



STUDY GUIDE

PROVIDED BY



PERFORMANCE DATES & TIMES

TOUR DATES:

- January 11th - February 26th

PUBLIC IN-HOUSE PERFORMANCE:

- January 11th



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This classroom guide for Huck Finn is designed for Alabama students ranging from grades K-12. It offers activities to help you integrate classroom activities into English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, and Theatre curricula.

All activities in this guide are linked to the Alabama State Department of Education content standards.

<https://www.alsde.edu/sec/sct/Pages/cos-all.aspx?navtext=Standards/COS>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Note to Fellow Educators.....	5
Your Role as the Audience.....	6
Plot Summary.....	7
Theatre	
Discussion Questions.....	8
English Language Arts	
BCT Must Reads.....	10
History	
The Wild West.....	12
Steamboat Brochure.....	13
Reading, History, & Geography	
The Mighty Mississippi.....	14
Mighty Mississippi Worksheet.....	17
Mighty Mississippi Answer Key.....	19
Reading/ELA	
Cause & Effect/Character Motivation.....	20
Post Show Response.....	22

A NOTE TO FELLOW EDUCATORS

Greetings!

We are excited for you and your students to attend *Huck Finn*, based on the novel by Mark Twain and adapted for the stage by Eric Schmiedl at the Birmingham Children's Theatre. We invite you to use this packet in your classroom to prepare for and reflect on your upcoming visit.

This packet is designed to assist you in introducing the play's plot, characters, settings, language, and themes to your students. We encourage you to use these activities prior to the show to guide your students to a better understanding and enjoyment of what they will see at the theatre, and also after you visit to reinforce the show's themes and tie them into the STEM curriculum.

Thank you for helping to extend the learning process beyond theatre walls and for instilling an appreciation of the arts in the lives of Birmingham children.

See you at the theatre!

Birmingham Children's Theatre

YOUR ROLE AS THE AUDIENCE

Dear Audience Members,

Birmingham Children's Theatre is excited to welcome you as a member of our audience! Theatre is a world of imagination and fun, where the impossible comes to life. The audience is an extremely important part of our storytelling, so before you attend a performance we want to share a few theatre etiquette guidelines with you.

Do:

- Feel free to laugh, gasp, and applaud!
- Participate when asked
- Arrive on time (30 min early is a good goal)
- Turn off and put away ALL electronics
- Sit in your assigned seating (an usher will help you)

Don't:

- Talk, wave, or shout during the performance
- Eat or drink

Thank you for playing your part! We are excited to share our production with you!

Birmingham Children's Theatre

PLOT SUMMARY

Two runaways – a boy and a slave – team up for adventure on the mighty Mississippi! Huckleberry Finn finds freedom on the run, out-thinking colorful con-men, narrowly escaping a family feud, and even passing as a girl as he and Jim make their way down the “big river.” On the journey, they learn lessons of integrity, dignity, and friendship. At turns dramatic then hilarious, two performers and one storytelling troubadour play a dozen characters in this timeless tale, uniquely adapted from Mark Twain’s classic American novel.



THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

1. Huck Finn is a stage play.

What is a stage play?

- How is a play similar to a TV show or movie?
- How is it different?

2. Who Performs the parts (roles) in a play?

- What kinds of skills do you think performers need to have to perform in plays?
- Who else works on plays?
(Remember: you may not see them on stage!)

DURING THE PERFORMANCE:

1. When you watch a play, you are a member of the audience.

What kinds of things should you do as an audience member?

Examples:

- Pay attention
- Laugh when something funny happens
- Clap if you enjoy something

2. What kinds of things should you not do as an audience member?

Examples:

- Talk to your neighbor
- Use a cellphone during the performance
- Yell at the actors (unless they ask you to!)



THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONT.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

1. What did you think of the play?
 - If you'd read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* beforehand, how was the book similar to the play?
 - How was it different?
2. Describe the performers in the play.
 - What did they do to make their characters special (different from other characters)?
 - How did they use their bodies to play their characters (using voice, movement, etc.)?
 - Did you see anyone else who worked on the play besides the performers on stage?
3. Describe the characters' costumes.
 - What did each character's costume tell you about that character?
 - Did any of the performers change costumes?
 - If so, why do you think they needed to change costumes?
4. Describe the set of the play.
 - Did it have a lot of locations?
 - Did it look like a place you've been before?
 - How did different lighting change how the set looked for different scenes?
5. Did the play have music in it?
 - If so, was it only in the background, or did it help tell the story?
 - What instruments did you hear in the music?
6. If you were going to direct *Huck Finn*, how would your production be different than the play you saw by BCT?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

BCT MUST READS

For each of our productions at BCT, we choose a few themes related to the show. Then, we create a list of BCT Must-Reads on those themes.

Themes are the main ideas behind a book or other literary work. Huck Finn has several themes of varying importance, including guilt, empathy, education, and racism.

- The Innocents Abroad 1869
- The Gilded Age 1873
- The Adventures of Tom Sawyer 1876
- The Prince and the Pauper 1881
- Life on the Mississippi 1883
- The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn 1885
- A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court 1889
- The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson 1894
- Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc Vol. 1 1896
- Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc Vol. 2 1896



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

BCT MUST READS CONT.

Read them as a class or let students choose two or more to read.
Then use these questions for discussion or book reports:

THEME:

How did the different themes show in each book? Explain.

SETTING:

Describe the settings of each book.

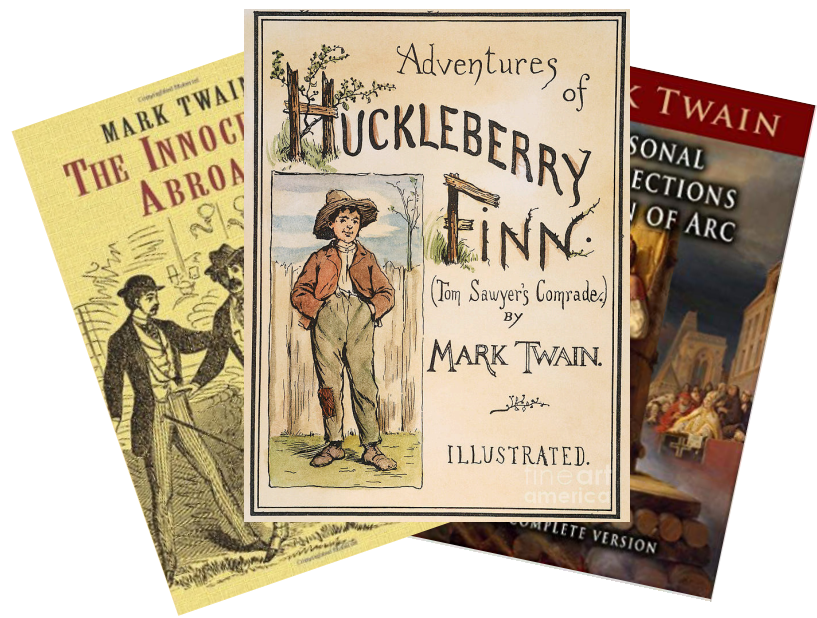
- What details can you remember?
- Were the settings similar to a place you know or a place you've visited?
- How were the settings similar to each other? How were they different?

CHARACTERS:

1. Who were the main characters of each book?
2. Did any characters show up in more than one book?
3. Were the characters of one book similar another book's characters in any other ways?
4. How were the characters related to the theme? Explain.

PLOT:

1. What did the main characters of the books want most?
2. Did anyone or anything stand between the main characters and their goals?
3. Did the main characters get what they wanted? How?
4. How were the plots of the books similar? How were they different?



HISTORY

The **WILD WEST**

*People and Events
That Shaped the
American West*



MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain was born in Missouri in 1835 on the banks of the Mississippi River. To help his family, he took jobs in printing and newspaper offices as a teenager. Then, at age 22, he set out on a journey along the Mississippi to New Orleans. He became a steamboat pilot until his brother got a job in Nevada and he decided to join him out west. He used his newspaper experience to get jobs writing for the local newspaper in Nevada, and a few years later, in San Francisco, where he wrote true stories about his travels around California and around the world. In 1872, he moved to Connecticut with his wife and began writing fiction that was inspired by his childhood in Missouri, most famously *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In both his fiction and non-fiction writing, Mark Twain influenced how others thought of the then-uncharted American West, and still influences what we think life was like in the early days of the West. Mark Twain was one of America's first native Westerners, one of the first journalists to write about life in the West, and is considered one of the greatest American authors.

