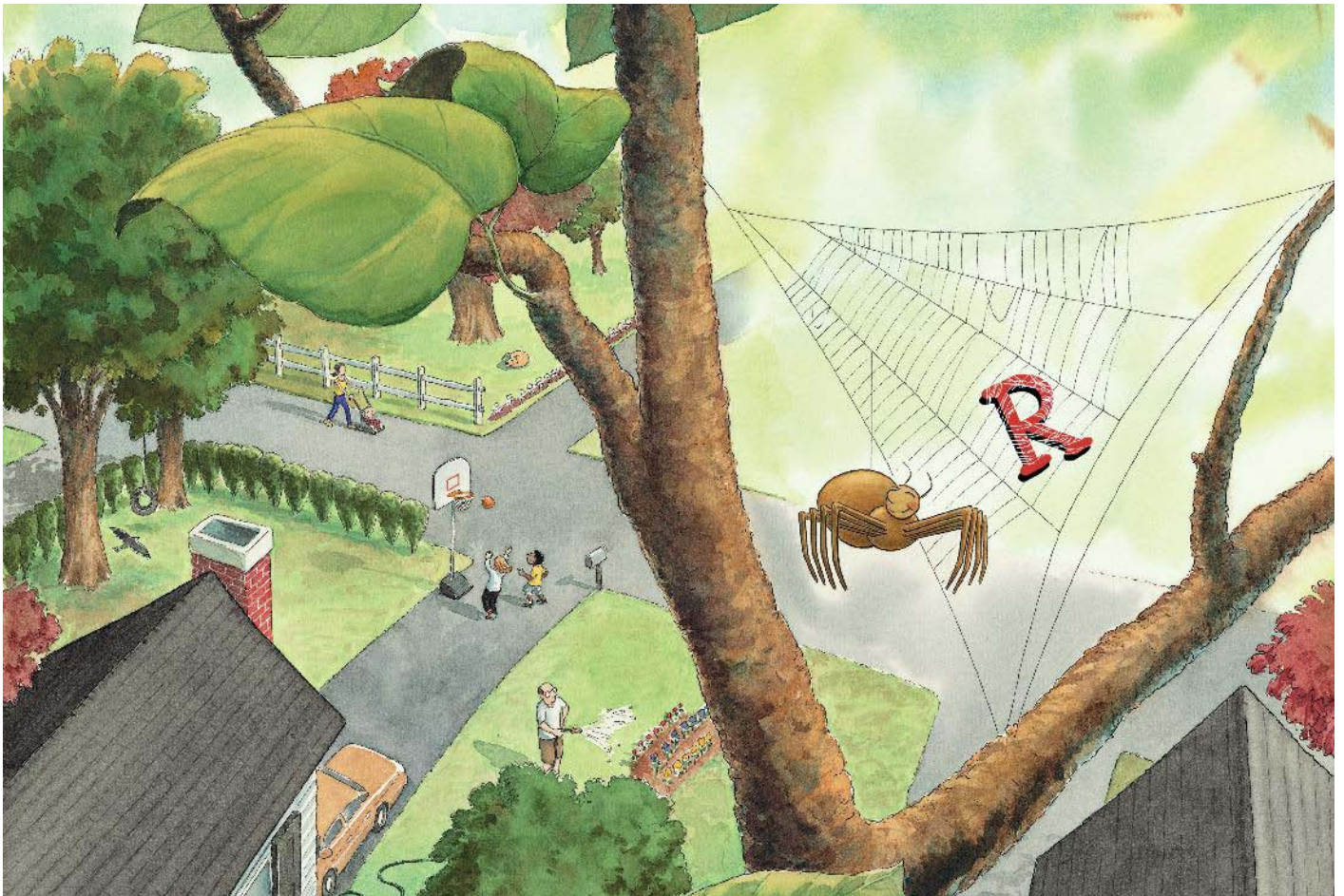


# Diary of a Worm, a Spider and a Fly

## Educational Materials

Book, Music & Lyrics by Joan Cushing  
“Diary of a Worm” series by Doreen Cronin and Harry Bliss.

