

# WINNIE-THE-POOH

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS ADAPTED BY  
*Lindsay Price*

FROM WINNIE-THE-POOH BY  
*A. A. Milne*



**CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE**

## **Introduction**

*Winnie-The-Pooh* is a theatrical adaptation of the first A.A. Milne book from his collection of stories.

## **Playwright Bio**

Lindsay Price is the Vice President of Theatrefolk Inc. and the co-creator of the Drama Teacher Academy. She has been involved with theatre education for over 25 years as a playwright, adjudicator, workshop instructor, resource writer, curriculum supervisor, professional development creator and keynote speaker. Her plays have been performed in schools all over the world with over 1000 productions a year.

## **Synopsis**

Join Pooh Bear, Piglet, and all their friends in the Hundred Acre Wood as they hunt Woozles, find lost tails, survive floods, and search for the North Pole. A wonderful collection of stories filled with the characters you know and love from A.A. Milne's book. And don't listen to Eeyore — it won't rain, and it will end well!

### **Story One**

Pooh Bear loves to eat honey and decides to try and get honey from a beehive with the help of Christopher Robin, some mud and a balloon. Trouble ensues but Pooh gets away from the bees without *much* trouble.

### **Story Two**

Pooh goes to visit Rabbit for a mid-morning visit and snack. Pooh enjoys eating honey but eats too much and gets stuck in Rabbit's home.

### **Story Three**

Pooh and Piglet go on a hunt to catch a Woozle — even though they have never seen one.

## **Story Four**

Eeyore is sad about losing their tail. Pooh decides to help Eeyore find it.

## **Story Five**

Pooh and Piglet decide to catch a Heffalump with a deep pit and honey. Piglet is extremely nervous about what will happen when they catch one.

## **Story Six**

It's Eeyore's birthday! Eeyore is unsure if anyone remembers, but Pooh and Piglet come up with ways to celebrate. They're not the most successful presents but they are perfect for Eeyore.

## **Story Seven**

Pooh Bear, Piglet, and Rabbit are unsure of the new arrival to the forest — Kanga. They come up with a way to make her leave by running away with Roo. The plan has many parts, and the end result is not one that they expect.

## **Story Eight**

Christopher Robin wants to take his friends to The North Pole, even though he doesn't know what or where it is. It's time for an Expedition! The adventure is sidetracked when Roo falls in the river and everyone participates in the rescue. When Pooh finds a pole, not only does it save the day, it may be the Pole they're looking for.

## **Story Nine**

The rain keeps falling in the Hundred Acre Wood and everyone is trapped. Piglet is extremely worried about the rising water. Pooh and Christopher Robin come to the rescue with an overturned honey pot and a large umbrella.

## **Story Ten**

Christopher Robin and all of Pooh's friends in The Hundred Acre Wood come together to celebrate Pooh's kindness and their friendship. Pooh becomes known as The Helping Bear and The Brave Bear.

## Characters

**CHRISTOPHER ROBIN:** Our Storyteller-in-Chief.

**POOH:** A bear of very little brain, but very big heart. And pretty good thinker when the situation calls for it.

**PIGLET:** A very small pig who feels that every story should be about them.

**RABBIT:** Doesn't really want to talk to anyone. Thinks they're smart.

**ROO:** A baby kangaroo with a tendency to tumble into things they shouldn't.

**KANGA:** A kangaroo mother who knows she can't take her eye off of Roo for obvious reasons.

**OWL:** Thinks they are EXTREMELY smart. Atrocious spelling.

**EEYORE:** A gray donkey with a tendency to see the worst in everything.

**RABBIT RELATION:** A narrator.

**RABBIT FRIEND:** A narrator.

## Themes

Childhood, friendship, happiness, kindness, memory, relationships, theatre

## Pre-Read Questions

- ★ How do you define friendship?
- ★ What do you know about Winnie-the-Pooh?
- ★ What is your favorite adventure that you've gone on with your friends?
- ★ Name a time you did something nice for a friend. How did you feel?
- ★ Do you value loyalty in a friendship? Why or why not?
- ★ Do you enjoy telling stories? Do you have a favorite story you like to tell?