Fun Fact!

Mark Twain was known for his humorous writing style. An award called the Mark Twain Award is given out to comedians every year.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS...

"The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter." - *Mark Twain*

Mark Twain is known as much for his humorous quotes as for his funny writing. What does the above quote mean to you? Do you agree? Why or why not?

HISTORY

STEAMBOAT BROCHURE

Create a brochure advertising a steamboat cruise on the Mississippi. Imagine this brochure being handed out in Cairo or New Orleans in 1850. What are some fun attractions? What might be on the menu? How many people would be on the Steamboat?

The brochure template consists of three vertical panels, each with rounded corners and a double-line border.

- Left Panel:** Features a horizontal line at the top, followed by a large rectangular drawing area. Below this are six horizontal lines for a list.
- Middle Panel:** Features a horizontal line at the top, followed by six horizontal lines for a list. Below the list is a large rectangular drawing area.
- Right Panel:** Features a horizontal line at the top, followed by two horizontal lines for a list. Below the list is a large rectangular drawing area. At the bottom, it says "Created By:" followed by a horizontal line.

READING/HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

Through the heart of North America runs a great river. You may have heard it called “The Mighty Mississippi”, “Big River”, or even “Old Man River”. No matter what you choose to call it, the Mississippi River is one of the greatest rivers in the world. It is over 2300 miles long, making it the second longest river in the United States.

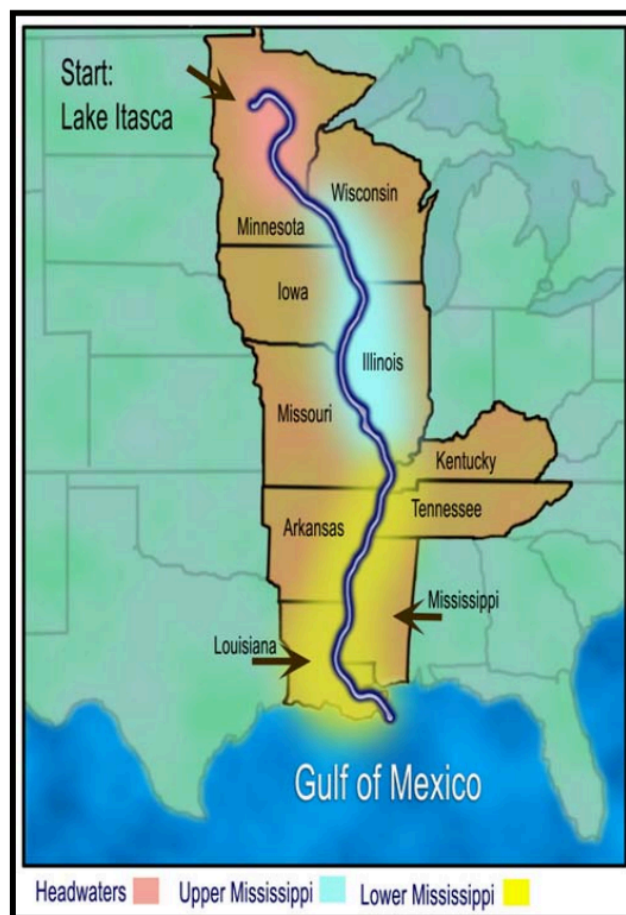
The Mississippi River begins as a tiny stream at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota and ends in the Gulf of Mexico on the coast of Louisiana. At least thirty-one states form the **river basin** and water from these states drains into the Mississippi. The Mississippi River Basin covers about 41% of the United States! The River is divided into three segments: the **Headwaters**, the **Upper Mississippi River**, and the **Lower Mississippi River**. Along its path it supports thousands of lakes, tributaries, large rivers, floodplains, wetlands and estuaries.