Directed by Troy Scheid



Main  
Street  
Theater

TEACHER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS – 2011-2012 SEASON  
MST – THEATER FOR YOUTH – *DIARY OF A WORM, A SPIDER AND A FLY*  
4617 Montrose Blvd. Suite 100, Houston, TX 77006 – 713-524-9196x101-[www.mainstreettheater.com](http://www.mainstreettheater.com)



# **APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE**

**This production of**

## **Diary of a Worm, a Spider and a Fly**

**would not be possible without the generous support of the following –**

Main Street Theater is funded in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance as well as The Brown Foundation, The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, the George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, the Albert & Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, The Humphreys Foundation, Houston Endowment, The Shubert Foundation, The Simmons Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, and The Wortham Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Houston Chronicle, KUHF 88.7 FM, Copy.com, Target, United Airlines, Allen Edmonds, BBVA Compass, Sterling & Associates, British Isles, the Kinder Morgan Foundation, The Lillian Kaiser Lewis Foundation, and The Radoff Family Foundation.



# TEACHERS –

Welcome to Main Street's Theater for Youth! We hope these supplemental materials will help you integrate your field trip into your classroom curriculum. We've included a number of activities and resources to help broaden your students' experience. Please make sure that each teacher that will be attending the play has a copy of these materials as they prepare to see the show.

Estimated Length of Show – 55 minutes

***Recent studies prove that integrating the arts into education enhances a student's development and performance. Students learning through the arts are more able to think at a higher level, collaborate with their peers, and score higher on standardized tests.***

Before you come to the theater, please take some time to talk with your students about what to expect. Going to a live play is an experience unlike any other, and many students are more familiar with going to the movies or sporting events. Please help them prepare for what they'll see and how they should act.

Here are some things to think about:

- How is a play different from a movie or a television show?
- How is a play different from real life?
- Can the actors see and hear the audience?
- Which of the following is appropriate behavior for a theater audience? Clapping, talking, eating, laughing, running, leaving during the performance.
- Ask students who have seen a play before to talk about what it's like to be in the audience.



Have students write letters or draw pictures to the cast of *Diary of a Worm...* with their thoughts and comments on the production. All correspondence should be sent to:

**SCHOOL BOOKINGS**  
*Main Street's Theater for Youth*  
**4617 Montrose Boulevard, Suite 100**  
**Houston, Texas 77006**

# HOW SHOULD I PREPARE MY STUDENTS FOR A TRIP TO THE THEATER?

- Read the book to your students or have them read it. The play is taken directly from the pages of the book.
- Discuss the page on theater etiquette with your students. Remind them that it can get very dark in the theater before the play and in between scenes.
- Make sure your students use the restroom before they leave school or at the theater before the performance. There will be actors running, dancing, and moving furniture in the aisles during the show. It can be very dangerous to get up to use the restroom during the performance. In addition, you may miss your favorite part!
- Talk about what kind of show they are coming to see. *Diary....* is a live theatrical performance. Our stage is very close to the seats and students will be very close to the actors performing. The actors are very friendly though so they should not be afraid.
- *Diary...* is a musical. This means that the actors will be singing to music. Talk about how singing during a play helps to tell the story.
- Talk to your students about imagination. People called actors perform in the play. Six grown-up actors perform in *Diary...* watch and see how they use their voices and bodies to act like little children.
- After the performance, the actors will remain on stage and answer questions that the students may have. Discuss with your students what a question is. While the actors love to hear what a good time the students had or what part they like the best, they LOVE to answer questions about the show, the book or being an actor. Don't forget to raise your hand!



# WHO WROTE *Diary of a Worm, a Spider and a Fly*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR –

### DOREEN CRONIN



I was born in New York and grew up on Long Island with my parents, two brothers and a sister. We lived in a red house with a big backyard --and a neighborhood full of kids. My dad was a police officer and he was very, very funny. I decided that I wanted to be a police officer or an FBI agent when I grew up. When I grew up, I realized that was very dangerous. I changed my mind.

It was my first-grade teacher, Mrs. Cooper, who first told me that I was a writer. She may have told all the students that -- I have no idea! But the moment she told me I was a writer --I became one. Mrs. Cooper used to give me extra writing assignments to encourage me. It was extra homework, but I loved it. I also loved our library and spent most of my free time there.

