

Sets

Sets are pieces of scenery that help identify places and locations during the show. You will see the actors moving the set pieces (including the three rolling flats represented to the right) around the stage throughout the musical. This signifies time passing or moving to a different place or scene. Theater is live, so the actors must make time pass by using their imaginations and telling the story to you. It's up to you to use *your* imagination and play along with the actors. That way, you'll understand the story together.



Set illustrations by Dan Helzer/Blitz Design



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Create Your Own Monster

Can you draw your very own monster in the box below?



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Let Us Know What You Think!

After you see *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*, use the space below to write to us OR send us a picture showing your favorite part of the performance. Please send them to **ArtsPower, 9 Sand Park Road, Suite 6, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009**. You may also visit us online at <http://www.artspower.org> and click on "Contact Us." Thanks!

Your school _____

School's city and state _____

Date _____

Dear ArtsPower,

I saw *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* at: _____

Here's what I enjoyed about the performance: _____

Here's why: _____

Here's what I would change about the performance: _____

Here's why: _____

From,

Your Name: _____