A Little Big River History

The Mississippi has a unique history. The North American Indians called it “Messipi” which means “Big River”. The first white man to reach the river was Hernando de Soto in 1541. He called the river “Rio de Espiritu Santo” or “River of the Holy Spirit”. In the 1600s, the French discovered the river and claimed the entire river for France. The French called the river “Louisiana” named after their king Louis XIV.

In the two hundred years that followed, the United States became a nation and claimed the area for itself. The Mississippi and its connecting rivers became major transportation routes. People, goods, livestock, and timber were transported to towns that were springing up all along the river. The land surrounding the river was very fertile and was used to grow crops and raise livestock.

In the 1800s, the river was alive with steamboats and barges. A unique culture sprang up from life on the river. Much of that culture is recorded in the writings of **Mark Twain**. Twain wrote stories about life on the Mississippi River. You may have read his story about a boy that traveled down the river called *Huckleberry Finn*.



READING/HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI CONT.

Commerce Today

Today, the Mississippi is still an important part of life in the United States. Over 12 million people rely on the river for their daily drinking water and the river is still used for transportation and commerce. The flow of water in the river is regulated by a series of 27 locks and dams on the upper Mississippi. Built in the 1930s, they were designed to maintain a channel for ships and barges to travel. The dams make the river deeper and wider but do not stop the flow of water.

Ocean going ships can move upstream as far as Baton Rouge, Louisiana and smaller ships and barges can go up stream as far as Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Coal, petroleum products (gas and oil), sand, gravel, salt, chemicals, grain and livestock are transported along the river. Shipping at the lower end of the Mississippi includes iron, steel, rubber, paper, wood, and coffee. The headwaters segment is not used for shipping. The lakes that are formed by dams are used for recreational boating and fishing.

River Ecosystems

The Mississippi River, along with its lakes, tributaries and wetlands provide a habitat for hundreds of species of animals, fish and birds. The River is the largest continuous system of wetlands in North America. It has wetland, open water, and floodplain habitats. A large percent of North America's duck, goose, swan, and wading bird populations use the river every year as they migrate south for the winter.

Danger on the River

Mississippi River, the river also has a dangerous side. Flooding is the number one natural disaster in the United States. Most flooding on the Mississippi is caused by too much rain falling in too short an amount of time. The water rises about the banks and flows into the land around it. Sometimes, dams and levies can break causing flooding. The quick rising muddy water destroys homes, businesses, crops, livestock and sometimes even human life.

Did You Know...

The Mississippi River is home to:

- 241 fish species
- 37 mussel species
- 45 amphibians
- 50 mammals
- 40% of the nation's migratory birds

In 2002 Martin Strel swam the entire length of the river.

A raindrop falling in Lake Itasca would arrive at the Gulf of Mexico in about 90 days

At the headwaters of the Mississippi, the average speed of the water is near 1.2 miles per hour. At New Orleans, the speed of the river is about 3 miles per hour.

At its headwaters, the Mississippi is less than 3 feet deep. In New Orleans, it is over 200 feet deep.

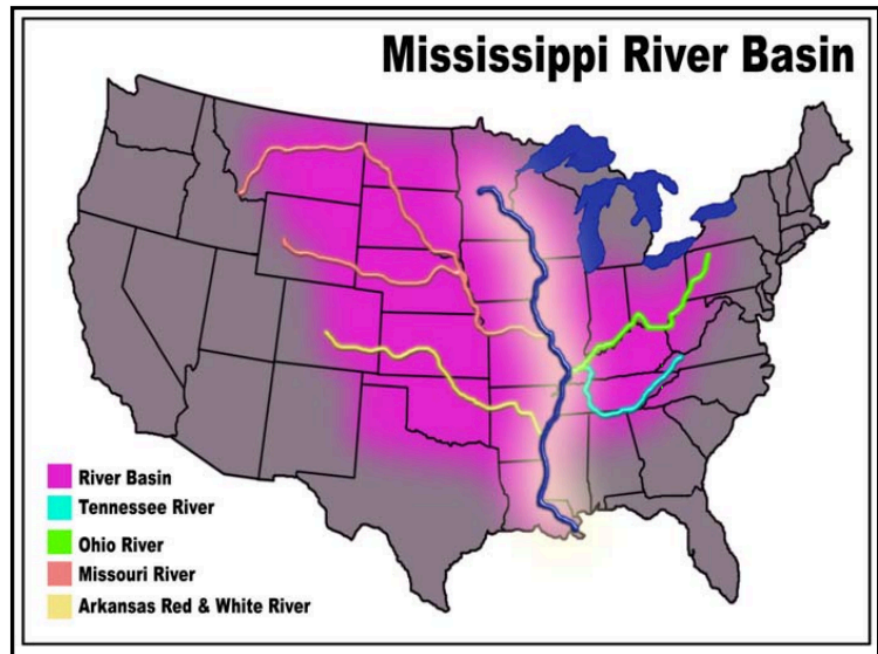
READING/HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI CONT.

