

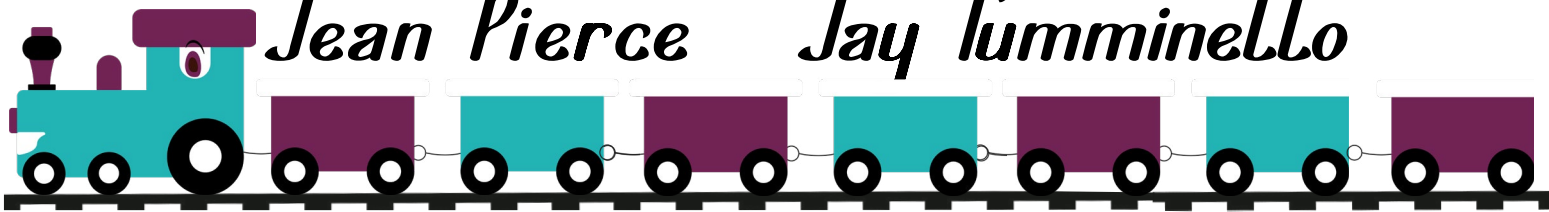
# *The Little Engine That Could*

Adapted by

*Jean Pierce*

Music by

*Jay Tumminello*



## **STUDY GUIDE**



BIRMINGHAM  
CHILDREN'S  
THEATRE

**PROVIDED BY BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S THEATRE**

# *Performance Dates & How to Use This Guide*

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## **“The Little Engine That Could”**

**Adapted by Jean Pierce**

**Music by Jay Tumminello**

**Directed by Bethe Ensey**

Jimbo the circus monkey and friends need a train to take them to Capital City, but Little Blue isn't sure they are up to the task - can the audience help encourage Little Blue to overcome their fears?

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Wee Folks Theatre  
January 26 - February 11

Visit [www.bct123.org](http://www.bct123.org) for more information or to book a field trip today!

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## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This classroom guide for “The Little Engine That Could” is designed for Alabama students ranging from ages 3 and up!

Use this guide to prepare for your trip to the theatre with pre-show activities and a theatre etiquette guide.

After the show, further the experience with activities that can be integrated into your current classroom curriculum.

All activities in this guide are linked to the Alabama State Department of Education content standards: <https://www.alsde.edu/>

*(All worksheets can be found in the “Study Guide Printables” packet provided).*

Lastly, we would love to hear from you! Please have your students fill out the “Post Show Response” form in the printables packet.

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# *Your Role as the Audience*

Dear Audience Members,

Birmingham Children's Theatre is thrilled to welcome you back to our theatre this year! We are kicking off 2022 with the beloved children's story "The Little Engine That Could," adapted by Jean Pierce.

A few rules we want to make sure everyone is aware of:

- We require all audience members 2 years or older to wear a face mask while in the theatre and during the performance.
  - \*All BCT staff and performers are vaccinated and at this time we plan for them to wear face coverings as well. BCT continues to watch the ongoing developments surrounding COVID-19 in our community and will notify all participants if there is a change to that policy before the show opens.
- Cell phones off! And put away - those glowing screens are very distracting.
- Have fun!

When you arrive at the theatre, our staff will meet your vehicle, guide your class to the theatre, and help you get seated. We have limited audience capacity for our shows this spring, so everyone has the ability to space out and feel a bit more safe and comfortable.

In theatre, the audience is an extremely important part of our storytelling, and we need your help to make this the best show possible for you and your fellow audience members.

While the show is happening, DO

- Give your full attention to the actors and the story
- Feel free to laugh, gasp, and applaud!

And to make sure everyone can enjoy the show, we ask that you DON'T

- Talk to your friends and neighbors
- Wave, shout, or disrupt the performance

"The Little Engine That Could" is a story of a little engine who overcame their fears to accomplish something no one believed they could do in BCT's delightful adaptation of this children's classic book. We hope you enjoy the show!

