

# By The Great Horn Spoon!

Drama/Acting Activities by Donna Inghima

The Laguna Playhouse production has adapted the book for the stage, following the journey Jack and Praiseworthy. We've cut much of the narrative and created scenes full of activities, events, and character interaction. We've added live music to the production to create historical reference and enhance storytelling. **Imagination** is the key word.

Three theatrical elements to approach with your students are: **Pantomime, Movement and Character**. Remember that **Acting is doing**. When you allow the students to "do", you have achieved a crucial goal when approaching drama activities.

## Unit Concept: Imagination & Creativity

**Pantomime: The art of creating something out of nothing. We transform the space around us to create places and objects.**

**Where:** We use our creativity to imagine the location around us, the gold fields, the mountains, weather.

**Objects:** We use our imagination to "see" or transform everyday objects. Objects take up space, have size, weight, mass, color, and texture.

### Activity # 1: "Digging for Gold" (20 minutes)

From their chairs, have the entire class imagine they are miners digging for gold. What are they wearing? Where are they, what is the weather like that day? What tools do they need to use? Picks? Shovels? Spoons? How heavy are the tools? What is the shape of the tools? What is the land like where they are digging, is it dusty, soft, and hard? After you have established the imagination exercise, in groups of four, have the students go up in front of the room and take positions as if they are on-stage.

- A) Direct them to explore digging in space.
- B) Then tell them to dig again and direct them to discover gold.

**Evaluation:** It's important that no judgment is placed on the student as to a right or wrong way of "doing". Allow the students to think about the concepts and themselves in the moment. Have the students evaluate their own work by answering.... were you, as the miner, **concentrated** on your task of digging? Did the shovel, pick, or spoon take up space in your hand? Did you see the dirt you were digging in? Did your tools or/and did the dirt have weight? Was it dusty? When you discovered gold did you see it with your eyes? How did it make you feel to discover gold? Did you pick it up to examine it more closely? **It is always possible to repeat an exercise after you have evaluated the work.**

### **Activity #2: "The Stagecoach"** (20 minutes)

**Place six chairs (3 rows of 2 chairs) in a diagonal (making a triangle in the front of the room).** Ask 4 students to go up on-stage and have them take their seats in the stagecoach. When you call out "**giddyap**" the ride begins. The group task is to let the coach move them. **Help them out by coaching:** Is the ride bumpy? Are the seats uncomfortable? Look at the scenery that passes by. Is the person next to you taking up too much room? Are you sleepy? Are your valuables safe? Help them create the "ride". The group may find a common movement that becomes **their** stagecoach. **Let each group ride for about 45 Seconds.** Vary the questions.

### **Activity #3: "Historic Character Panel"** (3 Parts - each 15–45 minutes)

#### **Character: Written**

**Have the students choose one of the smaller characters in the book** and write a brief history about them; include: age, education, where they were born, what they do for a living, how they happened to be doing that occupation. Identify family members and how they get along with the members of their family. Ask them to develop someone as unique and different as they themselves are using personality and physical traits or speech pattern.

#### **Smaller characters include:**

Justice of the Peace  
Cheap John's  
Quartz Jackson's Wife  
Sarah  
Mountain Ox  
Highwayman  
Jonas

Hotel Clerk  
Ship's cook  
Constance  
Buckbee  
Aunt Arabella  
Azariah Jones  
Stage Coach Driver

After the characters are written, ask the students to come up with one question each that they would like to ask any one of the other characters.

**INTERVIEW SHOW w/ teacher as Moderator.**

Put 5 chairs up in front of the room and invite 4 students at a time to come up and be the members of the **“Historic Character Panel”**. Structure the activity like this. Each “character” states who they are and what their occupation is. Then invite the members of the audience to ask questions. As host/moderator give each character an opportunity to answer questions. Let the focus of the discussion be centered around one day – like “What was it like for you the day it rained on board ship or at the diggings” something universal enough to lend itself to colorful description of activities or obstacles that had to be overcome. It works well if each character has an opportunity to answer two questions. **You close the game by inviting the audience back next week to meet members of the first wagon train across the great divide – or something equally curricular.**