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Based on the books

by **Dr. Seuss**

“Let our stage be your
classroom.”

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This study guide is also available online at
<https://arvadacenter.org/education/study-guides>

Greetings and Welcome to *Seussical*

Theatre for Young Audiences adapted from the books by Dr. Seuss

This study guide provides ideas for turning a day at the theatre into an interactive educational experience. It includes information about the plot, good audience behavior, important words to know about theatre and reproducible pages for helping students better understand the story. Ideas presented in this study guide provide excellent strategies for extending and developing vocabulary and comprehension in all content areas. We hope you find the activities transferable across your curriculum. In addition, the guide provides information and classroom connections. This guide will help prepare students for the performance and then facilitate reflection afterwards.

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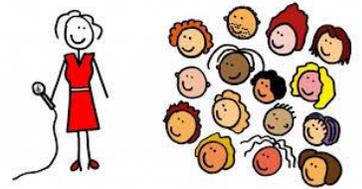
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Audience 101

As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Please help your students understand that the rules of attending a live theatre performance are different from watching television at home or a movie in a cinema. As it is a live performance, it cannot be stopped and restarted. Audience members should laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy the performance, but there are a few rules that need to be followed. Please review the following theatre etiquette with your students prior to your visit:

- Food, drinks, candy and gum chewing are not permitted in the theatre.
- Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum during the performance unless encouraged by the actors on stage.
- Keep feet on the floor, not on the seats.
- Performers appreciate enthusiastic applause, but not whistling or shouting.
- No photography or videotape recording of any kind.
- Please turn off all cell phones.

Being part of the audience is a very important job. Enjoy the show!



Theatre Words to Know

Backstage - the part of a theatre which is not seen by the audience, including the dressing rooms, wings and the green room

Blocking - the instructions that actors use to know exactly where they are supposed to be on stage at all times

Box Office - the place that sells tickets to a performance

Cast - the people who perform in a show

Choreographer - the person who creates dances and arranges movements for a musical

Control Booth - the place in a theatre from which all the sound and lights are controlled

Crew - all the people who work together on a show except the cast

Cue - signals that are given to both the actors, the crew, the musicians and any others working on a show

Director - the person who provides the vision of how a show should be presented, who works with the actors on their roles, develops the blocking, and is in charge of the rehearsals

Green Room - a place for the performers to relax while waiting to go on stage (it is not always painted green! ☺)

Marking Out or Spike Mark - when the stage is marked with tape to show where furniture and props should be placed during the performance

Props - all the items used in a play to tell the story not including the scenery or costumes, the short forms of "Properties"

Rehearsal - the period of practice before the beginning of a show in which the actors and director work on the development of the show

Sound Effects - the noises which are produced to accompany a scene in a show, usually produced by a machine but can be produced by actors off stage.

About the Children's Musical Production

Plot Summary of the Musical

Seussical incorporates elements from at least 15 of Dr. Seuss's books and interweaves the stories. Although all of the characters in *Seussical* are from his books, many of the characters have never met before, but they meet and share adventures in this lively musical. The overarching plot combines the stories of *Horton Hears a Who!* and *Horton Hatches the Egg*. The Cat in the Hat serves as the narrator and an outside observer. *Seussical* uses the themes of imagination, friendship and courage to create a tale about what it takes to face big challenges.

About the Author



- ❖ Author, Theodor Seuss Geisel, was a German-American author best known for writing and illustrating more than 60 children's books under his pen name Dr. Seuss. Many of his books have been made into movies. (Make sure to familiarize your students with the differences between a movie and a live production.)
- ❖ His first children's book, *And to Think I Saw it on Mulberry Street*, was published in 1937.
- ❖ Dr. Seuss was never a doctor, but Dr. Seuss continues to be one of the best known names in the world. He lived to be 87 years old and died in 1991.
- ❖ Dr. Seuss's books are all about playful, imaginative LANGUAGE – especially RHYMING, RYTHMICAL language! Many of his books have moral lessons, but the majority feature nonsensical silliness and fun, and repetitive word play.
- ❖ March 2, Dr. Seuss's birthday, has been adopted as the annual date for National Read Across America Day. On this day children and adults in schools and libraries across America dress up like the Cat in the Hat in honor of Dr. Seuss's legacy.



