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# Seesaw and the BC Curriculum

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An overarching goal within the BC Ministry of Education system is the nurturing of student achievement in five key areas:

*Reading*  
*Writing*  
*Numeracy*  
*Information and Communications  
Technology*  
*Social Responsibility*

(Reference BC Performance Standards, Ministry of Education)

The presentation of *Seesaw* in your school and the suggestions within this Study Guide directly relate to student development in the areas of Writing and Social Responsibility.

*Seesaw* and the Study Guide activities can enrich your plans to achieve goals within the Language Arts, Social Studies, Personal Planning and Fine Arts (Drama) Curricula. Specific goals within the curricula will be noted for each activity.



# Synopsis

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In *Seesaw* we meet four ordinary kids coping with the ups and downs of their lives; Paige a popular yet insecure girl, Adam the tough bully who is also a budding artist, shy Josh who learns magic tricks in order to become invisible, and Charla the new girl who wants to be everybody's friend. In *Seesaw* we get to see them over a few days - at home and at school - and learn more about what makes them act the way they do. The play weaves the stories of these four characters as they respond to the pressures around them and develop a sense of themselves in the world. As the characters interact they learn from each other and begin to make positive and hopeful choices. Some of the characters feel confident, others are nervous or afraid.

*Seesaw* helps students examine the influences youth get from pop culture (violence, body image, materialism) and how these affect the way they interact with schoolmates and their parents. It's about self esteem, fitting in, and "doing the right thing". *Seesaw* also examines the various types of bullying behaviour - from the physical to the emotional. Using actors and an array of puppets *Seesaw* is a fast paced exploration of the shifting nature of relationships, the value and importance of friendships, and focuses on the creative mind and imagination as a crucial part of learning and growing.

## CHARACTERS

- ADAM*     *An artist and a bully who gets into lots of trouble. Things are rough at home.*
- PAIGE*     *Popular, obsessed with image, fashion and movies.*
- JOSH*     *A magician and loner; nervous and easily intimidated.*
- CHARLA*   *New at school, looking to make friends.*

*The many other characters in Seesaw are portrayed by puppets, masks and voices. These include parents, siblings, friends and older students.*



# Preparing Students for the Play

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When young people attend a live theatrical performance for the first time they often do not realize how different it is from watching a movie or television show. Because the performers and audience are together in the same room, they are creating the event together.

A live presentation has not been pre-recorded, with the mistakes edited out. This makes it riskier for the performer and more exciting for the audience. It also means that the audience has a real contribution to make to the overall experience. Each audience member affects those around them as well as the performer. The more the audience 'gives' to the performer, the more the performer can give to the audience.

The audience has a considerable impact on the performers and the performance and so we suggest the following general guidelines:

*As your students watch the play, have them notice how the actors help us to understand the feelings of the characters.*

- Be prepared for the show by reading the program, Study Guide or any other background information available.
- Give your energy and attention to the performer(s).
- Do not eat or drink in the theatre.
- Do not talk during the performance.
- Make sure all interruptions are kept to a minimum: in schools, please arrange to hold the bells.

These suggestions encourage active participation as audience members (Fine Arts curriculum) and encourage Socially Responsible behaviour during the presentation. They also enhance the development of discussion and creative thinking skills (Language Arts).



# Kindergarten to Grade 3

*These suggestions address the Standards of Writing and Social Responsibility and the Language Arts, Social Studies and Fine Arts Curricula.*

**Grade  
K - 3**

## CURRICULUM AREAS

### *PERSONAL PLANNING*

*Personal Development (Mental Well Being)*

### *SOCIAL STUDIES*

*Applications of Social Studies*

### *LANGUAGE ARTS*

*Self and Society (Personal Awareness)*

*Self and Society (Working Together)*

### *FINE ARTS (DRAMA)*

*Exploration and Imagination*

*Drama Skills*

## **After the Play SHORT ACTIVITIES**

### DISCUSSION

- Who was the most interesting character?
- What do you remember about the play?
- Why was that interesting to you?

