

My Stupid Cat Named Max... and Other Plays for Young People

by Nick Sweet

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Dedication --For Joan

About This Script

These four plays are ideal for young actors in school, for children's theatre groups, or even for summer camp talent shows. With plenty of rhyming and choral recitation, they can be presented easily with only a few rehearsals. Though each requires strong leading characters, any number of children can participate. Included with each piece are suggestions for simple staging, but feel free to use your own creative ideas.

Lost in the Forest (for grades K-2nd) tells of a little boy (or girl) who gets separated from his mother while on a picnic and is comforted and led back to her by the inhabitants of the forest.

My Stupid Cat Named Max (for grades K-6th) shows us a little boy (or girl) with extremely vivid dreams. He meets monsters, aliens, the sun and moon, and rescues a shooting star ... or is it just his stupid cat?

The Johnson Family (for grades 5-6th) is about a young man with twelve sisters and we see how they treat him as the only son in the family. They show him exactly where he stands!

Searching for a Princess (for grades 4-6th) is about a King and Queen who are looking for a Princess for their young son, the Prince. They find all types of young ladies, but only one is truly princess material.

“Lost in the Forest”

Casting note from the playwright: As an Artist-in-Residence, I have performed this play hundreds of times with students in kindergarten, 1st and occasionally 2nd grade. I play the role of the little lost boy because I know the lines. The teacher usually plays my mother and reads her lines from note cards that I give her. In summer programs, little girls who could remember lines played my mother and that added to the fun. The kids play the flowers, butterflies, frogs, and rabbits. It would be a thrill for the class if the teacher played the lost child. The part could be male or female and the parent could be "mother" or "father." Just change the references. If the teacher declines the main role, then a 5th or 6th-grader with acting experience might be utilized, or a parent volunteer might be fun. I doubt that a student in kindergarten, 1st or 2nd grade could handle the main role, but kids this age can certainly handle all the others.

Staging: This play is about the fear that comes from being lost, a subject all young kids can relate to. I usually start by asking, "Who's been lost before?" Nearly every hand goes up. I ask, "How did you feel when you were lost?" (sad, scared, etc.) Then I tell them that I know a play about a little child who gets separated from his mother on a picnic. Luckily, he gets lost in a magic forest like the one in "Alice in Wonderland." The flowers, butterflies, frogs, and rabbits can talk and sing, and they help the little boy find his mother.

- A) Establish a circular playing area in your room by moving the desks to the perimeter.
- B) Brainstorm about how flowers would move if they could, how butterflies, frogs and rabbits actually move.
- C) Divide the class into those three groups: flowers, butterflies and frogs/rabbits and rehearse each group's movement while the other groups are seated.
- D) Put the child and mother at 6 o'clock, the flowers at 9, the butterflies at 12, and the frogs and rabbits at 3.

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Each group needs to do three things:

1) When they first approach the lost child, they ask, in unison, "Why are you crying?" The child replies: "Because I'm lost in the forest and I can't find my mama." (If the group forgets to ask, the child can give the response anyway leaving out "because.")

2) Then the group sings this simple song:

C C G F G D
Dry your tears, don't be sad

C C E G A
You can find safety

A A F A G G
You can find your mama

E E D F E D C
If you only follow me.

(Or feel free to make up your own tune.)

3) Then the little boy follows the group as they lead him in a circle, single file, back to their starting point. It's just like "follow the leader." The lost child mimics the movements of the group; flaps his wings like the butterflies, hops like the rabbits, etc. After you rehearse each group leading the child, you're ready to start the play. Get everyone in place at 3, 6, 9 and 12 o'clock to present the play.

"Lost in the Forest" could be integrated into a unit on feelings. It also might fit into a science unit on forest life. In an elaborate production, each child could construct his/her own costume, and the set for the forest could be designed and constructed in art class. In one production, the flowers had petals that hung around their necks like necklaces, the butterflies had pretty wings, the frogs had "bulging eyes" headpieces, and the rabbits had rabbit ears. In a simple production, there would be no props, costumes or set. This play has been staged with as many as 60 kids as the inhabitants of the forest.

“Lost in the Forest”

CHILD: Mama took me on a picnic. (*MOTHER and CHILD, hand in hand. She carries picnic basket or mimes carrying one.*)

We went far into the woods,
The sun was shining brightly.
And the breezes felt real good.

I saw a little brook and said,
"Can I go play down there?"
And Mama said,

MAMA: "Okay, but don't get lost,
Or you'll get scared."
(*MOTHER disappears until near the end of the play.*)

CHILD: "I'll stay close by," I promised her,
And off I went to play. (*CHILD moves center.*)
I skipped some stones and splashed around,
(*Mime skipping stones and splashing in the brook.*)
But then I walked away.

I saw a tree and right away
I started to climb up.
(*Mimes reaching up, unsuccessfully.*)
I tried and tried, but couldn't
'Cause my arms weren't long enough.

So I started back to Mama
And to eat my picnic lunch,
But I forgot where she was at,
I didn't have a hunch. (*Looks lost.*)

So finally I decided
To try to find the brook,
(*Looks more lost, frightened.*)
But I couldn't even see it
Though I looked and looked and looked.
(*Hand shading eyes.*)

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CHILD: *(Cont'd.)*

"Oh, no!" I said and I sat down, *(Sits.)*
And tears rolled down my cheeks. *(Cries.)*
I'm lost in the forest,
And I might be lost for weeks.

I got real scared and cried some more *(Does.)*
And hoped someone would find me.
When I looked up, guess what I saw?
Some flowers right beside me.

(FLOWERS approach the seated child, center.)

FLOWERS: Why are you crying?

CHILD: Because I'm lost in the forest and I can't find my
mama.

FLOWERS: *(Singing.)*

Dry your tears, don't be sad
You can find safety
You can find your mama
If you only follow me.

*(FLOWERS play "follow the leader" with the CHILD. When
they are back in place, child resumes poem.)*

CHILD: So I followed all the flowers
And they led me all around
But I was getting tired
So I had to lay down.

(Mimes sleeping, then waking.)

When I woke up, they all were gone *(Sits up.)*
And I was lost again. *(Look sad, scared.)*
I was trying not to cry
When some butterflies flew in.

*(BUTTERFLIES, with their wings aflutter, approach the seated
child.)*

BUTTERFLIES: Why are you crying?

End of Freeview

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