I graduated from Penn State in 1988 and St. John's University School of Law in 1998. I practiced law in downtown Manhattan for a few years. It was during that time that *Click Clack Moo: Cows that Type* was published. I left my job as an attorney and have been writing every since. Thank you Mrs. Cooper!

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT –

### JOAN CUSHING

**Joan Cushing** is best known for her political satirical revue *Mrs. Foggybottom & Friends*, which ran for 10 hit years at the Omni-Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., more recently Cushing has turned her hand to adapting popular children's books as musicals, receiving over 300 productions and 3 national tours. Works include *Miss Nelson Is Missing!*, *Miss Nelson Has a Field Day*, *Junie B. Jones & a Little Monkey Business*, *Petite Rouge: A Cajun Red Riding Hood*, and *Heidi* (with Martha King De Silva), all commissioned by Imagination Stage; and *Brave Irene*, commissioned by Adventure Theatre. Recent works include a new script for *Tussaud*, based on Madame Tussaud's bloody pursuit of art (not for TYA); *The Christmas Doll*, 2007 National Youth Theatre Award for Outstanding New Play/Musical, world premiere Children's Theatre of Charlotte; *Lizzie Bright & the Buckminster Boy*, First Stage Milwaukee, New Play Series, and three world premiers this season: *George and Martha* for Imagination Stage, *Diary of a Worm, A Spider & a Fly* for Oregon Children's Theatre, and *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* for Roanoke Children's Theatre. Ms. Cushing lives in the Nation's Capital with her husband Paul Buchbinder. Their 19 year old son Ben, when not evacuating due to hurricanes, is a Jazz Studies major at Loyola University/New Orleans. Cushing is thrilled to have another play produced at Main St. Theatre. For more info, go to [www.joancushing.com](http://www.joancushing.com).

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## Reading –

Read the *Diary books* to your class before coming to see the play. Start by having the students look at the pictures. Ask them what they think the story is about. Remind them to use the pictures as clues. If they can, have them take turns reading. What is their favorite part of the story? Did they think the story was make believe or fiction or was it real or non-fiction?



## Biology –

### Fun Facts about Worms...

- They have five hearts which all pump blood through blood vessels just like a human heart!
- They eat almost anything that was once alive, but is now dead.
- If they are cut in half, only the part that has the head will live.
- They tunnel through the ground and bring air into the soil so that plants can grow.
- They typically live for about 3-4 years.



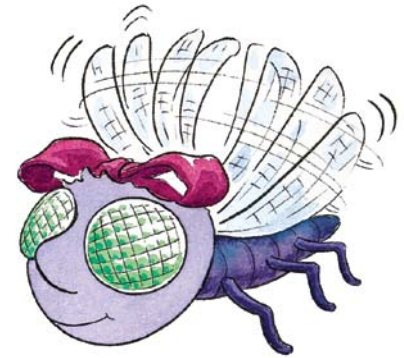
Worm made macaroni necklaces in art class once. Have your students make some of their own. Make sure to use different types and colors of pasta to make the necklaces look different. Remind them not to eat them like worm's family did unless they cook it!

### Fun Facts about Flies...



- There are more than 120,000 species of flies worldwide.
- Most flies live an average of 21 days and take on various shapes
- Except for a few wingless species, flies have only one pair of wings.
- Baby flies are called **larvae** but they are also known as maggots.
- Common houseflies have a maximum flying speed of 5 miles per hour and beat their wings 200 times per second!
- Flies do not have teeth or a stinger. Their mouths absorb food like a sponge.

Fly dreams of becoming a superhero. Discuss with your students what makes someone a hero. Can ordinary people be heroes? Have the students identify one person that they consider a hero. It could be a famous person or someone that they know. Have them draw a picture of their hero and write 2-3 sentences about why they are a hero. Have them share them with the class.



## Fun Facts about Spiders...

- A fear of spiders is called Arachnophobia.
- They are not insects. (Insects have 3 body parts and 6 legs)
- The largest spider in the world is the Giant Bird-eating spider. One that was found had a leg span of 28 cm (11 inches)!
- The smallest spider is the Patu Marplei. You could fit 10 of them on the end of a pencil.
- Spider silk is possibly the strongest material in the world!