### WRITING/DRAWING

- Draw a picture of the most interesting character during the most interesting part of the play.
- Write a description of your drawing or
- Tell someone the story of your drawing and have them write down your words.



# Kindergarten to Grade 3

**Grade  
K - 3**

## *Understanding Emotions and Feeling Words*

In many interactions people express as much (or more) of their feelings through physical expression or body language. Being 'fluent' in reading body language is an important skill for young people. Human interactions can be complex and confusing if you're not sure what people really feel!

### **After the Play OTHER ACTIVITIES**

#### PARTNER STATUES

Students can explore emotions by shaping a partner into a statue that expresses a feeling. The 'sculptors' gently move their partner's body into a shape, paying particular attention to the position of hands, shoulders and spine. The facial expression on the statue is also crucial. To shape the face, it is best for the sculptors to *make* the facial expression themselves, and then have their partners imitate it.

When the statue is completed to the sculptor's satisfaction, their partner (the statue) takes a moment to notice how the position of their body affects their emotional state. The partner then guesses what feeling they have been shaped to represent. Students can be asked to consider if/when they've seen someone else express that feeling, or if they have ever felt that way, themselves.

Repeat the exercise with roles reversed.

*Have students write a sentence (or short story) using some of the feeling words.*

Volunteers can show their emotion statues to the class and students can guess what feelings the sculptors were hoping to create. As the class generates a wide range of feeling words, record these on the board.



# Grades 4 to 5

*These suggestions address the Standards of Writing and Social Responsibility and the Language Arts, Social Studies and Fine Arts Curricula.*

## CURRICULUM AREAS

### PERSONAL PLANNING

*Personal Development (Mental Well Being)*

### LANGUAGE ARTS

*Self and Society (Personal Awareness)*

### FINE ARTS (DRAMA)

*Exploration and Imagination*

*Drama Skills*

*Context*

**Grade  
4 - 5**

## After the Play SHORT ACTIVITIES

### DISCUSSION

- What was the most memorable part of the play?
- Why?
- What made it interesting to you?
  
- How did the actors use their voices and bodies to portray the characters?
- What feelings did they express?
- What words and actions did they use to express emotions?
  
- Which character would you want as a friend?
- What challenges are they facing?
- What advice would you give them?

### CREATIVE WRITING

- Write a description of the most memorable part of the play.
- Write a letter to the character you'd like to have as a friend. Offer suggestions for how they might deal with their challenges.



## Grades 4 to 5

### *Friendship and Self Esteem*

The interpersonal dynamics that contribute to a positive self image and trusting relationships are critical to young people at this age. The themes of self esteem and friendship cross through many areas of the curriculum. By using the presentation of *Seesaw* teachers can address many curricular and Social Responsibility goals.

**Grade  
4 - 5**

### **After the Play OTHER ACTIVITIES**

*Teachers may ask students to re-create the scene as written in Seesaw, or to be more creative in their approach and generate an alternative ending to the scene.*

*See Strategies for Brainstorming, Web Charts and Strategies for Role-play in the Classroom on the Green Thumb website [www.greenthumb.bc.ca](http://www.greenthumb.bc.ca)*

### SMALL GROUP WORK - WRITING PROJECT

Students work in small groups to identify a scene from *Seesaw* that they are interested in exploring. Encourage them to look for a moment in the play where the characters were dealing with issues related to friendship and self esteem.

- Each group then writes a scene similar to the one in the play, including dialogue and staging directions.
- Each group, in turn, reads aloud their scene while the rest of the class makes notes on the aspects of the scene that explored a character's sense of self or the dynamics that enhance or detract from a friendship.
- Then conduct a brainstorming session, generating lists of words related to the issues of friendship and self esteem. Encourage the class to include feeling words, ways of communicating, actions and attitudes.
- Ask the class to consider the relationship between situations that enhance self esteem and those that build friendship. This could be explored through further group discussion or as a journal writing assignment.

