

The Musical

Based on the book series by Harry G. Allard Jr.

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Dear Teacher,

We have created the following study guide to help make your students theatre experience with the musical, *MISS NELSON IS MISSING* as meaningful as possible. For many, it will be their first time viewing a theatrical production. We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more significant and long lasting. Our study guide provides discussion topics, as well as related activities. These are just suggestions; please feel free to create your own activities and areas for discussion.

We hope you enjoy the show!

Author: Harry G. Allard Jr. (Illustrator: James Marshall)



Born in Evanston, Illinois, Harry G. Allard Junior graduated from Northwestern College in 1943. He then went on to serve in Korea. After returning home, he moved to Paris and became fluent in French, later earning a Ph.D. in the language from Yale. After that, he taught the language at the college level for many years.

In Boston, he met James Marshall. Marshall's art inspired him and the two became friends. Their first book, *The Stupids Step Out* proved successful and they continued to work together, creating the Miss Nelson character. Mr. Allard resides in Massachusetts.

Book Writer/Lyricist/Composer: Joan Cushing

Ms. Cushing is a humorist, playwright, composer, lyricist and political satirist. She performs in Mrs. Foggybottom & Friends, which is a newsical review featuring her wit and humor. She's a former elementary school teacher and cabaret performer. She's written several other children's musicals including MISS NELSON HAS A FIELD DAY and HEIDI.

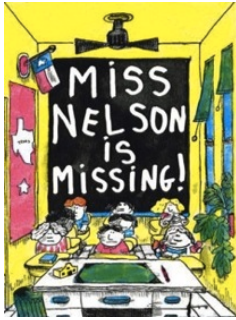
For more information check out her website at www.joancushing.com.

Activity: Alma who? / Write your own school song

An ALMA MATER is a person's school song and school pride is important. In fact, the first song in the beginning of *MISS NELSON IS MISSING*, the musical, is their school song (The words are listed below). Read them and try to write your own school song. See if you can include two or more rhymes and specific details about your school. For example if your school colors are blue and white, perhaps you could try adding that to your song (hint – both of those colors are also easy words to rhyme, for example, blue and true / white and right.)

HAIL TO THEE, OH ALMA MATER.
WE ARE LOYAL, THROUGH AND
THROUGH. PROUD TO BE YOUR SONS
AND DAUGHTERS, TO YOUR COLORS
WE ARE TRUE.
GREEN IS FOR THE TREE OF
KNOWLEDGE. GOLD IS FOR THE
GOLDEN RULE.
HAIL TO THEE, OH
HORACE B.
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL.

Activity: The worst students in room 207!



Miss Nelson has some behavioral issues with the students in room 207. In fact Pop, the principal calls them “the worst students ever!” They even say “respect for others” is the catch phrase of the week, and “Character Counts!” While these words are used in the plot of the show, they’re important for students to think about.

- Have a dialogue with students about what respect means to them. Ask questions about how would they like to be treated.
- Role-play certain scenarios that demonstrate a situation where someone is behaving poorly and brainstorm the best solutions to the problem.
- Have students make a list of positive buzzwords that demonstrate good character and respect for others. Hang it in the classroom for students to refer to. When one of the words is used put a mark (or a sticker) by that word to keep track of what is used the most. Have the class write a mission of “Good Character” using their most commonly used buzzwords. (These can also be incorporated into the school song/above activity.)
- Losing something is difficult, but the students realize how much they loved Miss Nelson when she was missing. Have students write an essay about an influential person in their life and how they’ve made a difference to them. If the person is still in their life, give them the option to share the essay with the person they write about.

Activity: A little bit of Detective work



When the students can't find Miss Nelson, a detective is brought in who refers to Sherlock Holmes. Spend a day in class solving a mystery.

- Have students read some of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories about Sherlock Holmes. There are some for younger readers (Grade range, 3rd-7th):
 - o The Extraordinary Cases of Sherlock Holmes (Puffin Classics)
 - o The Great Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Puffin Classics)
 - o Classic Starts: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Classic Starts Series)

Assign roles to students and reenact the story in class with students using the clues to solve the case.

Before students see *MISS NELSON IS MISSING* have them try to predict what happened to Miss Nelson. Then, after they see the show, discuss what happened and see if anyone guessed correctly.

Activity: Teacher for a day



It's hard to understand how hard something is until you do it yourself. The students in classroom 207 behaved poorly for Miss Nelson and were afraid of Viola Swamp, but none of them understood how hard it is to be a teacher.

Have students think about their favorite subjects and what they would teach if they could.

- Have them make a lesson plan for the length of one class.
- In the lesson plan have them include
 - o An in-class project
 - o At least 3 facts or statistics
 - o Questions to ask the students about the topic
- Have them turn in the lesson plan. For students who are comfortable, have them try and "teach" their lesson plan for a portion of one class period.
- After they present have the students share what they thought of their "teaching" experience.

Activity: Everything is not what it seems



Viola Swamp scared the kids into better behavior. She even looks a little like a witch. But Viola Swamp isn't exactly what she seems. Many famous characters have donned alter egos to help solve problems, for example: Superman, who remained the mild-mannered Clark Kent when not fighting crime. Bat Man, whose alter ego was Bruce Wayne.

Have students think about whom they would disguise themselves as to make the world a better place.

- Would they have special powers?
 - o What would they be
 - o What would their disguise look like?
 - o What problems/causes would they want to focus on to solve?
- Have them draw a comic strip of them as their alter ego in action and share them with the class.

Theatre Etiquette:

We want your students to have the best experience when they see a performance live so below is a list of reminders of how to behave when they see the show.

- Keep in mind that the actors on stage can hear you if you talk, so always be courteous to the actors and other audience members around you by paying attention during the performance and not talking or texting.**
- Arrive early. Seeing a show is a special experience and you don't want to miss any of it. 😊**
- Remember not to bring any food, beverages or gum into the theatre or where you're seeing the show unless you're told it's okay.**
- No taking pictures or recording during the performance.**
- Be sure to laugh and applaud when appropriate and remember to have fun!**

See you at the show!