Before the Performance

"I just have to save them because after all, a person's a person no matter how small." Horton

- ❖ *Seussical* is a collage of storylines and characters from some of the well-known books by Dr. Seuss. *Seussical* is a celebration of the incredible legacy and ageless storybook characters created by Dr. Seuss.

To ensure the best experience for your students, read as many of the following books as possible before attending the performance (in order or priority):

- *Horton Hears a Who!* (first published in 1954)
- *Horton Hatches the Egg* (first published in 1940)
- *The Cat in the Hat* (first published in 1957)
- *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories* (first published in 1951)
- *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* (first published in 1965)
- *McElligot's Pool* (first published in 1947)
- ❖ As you familiarize your students' with the works of Dr. Seuss, look for and highlight these characters, who will appear in *Seussical*:
 - Cat in the Hat
 - Horton the Elephant
 - Jojo (the smallest Who of all)
 - The Whos
 - Mr. and Mrs. Mayor
 - Yertle the Turtle
 - Gertrude McFuzz – short story from *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*
 - Mayzie La Bird (girl bird with one feather in her tail)
 - Sour Kangaroo
 - Wickersham Brothers
 - Strange fish in all shapes and sizes (*McElligot's Pool*)



Online Resources

There are many, many pins on **Pinterest** for activities related to the Dr. Seuss books.

Below are some additional links you may find useful:

<http://themes.atozteacherstuff.com/488/dr-seuss-activities-lesson-plans-printables-ideas-units/>

<http://www.seussville.com/Educators/educatorClassroomResources.php?id=printables>

<https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2014/02/dr-seuss-activities-kids.html>

<https://www.weareteachers.com/7-dr-seuss-books-and-activities-for-read-across-america-day/>

<https://www.woojr.com/dr-seuss-activities-and-lesson-plans/>

<http://www.freehomeschooldeals.com/free-list-of-dr-seuss-activities-and-printables-cat-in-the-hat/>

There are excellent classroom lessons as well as pre & post classroom activities provided at the websites above. Check them out for additional opportunities that may help your students' theatre experience be even more meaningful.



Vocabulary and Phrases used in the Musical

As you prepare students for understanding the vocabulary, phrases and themes in this production, the following is suggested prior to attending the musical:

- 1) Read at least one Dr. Seuss book aloud to your class (*Horton Hears a Who!* and *The Cat in the Hat* are highly recommended) for better insight into the made-up words and worlds that are central to all Dr. Seuss books. The language is silly, whimsical, and much of it is made-up to create a rhyme or rhythm. Also, some of the vocabulary is outdated and not commonly used today.
- 2) Use realia, photos, videos, internet resources, and/or examples from Dr. Seuss's books to help students gain understanding of these words and phrases which will be used during the musical.

Adventure - exciting experience; something new to explore, learn about, and be curious about

"A person's a person no matter how small" - repeatedly said by Horton the Elephant throughout the musical; no matter how a person looks or what a person's size is, s/he has value and is to be respected and cared for

Biggest blame fool - a person who is easily tricked

Boil - to cook something on high heat until it bubbles

Breakin' the peace - disruption; causing trouble; making too much noise

Clover - green plant often found growing in or around grass; leaves are often in triplets; very soft

Confusing - unclear, puzzling, doesn't make sense

Creatin' a fuss - making a big deal over something small; causing trouble

Drifting - floating; wandering; i.e. drifting through space

Frills - add-ons and decorations that make something more fancy and pretty; bling

Hoax - trick, joke, or prank

Gust – breeze; sudden puff of air

Jungle – an environment dense with a variety of plants, trees, and animals where it is hot and humid

Lumbering – moving slowly and with much effort; i.e. lumbering elephant

Lunatic – someone with crazy ideas; someone who acts in an extremely foolish way

Nervous conniption – a person's upset reaction to something disturbing; i.e. the teacher had a nervous conniption

Outlandish tales & Turning minnows into whales – exaggerating; adding details and making up parts of a story that make it unbelievable and exaggerated

Palm Beach – a famous beach in Florida on the Atlantic Ocean; very warm and beautiful

Pathetic – sad; miserable

Pluck – to pull out feathers from a bird

Possible – could happen; likely to occur

Propels – pushes; forces; to send something flying; i.e. each gust propels our dust

Seuss – refers to the author of the books the musical is based upon, Dr. Seuss

Sinister – not good; some up to no good; evil

Solla Sollew – a place where they never have troubles or at least very few from *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* by Dr. Seuss (first published in 1965); theme of this story is overcoming problems and learning to face challenges instead of running away from them (reference to this place in the musical)

