



Walton Arts Center

# Performance Guide



## *The Very Hungry Caterpillar and Other Eric Carle Favorites*



Photo Credit: Mermaid Theatre

*Performed by Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia and based on three storybooks by beloved children's book author Eric Carle, The Very Hungry Caterpillar and other Eric Carle Favorites uses puppetry to recreate his well-loved characters and memorable settings. The triple bill includes the stories of the very hungry caterpillar's metamorphosis; the little cloud's fanciful travels through the sky, and the mixed-up chameleon's discovery of his own unique nature. Theater performances adapted from books are a foundation for literacy skills.*

### Ideas for Curriculum Connections:

Arkansas Learning Standards: RL.K.1, RL.1.1, RL.2.1, RL.3.1; RL.K.2, RL.1.2, RL.2.2, RL.3.2; RL.k.3, RL.1.3, RL.2.3, RL.3.3; RL.K.5, RL.1.5, RL.2.5, RL.3.5; RL.k.6, RL.1.6, RL.2.6, RL.3.6; SL.K.1, SL.1.1, SL.2.1, SL.3.1; SL.k.4, SL.1.4, SL.2.4, SL.3.4. Fine Arts Standards Theatre: P.4.K.1, P.4.1.1, P.4.2.1, P.4.3.1; R.7.K.1, R.7.1.1, R.7.2.1, R.7.3.1; R.8.1.1, R.8.2.1, R.8.3.1; R.9.K.1, R.9.1.1, R.9.2.1, R.9.3.1; R.9.2.3, R.9.3.3; CN.10.K.1, CN.10.1.1, CN.10.2.1, CN.10.3.1.



Photo Credit: Margo Ellen Gesser

## The Books

The books of Eric Carle are among the favorites of both educators and children. Vibrant color, rhythm, rhyme and a sense of discovery and wonderment engage young readers and support them in essential pre-reading skills.

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969) follows the life of a voracious caterpillar from egg to butterfly while featuring counting and the days of the week.

*The Mixed-Up Chameleon* (1988) is the story of a small green chameleon that wants to be a little bit of everything but learns being himself is best of all.

*Little Cloud* (1998) tells the story of Little Cloud, who likes to stand out from the crowd. When all the other clouds drift up, he goes his own way, changing shapes. It's all lots of fun, but so is playing with friends.

## The Artists

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia has adapted many of Eric Carle's stories for performance on stage. The company works with composers to create original music and with professional puppeteers to create puppets that have the visual impact to tell classic children's literature well. The production of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar and Other Eric Carle Favorites* was adapted, directed and designed by Jim Morrow with music composed by Steven Naylor.

## The Performance

The performance uses two puppeteers to operate several puppets at once. The puppeteers use choreographed body movement, rhythm and precise timing to create all the characters from the books. To be less visible onstage, they wear black or neutral colored clothing and on occasion, masks. Through black-light effects, the puppets and scenery look like Eric Carle's drawings in all of their vibrancy. This kind of lighting makes anything black disappear and anything with color stand out. The artists from Mermaid Theatre understand how to capture and hold the attention of very young children for an extended period. Their performances are great first theater experiences for children.

## The Artform of Puppetry

A puppet is any inanimate figure manipulated by a person called a puppeteer. Even very simple puppets are powerful in their ability to bring stories to life. The art of puppetry begins in a good story, imaginative use of stage space and the animation of puppets. There are different types of puppets. Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia uses rod puppets. Rod Puppets are puppet figures manipulated by rods. During the performance the puppeteers stand on the stage as they move the puppets. When two puppeteers manipulate a single puppet they use synchronized breathing to unify their motion.

# Learning Activities

## Create a Puppet

Create a three-dimensional caterpillar or little cloud from an ordinary object and show it moving on a “stage.”

Use a sock over your hand as the large mouth of the caterpillar. Create the opening for the mouth by stuffing the extra fabric between four fingers held together and thumb. Glue pompons at the “head” of the caterpillar to be eyes Use a white glove to be a little cloud. Attach white polyfill to the glove to show changes in shape.

## Create the Food

Draw and cut out pictures of your favorite foods. Attach the image to a pencil for visibility. Practice using the puppet in one hand and the food in the other. The puppet “sees” the food, moves slowly toward it, opens the mouth and the food disappears from the stage as the puppet chews.

## Movement with Music

Move puppet slowly from your lap to the surface of your desk. Practice opening and closing the mouth, and practice the small chewing movements the caterpillar might make. Find ways for the caterpillar to enter the space in front of each puppeteer. See the food. Let the puppet “eat” the food. Exit. The entering, eating and exiting provides a beginning, middle and ending structure for their story. Use a favorite piece of music to guide the movements of the puppet. Use a narrator to speak favorite lines from the story.

## Pre Performance Discussion

- Have you ever seen a performance using puppets?
- Have you ever used puppets?
- What do puppets look like?
- Where do puppets perform?
- Is a puppet’s stage different from a stage for people?
- How do puppets move?
- What is a puppeteer?

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia is one of North America’s most respected schools of puppets, puppet design and the art of puppeteering.

During the performance, puppeteers stand on stage as they move the puppets. Puppeteers wear black clothing and black masks to be invisible.

## Pre Performance Vocabulary

**puppets:** figures made to look like an animal, object or person and moved by wires, string or the hands.

**puppeteers:** people who make puppets move.

**scenery:** the painted hangings or screens used in the theater.

**black light:** invisible infrared or ultraviolet rays used to make things glow.

**cocoon:** the covering made of silky threads that a caterpillar spins around itself before becoming a butterfly.

**collage:** a picture made by pasting paper on a background.

**palette:** a set of colors used by an artist.



Photo Credit: Mermaid Theatre



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### Reflect and Assess

Ask the following questions. Record the group's answers on the board and discuss.

- What did you think about The Very Hungry Caterpillar? What part(s) of the performance do you remember? What questions do you have?
- Describe the characters in The Mixed Up Chameleon. Who were they?
- What were they doing? Why?
- What did you already know about caterpillars before the performance? What do you know now?
- If you were in the performance of The Little Cloud, how would you play Little Cloud? Why would you perform the character that way?
- How did the set help tell the story? What sounds did you hear?
- How did the performance make you feel?
- What moment in the performance do you remember most?
- Think, plan and write a description of that moment for someone who was unable to experience the performance.

### Learn More Online

Official website Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia

[mermaidtheatre.ca/](http://mermaidtheatre.ca/)

Learn how Eric Carle paints his tissue in the illustrations of his storybooks

[www.eric-carle.com/slideshow\\_paint.html](http://www.eric-carle.com/slideshow_paint.html)

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Colgate Classroom Series performances help students meet Arkansas Learning Standards.

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