## Pre-Read Activities

### Story of My Life Monologue

- ★ Give students five minutes to free write about an important story in their life they wish to share.
- ★ Now have students write a monologue based on their freewrite. Students can write the monologue as themselves or create a character who is saying the monologue.
- ★ Ask for volunteers to present their monologue.
- ★ After presentations, debrief the activity with students.
  - » What did it feel like sharing your story?
  - » What was easy about it? What was challenging?
  - » Why is this story important to you?

### Storytelling Exercise

- ★ There are many different ways to share stories (e.g., drawing, writing, singing). As a class brainstorm different ways we all share stories.
- ★ Now as a class create a story together. Have students decide on the characters, where the story takes place, the problem, how it's solved, and so forth. You can also use a story template that you prefer if you have one available.
- ★ From there, put students into groups of four. Assign students a way to share the story the class created together. For example, one group can share the story through song while the other one shares the story through drawings.
- ★ Have each group present the story with their assigned storytelling method.
- ★ At the end of presentations, discuss as a class the exercise.
  - » Which was your favorite way to tell a story? Which seemed the hardest?

- » What was different about the story as it was shared through different storytelling methods? What was the same?
- » If you were to do this activity again how would you want to share the story?

## **Adaptation Exercise**

- ★ Divide students into groups. Give each group a poem as their source material, something short. The point is to have students work quickly.
- ★ Discuss the definition of adaptation, and adaptations that students may know.
  - » Adaptation definition: To make something suitable for a new purpose, to modify, to alter
- ★ The goal of the exercise is to have students adapt the poem into a scene. They don't have to specifically use the words of the poem, but the scene does have to be connected to the poem. Remind students that they are making something suitable for a new purpose. That means the scene must have characters and a conflict, and take place in a specific location.
  - » What characters can be derived from the poem?
  - » What location can the scene take place in, as indicated by the poem?
  - » What conflict can be derived from the poem?
- ★ The scene should be less than one minute. Give groups time to discuss, create, rehearse, and present.
- ★ Afterward, discuss the similarities and differences in the scenes. Hopefully there will be differences! This will show students that there is not one way to adapt material.
- ★ Also, discuss the process. What were the challenges? How did they modify and alter for a new purpose?

## Winnie-the-Pooh Adaptation Exercise

- ★ As a class, read a section from the original *Winnie-the-Pooh* by A.A. Milne. For example: divide up Story Number 2, *IN WHICH POOH GOES VISITING AND GETS INTO A TIGHT PLACE*, between your groups.
- ★ Discuss the definition of adaptation, and adaptations that students may know.
  - » Adaptation definition: To make something suitable for a new purpose, to modify, to alter
- ★ Divide students into groups. Each group will have a copy of the original section. Their first task is to identify characters, locations, and possible lines of dialogue.
- ★ Next, groups are to discuss, decide, rehearse, and come up with a one-minute section of a scene. This is an exploration, rather than an assessed assignment. How do you adapt? What are the challenges?
- ★ After groups present, discuss the similarities and differences in the scenes. Hopefully there will be differences! This will show students that there is not one way to adapt material.
- ★ Also, discuss the process. What were the challenges? How did they modify and alter for a new purpose?

## Research Project

- ★ Divide students into groups and give them a limited amount of time to research the author of the original text, A.A. Milne.
  - » Who is A.A. Milne?
  - » What is his background?
  - » When did he write *Winnie-the-Pooh*?
  - » Did he write anything else?
  - » Was he a “successful” writer?

- ★ Decide how students will share their knowledge. Will they create a scene based on what they've learned? An oral presentation with a visual component? Will you create a quiz? Give students a way to demonstrate what they learned.

## Animal Characteristics

- ★ Share with students the names of the animals in the play. For example: Piglet, Owl, Rabbit.
- ★ Based just on the name of the animal and student pre-knowledge or inference, have students create a physicality and character for the animal.
- ★ For example, ask students to think of the name Piglet. What animal does that sound like? In this instance, it would be a pig. What comes to mind when they think of pigs? What is a pig's physicality? How do they move? How does their movement suggest personality traits? Have students create a character of a mole and interact with each other.
- ★ If students have no idea about certain animals, you can also do this exercise by giving students a short description of the animal and have them create their characters based on your description. For example:
  - » Pigs are omnivorous mammals. They can often be found on farms. They have short legs, hooves, a small tail, and a snout.