The River in Danger

Hundreds of years of human use have changed the Mississippi River. The locks and dams have changed the natural course of the river and have affected the natural ecosystem. Much of the floodplains and wetlands areas have been destroyed by farming and housing developments.

Water, full of pesticides, chemicals and waste, runs into the river from cities and farms. These changes have added to flooding problems and cause **hypoxia**. Hypoxia occurs when there is not enough oxygen available in the water for marine life to live. This is a problem in the Gulf of Mexico where the water from the Mississippi ends up.



The Mississippi River is a very important part of North America. It is responsible for a more prosperous economy and for a large percentage of the ecology of the United States. The Mighty Mississippi deserves our respect and our attention as we search for ways to preserve the river and river basin for the future.

READING/HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI - WORKSHEET

The Mississippi River begins at _____ in Minnesota.

_____ was the first white man to discover the Mississippi.

The Indian name for the river is Messipi which means “_____”.

The flow of water on the Mississippi is regulated by _____ locks and dams.

_____ wrote stories about life on the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River is the longest river in the world.

T F

Flooding is a big problem for people who live near the Mississippi.

T F

10% of the birds in the U.S. use the Mississippi River when they migrate.

T F

Coal and livestock are two products that are transported on the river.

T F

The Mississippi River has the largest continuous area of wetlands in the U.S.

T F

READING/HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI - WORKSHEET CONT.

List some of the products that are transported on the Mississippi River

Explain one problem that the Mississippi River faces today.

From your answer above, explain how you think we can stop the problem?

READING/HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI - ANSWER KEY

The Mississippi River begins at Lake Itasca in Minnesota.

Hernando de Soto was the first white man to discover the Mississippi.

The Indian name for the river is Messipi which means “ Big River ”.

The flow of water on the Mississippi is regulated by 27 locks and dams.

Mark Twain wrote stories about life on the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River is the longest river in the world.

False

Flooding is a big problem for people who live near the Mississippi.

True

10% of the birds in the U.S. use the Mississippi River when they migrate.

False

Coal and livestock are two products that are transported on the river.

True

The Mississippi River has the largest continuous area of wetlands in the U.S.

True

List some of the products that are transported on the Mississippi River

Answers will vary. Coal, grain, livestock, iron, steel, coffee, rubber

Explain one problem that the Mississippi River faces today.

Answers will vary. Floodplains being destroyed, Hypoxia, Pollution

From your answer above, explain how you think we can stop the problem?

Answers will vary.

READING/ELA

CAUSE & EFFECT / CHARACTER MOTIVATION

Reading Activities

1. **Cause and Effect:** The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a great novel for doing reading activities about cause and effect. For students to do one of the easiest activities with this reading skill, they need index cards, a pencil, a partner, and their Huckleberry Finn novels.
2. Students pair up and decide who will write the first cause.
3. The first student writes any cause from Mark Twain's book on an index card. She includes the chapter and the page number for easy reference. For example, she would write: "Cause: Huckleberry Finn wants people to think he is dead (page #)."
4. She gives the card to her partner, and the partner reads the cause. Then her partner writes the effect on another index card. For example, the second student would write: "Effect: Huckleberry Finn shot a pig and made it look like he had been killed."
5. The first student reads this effect. Then the first student writes another cause on her index card from anywhere in the story.
6. Once the students have written three causes and effects, they switch roles and write three more.
7. Students can save these index cards, mix them up, and trade with another pair of students who have finished their six pairs of cause and effects. Then each pair of students can match the cause and effects together (from the other group).