Create an animal mural with your students. Tape a large piece of butcher paper on the wall and divide it into 3 horizontal sections – above ground, below ground and on the ground. Discuss which animals live and work in each area. Then use crayons and markers and have the students draw the animals and other things in nature. (kidzone.com)



from shopping bags.

## Recycling/Environment -

An important theme in the play is the discussion about the environment and how ant, spider, butterfly, worm, bee and fly contribute to it. The production team expanded upon that by utilizing recycled or reused materials in their designs. The costume designer created fly's wings from a laundry basket and some videotape. Worm's rings on his costume were made from the tops of old pants. Butterfly's wings were made from napkins.

The set designer used recycled carpet tubes for the straws, pencil and crayon on Fly's tree house. Fly's light was made from a tin can. The safety banner was made

Make your own recycled items. Have your students create insects and bugs from egg cartons.

**Materials Needed:**

- Egg Cartons
- paint
- Glue
- Misc Supplies (wiggle eyes, felt, chenille stems, sequins, etc)

**Instructions:**

Cut a long row of cups and make a caterpillar. Use two sections and some tissue paper and make a butterfly. Make a spider with long, chenille stems legs!

**Spider Suggestion:** Trim an egg carton cup to even it out a bit. Paint inside and outside black. Let dry. Poke a hole in the middle of cup and four holes in each side. Put string through top hole and tie off. (Elastic string works great for a dragline) Put twist ties in each side hole and bend back ends inside cup to hold. Glue eyes on.

(familycrafts.com)