Sour – used to describe the kangaroo "Sour Kangaroo"; someone disagreeable; grumpy; bitter

Speck – very tiny spot, fleck or drop of something; i.e. speck of dust

Universe – cosmos; outer space

Unreliable – not responsible; someone or something you cannot count on to do a job

Unusual – unique; different; not usual or common

Upright behavior – following the rules; staying out of trouble; being kind and considerate

Yelp – small cry; squeal; squeak; i.e. faint yell

Comprehension Lessons

Frayer Model

Use any of the vocabulary words in a Frayer model as modeled below:

Definition (in own words) Decorations that make something fancy	Picture
Examples sequins feathers lace	frills Non-examples sticks plain white paper a rock

Have groups of students complete a Frayer model (template included in the Classroom Reproducibles section), for different vocabulary words and let students teach each other about their word.

Vocabulary Sentence Frame

Prior to seeing the play, or in conjunction with reading a Dr. Seuss book, insert a vocabulary word into the first blank in this sentence frame and have students work together to complete the frame and draw a picture as modeled below.



A jungle is a place that (is/has/does) hot weather and lots and lots of plants and animals.

(Template included in Classroom Reproducibles Section)

Somebody Wanted, But, So

Use the template below to help students understand the story and how the characters solved problems (conflict resolution).

Somebody: Horton

wanted to save the Whos

but lots of people thought he was crazy and just talking to a speck of dust.

so he waited and waited until the others could hear the Whos and started to believe they were real people. Then the Whos were saved.

(Template included in Classroom Reproducibles Section)

Discussion Questions to Get at the Heart of the Story

Dr. Seuss believed in helping a friend, in not giving up, and in keeping a promise. He believed in the value and dignity of others, in working to preserve the fragile sweetness of the natural world, and he believed that peace is the ultimate ideal among nations and in every heart. He also believed in the pure power of the imagination. You will find all of these serious concerns at the heart of Seussical.

To help your students more fully appreciate these themes, you may want to use these suggested questions before, during, and after reading a Dr. Seuss story aloud and seeing the musical. Encourage children to ask their own questions during classroom discussions or while sharing with a partner. Ask children for evidence from the story/musical to support their answers.

❖ Retelling – Literal

- Who are the main characters of the story?
- How are the main characters alike and different?
- What is the setting of the story?
- How do the fictional characters in the Dr. Seuss books differ from real animals and people? How are they the same?

❖ Predictive

- Stop at various places in the book. Ask: "What do you think will happen next?"
- Stop at various places in the book. Ask: "What do you think the character will do next? Would you have done things the same way? Why or why not?"
- How do you think the characters from the different books will interact with each other in the musical? Will they become friends? How will they work together to solve problems?

❖ Main Idea

- What does Dr. Seuss want you to learn from reading this story?
- What is this story mostly about? Give 3 details from the story that support your thinking.
- Character development is an essential element of a high-quality story. How does Dr. Seuss show that his characters grow and learn as the stories unfold?

❖ Inferential

- Who do you know that would like this book/musical?
- Which character in this book/musical is most like you/most different from you? In what ways?
- Dr. Seuss's characters are different in many ways. How are they able to use their similarities and differences to solve problems?

Pre-Performance and Post-Performance Classroom Instruction

- ❖ Have students complete a Venn Diagram or a Double Bubble Map* (included in the Reproducibles section) to compare and contrast the following:
 - Mayzie LaBird and Gertrude McFuzz.
 - Jojo and yourself
 - The Wickersham Brothers and Sour Kangaroo
 - Horton and one of you friends
 - This activity can be used to then prompt a discussion about how the two are different, in what ways they could be similar, and how contrasting the two helps us better understand our own behavior and/or if two things are more alike or more different.

- ❖ Compare and contrast
 - Funny Things to Say and Hurtful Things to Say
 - Kind Behavior and Unkind Behavior;
 - Tolerance (Being Understanding) and Getting Annoyed
 - Caring Behavior and Uncaring Behavior
 - This activity can be used to then prompt a discussion about perspective and point of view. For example: The Wickersham Brothers think they are being funny, while Horton feels hurt by their words. This conversation could continue with examples from students' own experiences.

- ❖ After reading the books and attending the musical, have students complete a Venn Diagram or a Double Bubble Map* (included in the Reproducibles section) to compare and contrast Dr. Seuss books and Suessical. After students have completed their comparison, have them decide if they are more similar or more different.