Thank You,

Birmingham Children's Theatre

# About the Artists



## **JEAN PIERCE: PLAYWRIGHT**

Birmingham native, Jean Pierce, affectionately known as “Ms. Jean,” was the resident playwright at Birmingham Children’s Theatre and has been with the theatre for over 40 years. She became associated with the theatre first as a board member, then an actress, director and writer. She has written plays mostly for the Wee Folks series, but also for Birmingham Theatre’s Main stage. She has adapted many of the fairytales and folktales most of us are familiar with and loves writing for children. Ms. Jean got the acting “bug” while at Birmingham Southern, where she received her B.A. in theatre. She did some graduate work in theatre at the University of Utah, but soon came back to Birmingham and worked with local theatres as an actress. She has said, “The only thing I had any gift for or always wanted to do was to entertain. When I write I have a feel for the dialogue and once the characters are there I kind of know what they are going to say.” She received the Governor Arts Award at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery, AL for her work. On a personal note, Ms. Jean is married and has two sons, Stephen and Adam. She has enjoyed living in the Mountain Brook area in the same house for over 50 years.



## **JAY TUMMINELLO: MUSICIAN**

Jay Tumminello began playing the piano at age 5. At age 14, he started playing Holmes Street United Methodist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Tumminello studied at the University of Alabama, majoring in piano performance, with a composite minor in organ and composition. After college, he took the organist position at Epworth United Methodist Church in Huntsville, where he remained for 10 years. In 2005 he relocated to New York City. While living in New York, he served the American Archdiocese of the Greek Orthodox Church, the American mother church of that denomination. Tumminello returned to Birmingham in 2013 and has been a huge part of Birmingham Childrens Theatres shows and programs, often teaming up with Jean Pierce, BCT’s resident playwright for over 40 years, as well as been a vital part of the Birmingham theatre community.

# *Pre-Show Activities*

## **DEFINING THEATRE EXERCISE**

### **Questions:**

1. "Have you ever seen a play?"  
(If they haven't, make sure to define it for them).
2. "What kinds of things happen in a play?"
3. "What kind of plays would you like to see?" or  
"What would you like to see if you are watching a play?"
4. "Where do plays typically Happen?"
5. "How should the audience behave and act during a play?"  
(Make a list of things a good audience member does and a list of things a bad audience member does).

### **Here are a few things you can discuss with your class to help them understand what to expect at a live theatre production:**

- Theatre features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times. The success of the play depends on the appropriate interaction between cast and audience.
- The theatre is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear costumes and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

# Activities for the Classroom

## 1. TRACKING TRAINS

- Find out what children already know about trains.
- How many have ever ridden on a train or a subway?  
Where did they go?
- Ask: What do trains carry besides people?  
Have you ever seen a freight train?  
How many cars do you think it had?
- If possible, show children photographs of different kinds of trains.
- Ask if children have toy train sets that they might bring to school.

## 2. ACT IT OUT

- Once children are familiar with the story, they can pretend to be engines while you read the story out loud.
- Have groups of three or four children play the role of each engine — the little train, the Shiny New Engine, the Passenger Engine, the Freight Engine, the Rusty Old Engine, and the Little Blue Engine. Have the groups stand in a line. Instruct children to put their right hand on the elbow of the child in front. By moving their right arms in a circular motion, children can replicate the movement of train wheels in motion. Each time a new engine appears in the story, have the children role playing that engine move their arms. If children are ready, they can speak for the engines as well. As a grand finale, have the whole class march around the room chanting, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can!”

## 3. NUMBER TRAIN TRACE

This worksheet can be found on page 2 of the *Study Guide Printables Packet*.

## 4. “THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD” WORDSEARCH

This worksheet can be found on page 3 of the *Study Guide Printables Packet*.



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**THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

QUESTIONS? CONTACT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,  
JESSIE KISOR AT [jessie@bct123.org](mailto:jessie@bct123.org)

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