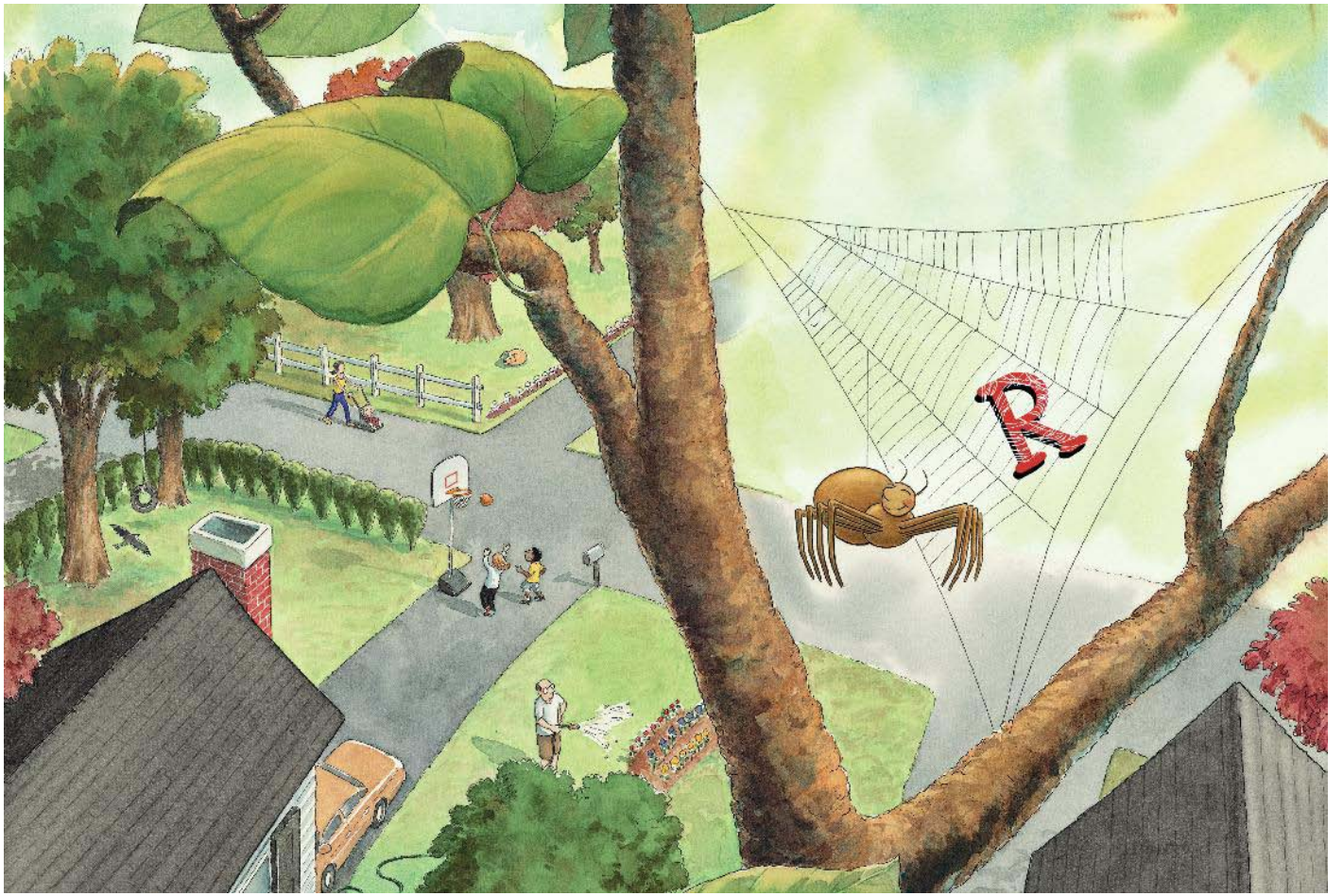
**Writing -**

Worm, Spider and Fly all write in a diary about their day. Many famous authors wrote in diaries such as Anne Frank and Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Use the attached “Dear Diary” form and have your students write a diary entry about their day.

Or use the attached “Dear Spider” form and have them write their own postcard to Spider. We would love to see what they write so feel free to send them to us!

(HarperCollins.com)



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# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PUT ON A PLAY?

It takes many years of preparation before you see a show at our theater. Many, many people work to put all the parts of a play together. The play you're seeing today comes from the series of books *Diary of a Worm*, *Diary of a Spider* and *Diary of a Fly* written by **author** Doreen Cronin. The **playwright**, the person who turns the book into a play is Joan Cushing.

About a year before MST's production, the **producer** contacted the **licensing agency** about the rights to perform the play. Once the agency agreed, the production team was assembled. The production team is the group of people directly responsible for how a play looks and sounds.

The **director** is the person who makes the decisions about who is in the play, how the play looks, and what themes are emphasized to the audience. S/he works with the designers to establish the concept (or mood & themes) of the play. The director also hires the actors to play the parts in the show. Once rehearsals begin the director conveys the concept to the actors by giving them directions on their character development and by blocking their movements.

The **set designer** creates the world that is seen when you enter the theater. S/he decides whether there will be real furniture or pretend furniture (such as cubes or chairs). The set designer decides where all of the different locations will be on the stage. The designer drafts diagrams so the carpenters can build the set. S/he also comes back once the set is built to paint everything.

The **costume designer** is the person who chooses what clothes the actors will wear to represent the concept of the play. The designer will sometimes shop for clothing or may build some costumes from scratch. S/he works closely with the actors to make sure that all of the clothing fits and feels comfortable. S/he also works with the set designer to make sure that the actors' clothing will not clash with the colors on the set.

The **props designer** is the person who provides all of the handheld items used by the actors during the play. This person either buys or builds everything that the actors might need to convey the story.

The **sound designer** creates or selects all of the sound effects and music for the play. The sound designer creates the noises that are heard when someone rings a doorbell, a dog barks offstage, or a telephone rings. The sound designer can also create music pieces to aid in setting the theme or the mood of the play.

The **lighting designer** decides how stage lighting will help tell the story. How can the color of lights complement the costumes and sets? Does the play require a scene at night? S/he will also decide when the lights should go out to cover up a scene change or when they should stay on.

The **actors** are the people who perform the play. They are real people who are pretending to be the different characters in the story. Actors are trained to play old people, young people and sometimes even animals. It's their job to tell the story to the audience.

The **audience** is part of the play too! Without someone to hear the story, there would be no reason to tell it. The actors want to get the audience to care about the characters, to laugh and cry, and applaud when the play is over.

Have your students choose a position in the theater that they would like to be – a director, an actor, a designer. For your older students, have them research a famous director, designer, etc and give a report on them – include things like where they went to school, what shows have they done. For your younger students, have them draw a picture of a set or a costume that they design for a show (they can use a book to base their design on.)