

2024



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S THEATRE

The New London Barn Playhouse presents:



EDUCATOR GUIDE

HOW TO BOOK THE SHOW

The New London Barn Playhouse is going on tour! This November 2024, schools and other organizations around New Hampshire can bring our professional production of “The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” to students during the school day. Here’s how it works:

1. Fill out our [booking form](#)
2. The show will tour from November 11–22, 2024. You can choose the date(s) and time(s) that work best for your group.
3. We can bring the show to your location or host your group in our Fleming Center space (we can seat up to 125 people).
4. We will work with you to determine the price of the show, based on how many students will attend. Our typical fee ranges from \$200–\$800.
5. Each booked performance also comes with a free pre-show workshop from a New London Barn Playhouse teaching artist.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Who are the performers?**

The Barn Playhouse hires a team of professional actors and designers to put the show together. Some of these guest artists will also design and choreograph the Barn Playhouse’s holiday production.

- **How long is the show?**

The run time of the show is one hour.

- **What does the booking fee cover?**

The fee covers script royalties, production costs, and stipends for our actors and creative team.

- **My school/organization cannot afford the booking fee, but we still want to book a performance. Are there any sponsorships or scholarships?**

We are working toward obtaining sponsors for this event so that we can provide opportunities for every student to attend the show. Email sage@nlbarn.org to share the specific circumstances of your organization.

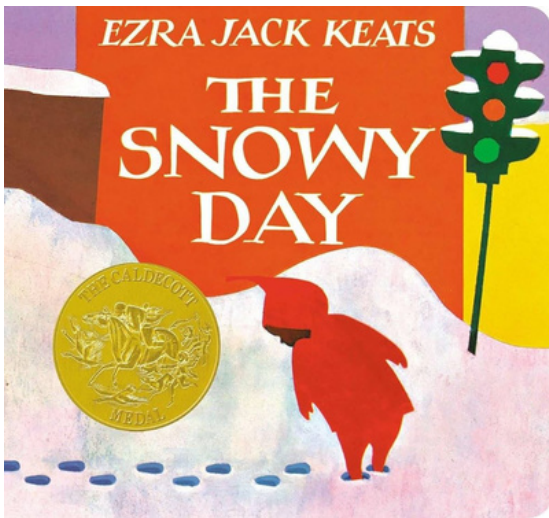
More questions? Email sage@nlbarn.org with any inquiries.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Synopsis

*The wonder of a fresh snowfall, the delight of whistling for the first time, the awe in finding a special treasure comes to life in *The Snowy Day and Other Stories* by Ezra Jack Keats. This story celebrates the joy in the small moments of a child's world.*

This play weaves together four stories by Ezra Jack Keats:



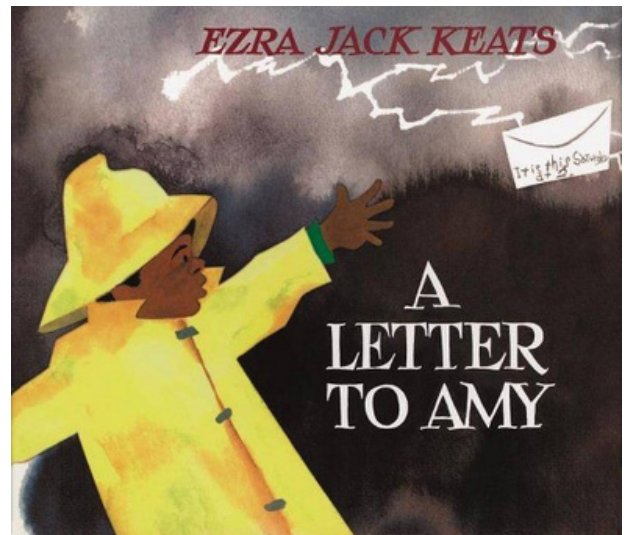
A little boy named Peter celebrates the snow-draped city with a day of humble adventures.



Peter wants to whistle so badly that he practices and practices until it finally happens.

