

A STUDY GUIDE FOR
PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS TO SEE
OGLEBAY INSTITUTES PRODUCTION OF

ROCKS IN MY POCKETS

Adapted for the stage by
Tom Stobart and Tim Thompson
Music by David Board and Rick Call

Based on the book by Marc Harshman and Bonnie Collins,
illustrated by Toni Goffe, text and illustrations copyrighted 1991 by
Cobblehill/Dutton, NY: by Quarrier Press,
Charleston, WV, 2002.

MISSION:

CHILDREN'S THEATRE is a formal theatrical experience in which a simple, continuous story is SHOWN to children ages 5-14 by adult actors. Our goal is to provide the children with the best possible theatre experience and we promise the play will both entertain and teach them a lesson.

PLOT SUMMARY:

The Woods family lived on top of a windswept mountain. Their farm was on old rocky soil, and they made their living the best they could. They raised knee-high corn, walnut-sized potatoes, but you'd hear no complaints from them.

But one thing they had was pockets, and in their pockets they carried rocks. The rocks were very important to them. But early one summer day, the rocks proved to be more important than ever and changed life forever for the Woods family.

An amusing tale of resourcefulness and honesty.

CHARACTERS:

HANK WOODS
EDNA WOODS
GRANDPA WOODS
TOMMY WOODS
JENNY WOODS
WOLFIE (their pet)\
MISS HOITY
MRS. TOITY
BIG AL GRIFTER
BLACKIE

RUNNING TIME:

35 minutes (depending upon audience reaction)
10-15 minute Q & A after the show

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

1. Read the book ***ROCKS IN MY POCKETS*** by Marc Harshman and Bonnie Collins in your classroom. I would like all of the students to know that the book is available for them to read and that I read the book before writing the play.
2. Select **TEN STUDENTS** and **ONE TEACHER** to take part in our play. They will be portraying people who “come from miles around” to see the rocks. Each of them will have two lines: one that will give total admiration to the “good” rocks and the second complete disgust about the “ordinary” rocks. Be sure to select students who want to be on stage and do not suffer from stage fright. We will have “cue cards” with lines for each of them or you are free to make up your own remarks. We will rehearse the scenes **10 MINUTES** before the rest of the students arrive.
3. Practice making **WIND SOUNDS**. During the play the students will be asked to create wind sounds whenever they hear the word “**WIND**” until an actor cuts them off.
4. The audience will be responsible for **THREE ANIMAL SOUNDS**. The crickets should go “**CHIRP, CHIRP, CHIRP**” and the owls, “**HOOT, HOOT, HOOT**” and the wolves can just “**HOWL**”. The actor playing “Hank Woods” will cue the audience.
5. We will **TEACH** the students the final refrain to our **CLOSING SONG**. Please encourage them to sing along.

WE WILL REVIEW ALL OF THE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY.

POST PRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

1. Name ways the play was different than the book.
2. Who was your favorite character? Why?
3. What lesson's did you learn?
4. What was the funniest part of the play?
5. Do you know any other stories written by Marc Harshman?
6. How would you make a "doohickey" for picking up rocks?
7. How many different ways did the Woods family use the rocks?
What made them so special?
8. Could you make up a story about resourcefulness? How about honesty?

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Draw a picture of your favorite character. Or a house "on the top of the top of the highest mountain".
2. Make some fancy rocks. Think of different ways you could make them. One thing you could do is to find real rocks and paint them. How would you make them shine?
3. Pick a story and turn it in to a play. Discuss what it means to adapt a story to play form. Tell them that we read the book before writing the play and tried to stay true to the original story. Simply figure out who the characters are in the story and where it takes place. Look around the room and find things that can be used for set pieces and props. Take turns playing the parts and being in the audience. Remember, it is not theatre if there isn't an audience.
4. Discover different outdoor sound effects you can create. Close your eyes pretend you are in the woods or on the top of a mountain or in the big city! What sounds would you hear? Try to re-create the sound.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Marc Harshman is the author of many picture books for children including *THE STORM*, a Smithsonian Notable Book for Children and Parent's Choice Award winner. His third book, *ROCKS IN MY POCKETS*, has always been extremely popular throughout Appalachia and he is very happy to see it come to life as a Towngate Theatre production. He is also a poet and a storyteller, having served as a judge for the West Virginia State Liar's Contest for over twenty-five years. He holds degrees from Bethany College, Yale Divinity School, and the University of Pittsburgh. He has lived for over thirty years in northern West Virginia with his wife, Cheryl, and daughter, Sarah Jayne.

Bonnie Collins is West Virginia's premier traditional storyteller who has for many years performed regularly at the state's most popular festivals. Two of her tales were collected in *Laughter in Appalachia*. She lives in rural Doddridge County in a small log house on the banks of McElroy Creek just a few miles from where she was born.

Wheeling resident **Tom Stobart** is the author of six acclaimed full-length plays, all of which have premiered at the Oglebay Institute Towngate Theatre. Some have gone on to productions in Pittsburgh, New York and Los Angeles. He is the proprietor of The Paradox Book Store, West Virginia's longest established used bookstore.

ABOUT THE CAST:

Tim Thompson (Director/Grandpa) of Wheeling, is the Director of Youth Theatre at Oglebay Institute. He has been acting, directing and teaching theatre since receiving his M.F.A. in Acting from West Virginia University in 1985. Tim has directed *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Secret Garden*, *Godspell*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Reluctant Dragon*, *Snow White*, *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, *House at Pooh Corner*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*. *Rocks in my Pockets* marks his 8th touring show.

Rick Call (Hank Woods) is a retired insurance agent from Steubenville, Ohio, where he began acting with the Steubenville Players in 1975. Now a veteran of well over 100 productions, Rick's favorite roles have been in *Our Town*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Tommy* and *Educating Rita*. He began acting at Oglebay Institute's Towngate Theatre twenty years ago and regularly appears in shows each season. This is his 8th touring show. In last years production, *Once Upon A Wolf*, Rick played the eponymous role of the wolf.

Nancy Longo (Edna Woods) is very pleased to be from the beautiful Ohio River Valley. She was born in Steubenville, Ohio, raised in Weirton, WV, and currently lives in Toronto, Ohio. Nancy is a member of the Ohio Community Theatre Association and has been doing community theatre for a very long time. This is her fourth season with the Towngate Children's tour. Nancy portrayed the role of Granny Stinkyfeet in last year's production of *Once upon a Wolf*. In her spare time, Nancy enjoys listening to music, singing, and hanging out with her family and friends.

Gretchen Schneider (Jenny/Miss Hoity/Blackie) is a recent graduate of West Liberty State College with a B.A. in Communications with a concentration in Theatre. Gretchen was part of the *Imaginary Factory*, a traveling Children's Theatre troupe at WLSC, for her entire college career. She performed in *Aesop's fables*, *The Brother's Grimm* and *Mother Goose*, just to mention a few. During her final semester she was given the privilege of directing *Alice in Wonderland*. She portrayed the role of Little Red Riding hood in last years show, *Once Upon A Wolf*. Over the past two months, she has been directing *Seussical the Musical* at John Marshall High School.

Joe Heatherington (Tommy/Mrs. Toity/Big Al) is a longtime, experienced veteran of the Towngate Theatre and Music Hall Players. Joe is excited to be part of this wonderful cast and to be under the direction of Tim Thompson. He was last seen in the role of Mort in *California Suite* at the Towngate and is currently in *Godspell* at the Lincoln Theatre in New Martinsville. His favorite roles include Barney in *The Matchmaker*, Charlie Brown in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Doody in *Grease*, Rooster in *Annie* and Moonface Martin in *Anything Goes*.