## Animal Inferences

- ★ Some of the animals in the play are not the type of animal suggested by their name. For example: Heffalumps, Woozles.
- ★ Use Eeyore as your model and then have groups take on Heffalumps and Woozles.
- ★ Based just on the names of the characters and student pre-knowledge or inference, have students create a physicality and personality for one of these characters.
- ★ Ask students how they think Eeyore would walk and talk. Start by having them say hello as Eeyore. Then give students a line from the show to say. For example, for Eeyore you can use the line "Pathetic."



- ★ Although the Woozles and Heffalumps don't have lines, allow the students to explore what they think these characters would say if they were in the play.
- ★ At the end of the exercise ask students how they felt exploring these characters.
  - » How do they think they fit in the world of the play?
  - » Was there a character they enjoyed exploring more? Why?

### **Character Characteristics Original Scene**

- ★ Before you read the play, give students the characteristics of some of the characters in the play, without identifying the specific character. For example:
  - » Down to earth, grounded, sensible. Looks out for others like a parent.
  - » Loud, obnoxious and self-important.
  - » Innocent and eager.
  - » Can be sly and sneaky or tough as nails. Suckers their victims in by acting nice.
- ★ Divide students into small groups. Each group will create a one-minute scene in which they each play a character that exhibits specific characteristics from the list.
- ★ Afterward, ask students if they can guess which animal is connected to the characteristics.

### **Friendship Scene**

- ★ In small groups, students will create a one-minute scene on the theme of friendship. For example:
  - » How would you demonstrate what it means to be friends?
  - » How would you demonstrate what it means to have a friend who is hard to be friends with?

## Friendship Tableaux Series

- ★ In groups, students will identify and discuss three words that demonstrate how they feel about the word “friendship.”
  - » Alternatively, you could have a class discussion to come up with a vocabulary list of words, and then groups can choose three words from the list.
- ★ Groups will then create a tableau for each of those words.
  - » Emphasize to students any principles of tableau that you use in your class. Do they need to incorporate levels? Connection between individuals?
- ★ Lastly, groups will create transitions between each tableau to form a series.
- ★ Groups will present their series to the class. Those watching should try to identify the words each group chooses to visualize.

## **Close Reading Analysis Questions**

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it’s being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can’t highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *Winnie-the-Pooh*, individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

## Read One: What is happening?

1. What does Pooh want in Story One? Why is Pooh climbing the tree?
2. What is Pooh's plan to get the honey from the tree?
3. How long does Pooh have to wait to become unstuck in Story Two? What does Christopher Robin do during this time to help Pooh?
4. What does Pooh say happens to Eeyore's tail?
5. What does Owl say Pooh needs to do to help Eeyore?
6. Where does Pooh find Eeyore's tail?
7. What is Pooh's plan to catch a Heffalump?
8. What is Pooh's favorite food?
9. How does Piglet feel about Heffalumps?
10. Why is Eeyore sad in story six?
11. What does Pooh give Eeyore for his birthday?
12. What happens to Piglet's gift to Eeyore?
13. What is the group's plan to get Roo away from Kanga? How does Kanga get back at the group for their trick?
14. Who is Henry Pootel?
15. What does Christopher Robin say an expedition is? How would you define an expedition?
16. What happens to Roo during the expedition?
17. How does the expedition end?
18. How does Piglet try and save himself from the rain in Story Nine?

19. What is the name of Pooh's boat? What is the name of Christopher Robin's boat?
20. Why is Christopher Robin throwing Pooh a party?
21. What gift does Christopher Robin give Pooh? What is the significance of the gift?