- ❖ Alphaboxes - for comprehension and vocabulary building - Using an enlarged version of the Alphaboxes template (included in the Classroom Reproducibles section) model adding words and pictures to the chart from the stories. For example, you might write "Horton" in the "H box" and draw a picture of Horton and tell why Horton was important to the story. After modeling an example with one letter, generate several more examples as a large group. When you feel your students are ready to try it on their own, have them work individually, in pairs, or triads to complete their own Alphaboxes.

- ❖ Have your students write a review of the performance and send it to the Arvada Center. Be sure they have read other reviews as mentor texts. You can find reviews online or in the newspaper. Check out reviews of Arvada Center productions at:
<http://arvadacenter.org/pages/in-the-news>

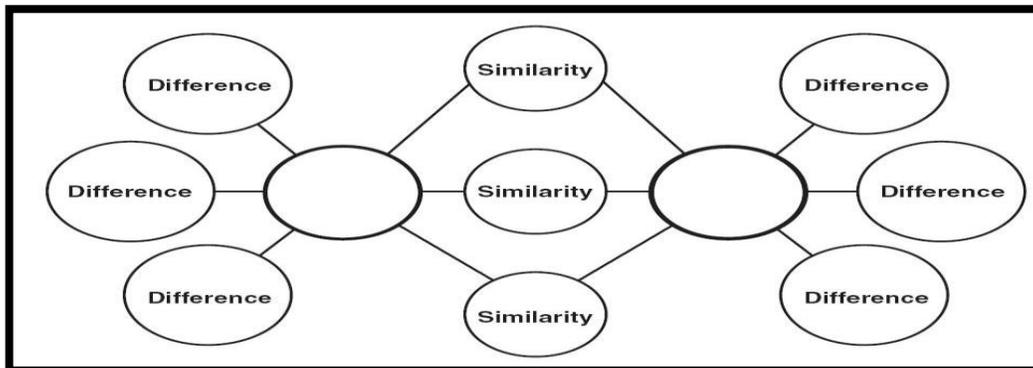
Pre-Performance and Post-Performance Classroom Instruction

- ❖ An overriding theme in Dr. Seuss' stories and in *Seussical* is friendship. As a class, brainstorm important attributes of a good friend. What makes a good friend? Make a list and use for the following activities:
 - Write a newspaper ad seeking a new friend
 - Make a wanted poster for a friend
 - Write a Friendship Cinquain* about a friend of yours
 - Write a commercial advertising for a good friend
 - Write a letter to your friend telling why he/she is a special friend
 - Draw a picture of a friend and write a sentence or two about why this friend is important to you
 - Write a story about one of your friends. What do you like about your friend? What do you do together? If you could do anything for your friend, what would you do? Share your story with your friend
- ❖ Some of the characters in *Seussical* make fun of Horton for protecting a speck of dust. How did it make him feel? Did anyone stick up for him? Have you ever had your feelings hurt because someone made fun of you? Write about or discuss how it makes you feel when someone makes fun of you. Have you ever stuck up for a friend who was being made fun of? How did that make you feel?
- ❖ Gertrude thinks more feathers will get her noticed. Does having certain things really make people more important? In the end Gertrude realizes it's what she does, not what she looks like that makes her important to Horton and makes her feel better about herself. Have a class or small group discussion about what REALLY makes us important and what makes us feel better about ourselves.
- ❖ Horton is rejected for being different. He is bullied because no one believes that he can hear the Whos. Why are people bullied for being different? Discuss the value of all people despite their differences (a person's a person no matter how small). You may want your class to create posters celebrating their differences.
- ❖ What did Horton do that made him a good friend? Make a list of adjectives you would use to describe a good friend.
- ❖ Horton promises to care for Mayzie's egg and keeps his promise. Discuss with your students the importance of keeping one's word. Is this difficult to do? Why are so many promises broken and so many responsibilities ignored? Why should people be accountable for their actions?
- ❖ Dr. Seuss books provide ample opportunity to engage in word play and rhyming activities.



*Definition of Instructional Terms

*Double Bubble Map (Thinking Maps®) - you can use the template provided in the Classroom Reproducibles section but it's actually better if students draw the map themselves so they can add as many bubbles as they need instead of just filling in the ones that are provided.