### ROLE PLAY

The scenes that the students have written can be used to inspire role-playing and further exploration of the issues of friendship and self esteem.



# Grades 6 to 7

*These suggestions address the Standards of Writing and Social Responsibility and the Language Arts, Social Studies and Fine Arts Curricula.*

## CURRICULUM AREAS

### PERSONAL PLANNING

*The Planning Process, Personal Development (Mental Well Being)*

### SOCIAL STUDIES

*Self and Society (Personal Awareness and Building Community)*

### LANGUAGE ARTS

*Comprehend and Respond (Engagement and Personal Response)*

*Communicate Ideas and Information (Composing and Creating)*

**Grade  
6 - 7**

## After the Play SHORT ACTIVITIES

### DISCUSSION

#### *Presentation*

- What worked about the performance?  
Why? - script, performance, direction?
- What didn't work?  
Why? - script, performance, direction?
- How did you feel about the design choices?  
Costumes, sets, use of puppets etc.

#### *Theme*

The playwright - Dennis Foon - based his play on interviews with students in grade 6 & 7. He wrote a play to address the concerns and issues that these students expressed.

- Did *Seesaw* cover issues relevant to young people your age?  
What were they? What was missing?
- Did the play offer new perspectives or useful insight?  
How?



# Grades 6 to 7

## After the Play SHORT ACTIVITIES

### REVIEW OR JOURNAL ENTRY

- Write a review of *Seesaw*. Include your point of view on the script, the performance and the design/visual aspects of the presentation, as well as your views on how *Seesaw* explored the issues relevant to 10 to 13 year olds.
- Write a journal entry describing your personal experience of the issues presented in *Seesaw*.

## After the Play OTHER ACTIVITIES

### WRITING (creative, problem solving)

#### *Scenario – An Advice Column*

- Using the characters in the play *Seesaw* – Josh, Charla, Paige, Adam - have your students write letters to a student advice column.

**Grade  
6 - 7**

#### *THE LETTERS*

*These can be brief, but should reflect the personality of the character and the issues each individual is facing.*

There are several options for creating the letters:

1. Have students write and reply to their own letters.
2. Have students write letters and exchange them with a partner.
3. Have each student write a letter, gather them and have students reply to a letter they randomly draw from those submitted by class members.
4. Collect the letters students write and select 4 - 5 of them for students to choose from when they write their replies.
5. Have one class write the letters for another class to use.
6. Create 3 - 5 letters that touch on the key issues for your students.



# Grades 6 to 7

## After the Play OTHER ACTIVITIES

### THE ADVICE COLUMN

Students write a reply to the letter they've selected including:

- A description of the issues that are affecting the character's situation
- What emotions and outside pressures are influencing the character
- Who could help support the character
- Actions the character might take
- Likely consequences for actions

*Learning outcomes:*

*As students write the answer to the question they are working on, you will be able to evaluate the students' ability to:*

1. *Understand the issues facing the character.*
2. *Discern the social influences that are contributing to the problem.*
3. *Empathize with the character's situation.*
4. *Creatively solve problems.*

**Grade  
6 - 7**

...and you might be interested to learn...

Here's what the Playwright, Dennis Foon, said about writing *Seesaw*:

*"I began working on Seesaw by interviewing 78 sixth and seventh graders from a wide range of Winnipeg schools. When I started, I did not know what I was going to write about.. By the time I finished talking to them, the themes of the play became very clear."*

### BRAINSTORMING TOPIC

If Dennis Foon had interviewed the grade 6 and 7 students at your school, what would the themes of the play be?