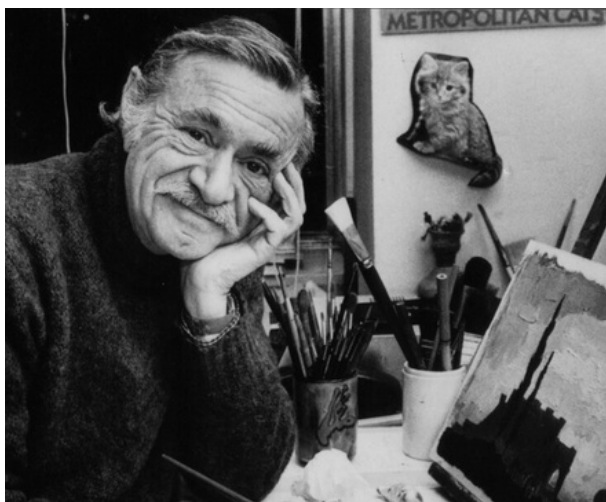


Peter and his friend Archie find a pair of goggles. When bullies threaten them and want the goggles, Peter and Archie must figure out how to outsmart the bullies.



Peter is having a birthday party, and he's asked all of his friends to come. Peter decides to send Amy a special invitation and rushes out in a thunderstorm to mail it.

ABOUT EZRA JACK KEATS



Ezra Jack Keats (1916–1983) is an award-winning children’s author and illustrator from Brooklyn, New York, best known for creating realistic and multicultural stories of childhood.

Ezra’s parents were Jewish immigrants who fled Poland to escape anti-semitism in Europe. Despite hardships like little money and the death of his father, Ezra’s childhood was full of support from his family, teachers, and librarians.

After graduating high school, Ezra worked as an artist in many different jobs. He painted murals with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), illustrated backgrounds for the Captain Marvel comic strip, and designed camouflage patterns for uniforms when he joined the Army. When World War II ended, he worked as a commercial illustrator before writing and illustrating his own books.

Growing up in New York City with struggling immigrant parents, Ezra often felt like an outsider. He saw children of different races and nationalities every day and realized none of them were represented in children’s books, which almost exclusively featured white main characters. He sought to capture a multicultural portrayal of childhood in the inner city, creating a prototype that inspired many other stories, including Sesame Street.

Today, the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation continues to support Ezra’s vision of a world where no child is an outsider. The foundation supports writers, illustrators, and organizations who promote inclusivity, diversity, and public education.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Jerome Hairston is a playwright from Virginia who has written for stage, film, and television. He graduated from the playwriting MFA program at Columbia University, and his plays have been produced all over the country. He was commissioned to write “The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” by the Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis in 2016.

Some of Jerome’s most well known television writer-producer credits are Smash, House of Cards, Law and Order, and Snowfall.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER



The Snowy Day is not a musical, but it has musical elements created by composer Victor Zupanc. Victor is from Canada and studied music composition at the University of California. He has worked as a composer, music director, and sound designer at theaters across America, and he is currently the Resident Music Director/Composer at the Children’s Theater Company of Minneapolis, where The Snowy Day was developed.

TYPES OF PUPPETRY

“The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” uses multiple different types of puppetry to tell the story. Here are some of the most common types of puppetry used in theatre. See which of these types you can spot in the production!



Shadow puppetry is a style of storytelling where a light is placed behind a screen. Puppeteers manipulate flat images in front of the light, so the audience sees the shadows of the shapes. Shadow puppetry most likely originated from Chinese and Indonesian cultures.



Marionette puppets are operated from above by strings or threads attached to the puppets' joints. Historians believe marionettes were some of the earliest puppets, originating in Ancient Greece and India and later becoming popularized in Italy.



Rod puppets are operated from below by using wooden or metal rods to move parts of the puppet's body. Different versions of rod puppets have been used for centuries, but Jim Henson's muppets popularized the “hand-rod style,” where one of the puppeteer's hands operates the puppet's mouth, and the other uses rods to operate the puppet's arms.



Object puppetry refers to when artists manipulate objects with their hands to give them life. In this form of storytelling, the puppeteer is picking up regular objects and moving and interacting with them in a way that gives them new a new meaning or identity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1. Adaptation

In theatre, adaptation is when one kind of story, like a book or a movie, is re-written for the stage to become a play. “The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” is a play that was adapted from four children’s books.

- *What parts of the books did you recognize in the play?*
- *How was the play different from the books?*
- *Ezra Jack Keats is known for his illustrations. Did you see any colors or styles onstage that reminded you of his drawings?*

2. The Four Seasons

In the play, Peter explores all four seasons: winter, spring, summer, and fall.

- *What clues in the costumes, sets, and puppetry helped you determine the season?*
- *How do you explore each of the four seasons in your own life?*

3. Learning a New Skill

In one scene, Peter struggles to learn how to whistle. It takes him a lot of practice.