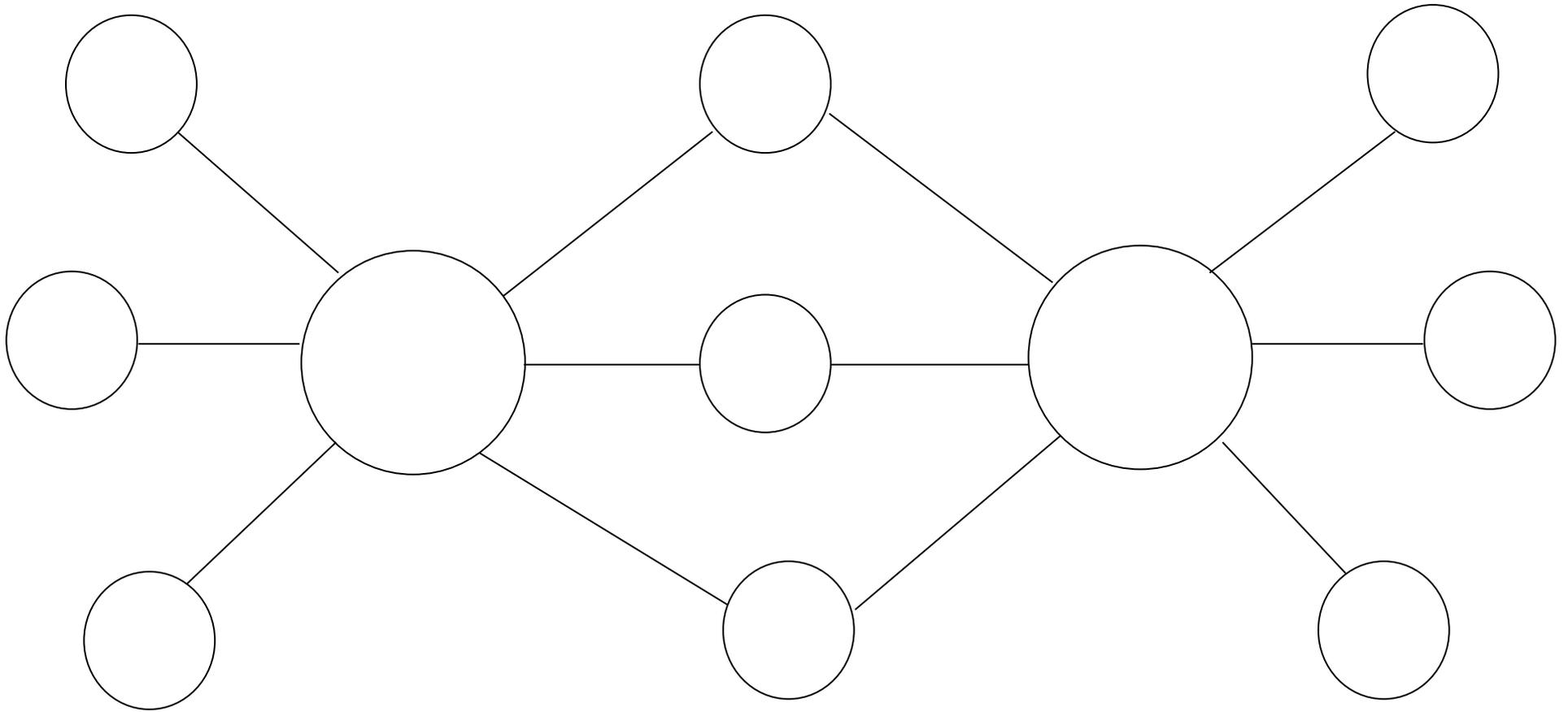
*Friendship Cinquain

- Line 1: Person's name
- Line 2: 2 adjectives describing that person
- Line 3: 3 action words describing that person
- Line 4: 4 words about friendship
- Line 5: Nickname or noun



Classroom Reproducibles

Double Bubble Map

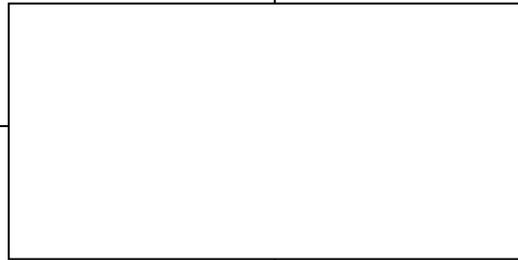


Definition (in own words)