# Seesaw Word Searches

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ADAM  
ARTIST  
BAD  
BULLY  
CHARLA  
CRY  
FRIEND  
HAPPY  
JOSH  
LOVE  
MAGIC  
MISHA  
NICE  
NYTRO  
PAIGE  
SAD  
SCARED  
SEESAW  
SHY

D	X	D	A	B	J	E	V	O	L
E	M	A	C	W	O	Y	L	F	Z
R	I	S	E	E	S	A	W	R	A
A	S	B	A	C	H	R	M	I	L
C	H	A	P	P	Y	T	N	E	R
S	A	W	A	L	C	I	Y	N	A
D	G	I	L	I	C	S	T	D	H
H	G	U	G	E	T	T	R	P	C
E	B	A	A	D	A	M	O	N	R
F	M	A	N	G	R	Y	L	R	Y

ADAM  
BAD  
CHARLA  
GOOD  
HAPPY  
JOSH  
PAIGE  
SAD

H	A	P	P	Y	A
G	J	E	T	L	A
O	O	N	R	F	D
O	S	A	D	A	M
D	H	A	B	P	Y
C	P	A	I	G	E



Founded in 1975 to develop and produce original Canadian plays for young audiences Green Thumb Theatre has emerged as a leader in theatre for young people.

Green Thumb Theatre believes that youth face the same scope of issues, problems, concerns and interests that adults do. We invite audiences to re-examine their feelings, prejudices, beliefs and aspirations by producing plays that encourage discussion, debate and critical thinking skills in youth.

As society diversifies, it is more important than ever that people respect each other and each other's differences. Our mission is to enlighten and empower young people by providing accessible, relevant, emotionally-grounded insights into their issues.

*Study Guide*  
Theresa Goode

*Study Guide Layout*  
Ereca Hassell

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Green Thumb Theatre is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and uses actors who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association.

**Green Thumb provides its productions with the support of:**



Canada Council  
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Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



# What Happened at School Today?

**Green Thumb Theatre** performed a play called *Seesaw* at your child's school. Green Thumb Theatre was founded in 1975 to develop original Canadian plays for young audiences. Since that time, Green Thumb has emerged as one of Canada's leading theatre companies for young people.

Our mission is to enlighten and empower young people by providing accessible, relevant, emotionally-grounded insights into young people's issues. Through our plays we seek to identify the sources and not just the symptoms of problems in our society, encouraging critical thinking and debate. Green Thumb invites its audiences to re-examine their feelings, prejudices, beliefs and aspirations.

## Synopsis of the Play

Meet four ordinary kids coping with the ups and downs of their lives; Paige a popular yet insecure girl, Adam the tough bully who is also a budding artist, shy Josh who learns magic tricks in order to become invisible, and Charla the new girl who wants to be everybody's friend. This new production of a Green Thumb favourite helps students examine the influences youth get from pop culture (violence, body image, materialism) and how these affect the way they interact with schoolmates and their parents. It's about self esteem, fitting in, and "doing the right thing". *SeeSaw* also examines the various types of bullying behavior – from the physical to the emotional. Using actors and an array of puppets *SeeSaw* is a fast paced exploration of the shifting nature of relationships, the value and importance of friendships and focuses on the creative mind and imagination as a crucial part of learning and growing.

We encourage you to discuss the play with your child and have included some suggestions for how you might begin those conversations..

## ...Ideas for Bringing the Learning Home...

### *For Six to Eight Year Olds*

Ask your child to draw a picture of the most interesting moment during *Seesaw*.

Sit together and talk about what they've drawn.

- What's going on in this part of the picture?
- What was this person like?
- How did it feel?

### *For Nine and Ten Year Olds*

- This description of *Seesaw* sounds like the kind of thing that could happen with kids at your school - Was it like that? In what way?
- If you were going to write a play about kids this age, what would it be like?

### *For Eleven to Thirteen Year Olds*

- What did you think of the performance?

The playwright, Dennis Foon, wrote the play based on interviews with kids in grade 6 and 7. He developed the characters and situation based on what they told him about what it was like.

- Did he get it right?
- Did it seem like it could have taken place at your school? In what way?

For further information on *Seesaw* or Green Thumb Theatre  
visit [www.greenthumb.bc.ca](http://www.greenthumb.bc.ca) or email us at  
[info@greenthumb.bc.ca](mailto:info@greenthumb.bc.ca)