- *What new skills have you learned? Are there any that you still want to learn?*
- *Have you ever been frustrated when you couldn’t do something right away? How did you learn without giving up?*

4. Bullying

In one scene, Peter and his friend Archie are bullied by kids who are bigger than them.

- *How are Peter and Archie feeling when they’re hiding? What do they do to get away from the bullies without getting hurt?*
- *Have you ever been bullied or seen someone else being bullied? What should you do if you see bullying happening?*

5. Friendship

Throughout the show, we see Peter’s many different types of friendships: his best friend Archie, his dog Willie, his family, his birthday party, and his new friend Amy.

- *Who are some of your friends?*
- *Peter was really nervous to invite Amy to his birthday party. Sometimes, it can be hard to make friends if you’re nervous or feel like you don’t fit in. What are some ways to make new friends?*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

1. Adaptation

In theatre, adaptation is when a story from another artistic medium, such as a book or a movie, is re-written for the stage to become a play. “The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” is a play that was adapted from four children’s books.

- *Which parts of the play were taken directly from the books?*
- *What did the playwright change to make the books fit the needs of theatre?*
- *Ezra Jack Keats is known for the bright colors and collage style of his illustrations. What elements of the show’s design reminded you of his drawings?*

2. Multicultural representation

All of Ezra Jack Keats’s stories featured a multicultural group of characters going through universal experiences of childhood.

- *Why do you think Ezra wanted to feature children of different races, ethnicities, and cultures in his stories?*
- *Over 92% of the people who live in New Hampshire are white. Why is it still important to share stories that feature characters of different races?*

3. Creative Theatrical Design

“The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” takes place in several different locations and during different seasons and different times of day. Sometimes, theaters are able to show these changes with large scenery shifts or backdrops. However, since this show is touring to different venues, the design needs to stay simple and compact.

- *How were the different locations captured through simple design choices? Do you have other ideas for showing place through small design changes?*
- *How did this production show the passage of time? Do you have other ideas for showing shifts in seasons or time of day through small design changes?*

4. Friendship

Throughout the show, we see Peter’s many different types of friendships: his best friend Archie, his dog Willie, his family, his birthday party, and his new friend Amy.

- *Who are your friends? Do you remember how your friendship began? If you wrote a children’s book about your friendships, which memories would you include?*
- *How has the process of making friends changed since you were Peter’s age? Making new friends often becomes more challenging as we age. What are some ways you might seek out new friendships now?*

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

We realize many students may not have experienced a theatrical production before, so here are some thoughts to share regarding etiquette in the theatre space:

There are many people involved, both on stage and off stage, who are working to put on the best performance possible for you and the rest of the audience . Unlike watching television or a movie, the performers and crew can see and hear the audience members—therefore, it is the audiences’ job to watch and listen carefully to the action on stage . The audience helps the performers and crew concentrate on doing their job when we practice the rules of theater etiquette.

- Applaud between scenes and when the performance is over. This tells the actors and creative team that you appreciate their work!
- Laugh when something is funny, gasp when something is shocking, and react appropriately throughout the show. We want to hear your natural reactions, but we don’t want you to make up reactions that disrupt the experience for others.
- Keep your feet, hands, and belongings in your own personal space so others can enjoy the performance too.
- Visit the restroom **before** the performance begins. If it becomes an emergency and you need to go during the show, try to exit as quietly as possible, so you don’t distract others.



PRE-SHOW WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Schools who book a performance of “The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats” also receive one free pre-show workshop from a Barn Playhouse teaching artist. The teaching artist will adjust the workshop content based on students’ ages and any requests from the classroom teacher.

Here are a few sample activities that could be facilitated during the pre-show workshop or by the classroom teacher. Each activity can be aged up or down to fit students’ grade level.

Create a Picture Book

- Students will read and discuss picture books by Ezra Jack Keats.
- Students will write text for their own children’s book around universal themes of childhood.
- Students will use collage and sketch to illustrate their picture books in the style of Ezra Jack Keats.

Write a Letter

- Students will read and discuss “A Letter to Amy” by Ezra Jack Keats.
- Students will write a letter to one of their friends.
- Students will learn to properly address, stamp, and mail the letter.

Story Drama

- Students will read and discuss “The Snowy Day” by Ezra Jack Keats.
- The instructor will lead students through a dramatic adventure where students act out Peter’s exploration of the snow.
- Students will improvise their own snow day activities.

Adaptation

- Students will read and discuss a picture book by Ezra Jack Keats.
- Students will discuss the process of writing and illustrating for a book versus writing and designing for a play.
- Students will dramatize the book, creating a short performance.