Character Motivation: Reading activities about character motivation and feelings can also be assigned while reading The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. When doing these reading activities, it is easiest for students to focus on Huckleberry Finn and Jim since they appear in the novel more often. To challenge students, you could focus on some minor characters' motivations such as the King, the Duke, Pap, and Tom Sawyer. Here is an example of a reading lesson for Huckleberry Finn's motivation.

1. Pick an event in the novel where it is fairly easy to see why Huckleberry Finn acts the way he does. A great event to start with would be when Huck Finn fakes his own death. Present this event to students—maybe even read it again from the novel.
2. Explain to students what the word "motivation" means, and use a simple example from their own lives. For example, you could say: "What is your motivation for going to basketball practice every day?" or "What is your motivation for getting an after school job?" and so on.
3. Now continue with the reading activities and discuss with students Huck Finn's motivation for faking his own death in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. What motivated him to take such drastic actions for his freedom? Why did he feel like he had to convince people he was dead?
4. Once students seem to understand character motivation, you can read them more events from the story, and they can write about the motivations in their reading journals

READING/ELA

CAUSE & EFFECT / CHARACTER MOTIVATION CONT.

Language Arts Activities

Voice and Letter Writing: As Mark Twain tells us in the “Explanatory” at the beginning of Huckleberry Finn’s book, he has written this book with several dialects. In most novels, characters have their own voice. In this novel, they have their own voice and their own dialect. So, a great language arts activity to do with students is to assign them to pick a character from the novel and write a letter in his or her voice. If you have studied the 6 traits of writing, then students will be familiar with the term, “voice.” If not, then you will need to explain how voice is the personality of the character, what the character sounds like to the reader—not just how the character talks.

1. Students should pick a character whom they want to pretend to be when writing their letters.
2. Students write a letter, using very little dialect, but trying to match the character’s voice. You can give them examples such as: Miss Watson would say, “Dear Huckleberry Finn: It is extremely important for you to attend your lessons each day.” Huckleberry Finn would say: “Dear Miss Watson: I ain’t comin’ to no stupid lessons.”
3. To continue the language arts activities, once students have written a letter that meets your expectations using very little dialect, ask them to try it using the same dialect as Mark Twain does in his novel. As Mark Twain points out in the beginning of Huckleberry Finn’s novel, he wrote these dialects painstakingly. Explain to students that they need to take their time, and use the book to help them. These language arts activities should be for fun and to show how difficult it is to write in dialect.

Writing a sequel: Since *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, students will be familiar with the way sequels work (not to mention all the sequels with today’s movies and books). Mark Twain leaves an open ending at the end of Huckleberry Finn’s novel. For language arts activities with sequels, you can ask students to write the first chapter of another Huck Finn book or assign them to summarize the plot of another Huck Finn story. They can add new characters or use the ones in the book.

POST SHOW RESPONSE

We Educate, Enrich and Entertain the lives of children through the magic of professional theatre. Please use this guide as a reflection to the performance you have seen and send back to BCT so we can make your next experience magical!

Dear (who was your favorite character?) _____,

I am (how old are you?)_____ and I am in the _____ grade at (what school do you attend?)_____. I saw your performance of _____ on _____(date) _____(month) _____(year)!

I thought the play was (how did the play make you feel and why?) _____

_____. My favorite part of the play was (what was something that was real to you?) _____.

I really liked the character because (what made you like them?) _____

_____. The set looked like (what did you see?) _____

_____. The music sounded like (what did you hear?) _____

_____. Something else I loved about the play was _____

_____. I would really love to see (what is a play that you think is fun?) _____

performed next at Birmingham Children's Theatre.

Love,

_____(what is your name?)



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S
T H E A T R E

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

QUESTIONS? CONTACT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, JESSIE KISOR

jessie@bct123.org