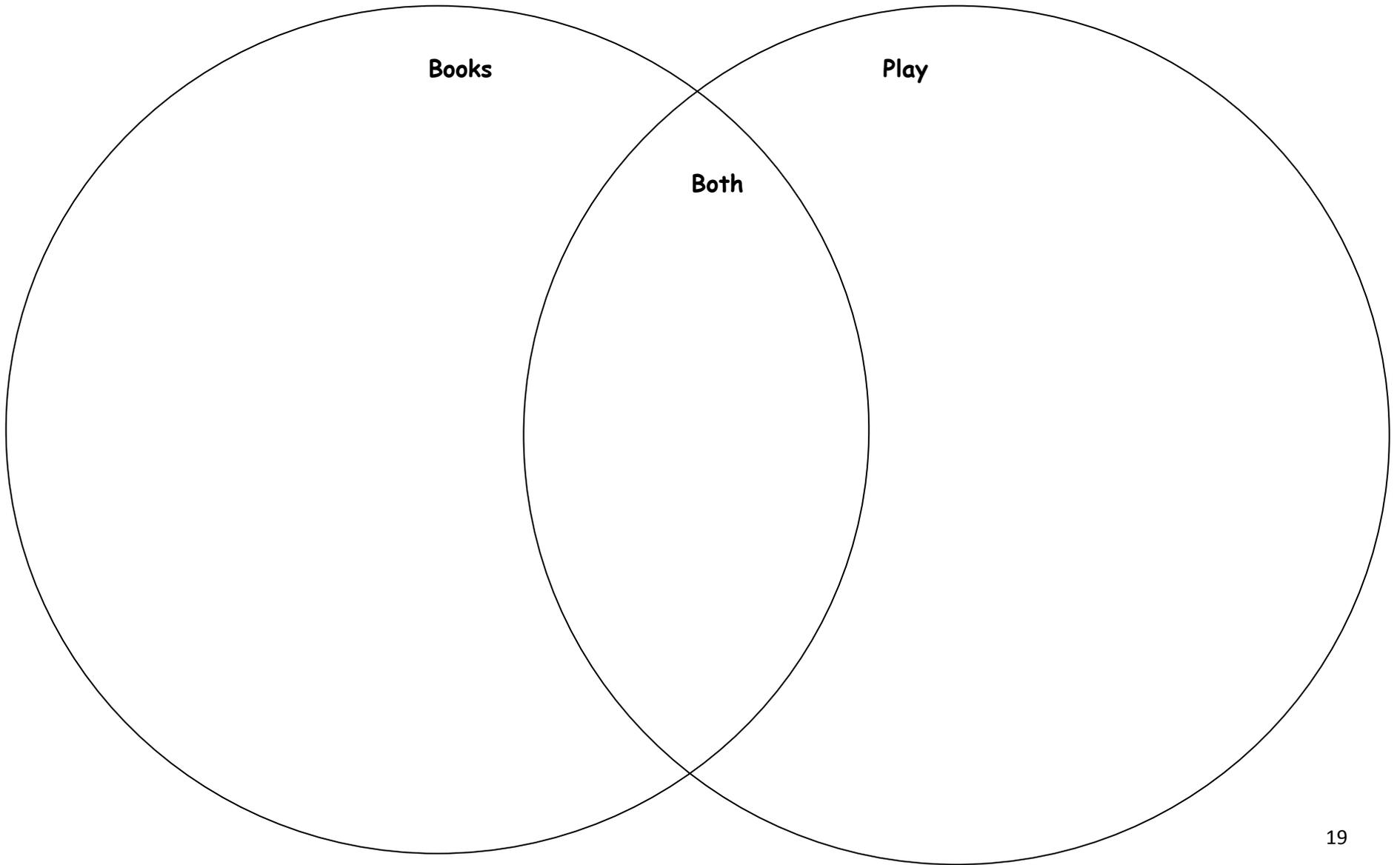
Picture

Examples

Non-examples



Compare and Contrast



A _____ is a _____ that (is/has/does)

_____.

Somebody: _____

wanted _____

but _____

so _____

Somebody: _____

wanted _____

but _____

so _____

Alphaboxes

Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee
Ff	Gg	Hh	Ii	Jj
Kk	Ll	Mm	Nn	Oo
Pp	Qq	Rr	Ss	Tt
Uu	Vv	Ww	Xx	Yy
Zz				