### **Read Two: How does it happen?**

1. How does the title of each story foreshadow what is going to happen?
2. How would you stage the movement sequences with Pooh (e.g., in Story One or Story Two)?
3. In your opinion, what does a Woozle look like? How would you costume a Woozle?
4. In your opinion, why does Christopher Robin call Pooh "silly old bear"?
5. How do Eeyore and Pooh juxtapose each other?
6. How does Owl's home help you picture his character? Why do you think the playwright describes it as "...grander than anybody else's..."?
7. Why do you think rhyming is important to how the animals in *Winnie-the-Pooh* speak?
8. Where do you think the author got the inspiration for a Heffalump from?
9. Why do you think the author chose honey as Pooh's food of choice?
10. What does it mean when Piglet describes Kanga as "...one of the fiercer animals..."?
11. Would you consider Christopher Robin the hero of this story? Why or why not?
12. How does the playwright use language and spelling to reflect the characters' personalities?

13. On page 78 the playwright describes Pooh's relationship with each of the characters. Do you agree with these descriptions? Why or why not?
14. All the stories can stand alone in this play, but Story Nine is the only one that leads into Story Ten. Why do you think the playwright did this?

### **Read Three: Why does it happen?**

1. What is the playwright saying about friendship? Cite the text to support your answer.
2. Christopher Robin is the only human in the story. How does this affect how you view the story? Why do you think he is the only human?
3. Compare and contrast your own personal experience with friendship with what happens in the play.
4. How does the playwright want you to respond to this play?
5. Which character do you relate to the most? Why?
6. The play ends with Rabbit Friend saying, "And what did happen the next morning?" What do you think happened the next morning in the Hundred Acre Wood?
7. Winnie-the-Pooh is a story that has been told and adapted many times through many generations. Why do you think it became so popular?

### **Post-Read Questions**

- ★ Which character was your favorite? Why?
- ★ Which story did you enjoy the most? Why?
- ★ How did you feel at the end of the play? What emotions did the stories bring up?
- ★ What is your friend group like? How are you similar to the friend group in the Hundred Acre Wood? How are you different?

## Post-Read Activities

### Character Costume Design

- ★ Choose a character and design their costume.
- ★ Based on their personality, what would they wear? What pieces of clothing define them? What colors and textures would they choose?
- ★ Draw a color costume rendering.

### Prop/Set Design

- ★ The playwright suggests that many of the set and prop pieces can be made out of cardboard. Put students in groups of three and assign them a prop or set piece to create.
- ★ What colors would they paint the prop/set piece? Would they make the piece realistic or whimsical? How would their piece help create the world of the Hundred Acre Wood?
- ★ Have students present their cardboard prop/set piece to the class when everyone is done designing and creating.

### Map of The Hundred Acre Wood

- ★ Share E.H. Shepard's map of The Hundred Acre Wood from 1926 with students. This map is in the public domain and is often found in the opening-end papers of the first edition of *Winnie the Pooh*.
- ★ As a class, work together to track where each scene takes place on the map.
- ★ After tracking where each scene takes place on the map, discuss with students how this affects how they view the play.
  - » Does the map reflect what they thought The Hundred Acre Wood looked like?
  - » How does looking at the map help you think of the story as an adventure?

- » What surprises you about The Hundred Acre Wood?
- » How could you use this map to help you create a set for the play?

### **Adaptation Compare and Contrast**

- ★ In the pre-read section, you adapted a section of the original text into an original scene. Now, compare and contrast your adaptation to how the playwright adapted the same moment.
  - » What are the similarities and differences?
  - » Infer why the playwright made some of the choices she did with her version of the scene.

### **Interview With the Author**

- ★ As a class, discuss questions students would ask A.A. Milne, the author of the original story. It is suggested that the list be around 15 questions, but it can be shorter depending on the amount of students in your classroom.
- ★ Then divide students into groups of four. Assign each group some of the questions from the list the class created.
- ★ Have students research the answers to these questions and then present them in an interview style.
- ★ The group will go up and as the teacher you will interview them as if they were A.A. Milne. Students will share their answers based on the research they found and how they think A.A. Milne would answer the questions.

### **Post- Read Storytelling Exercise**

- ★ In the pre-read section, you shared a story you created as a group. Now take the story each group created and assign them a character from the play. Have groups share the story the way the character in the play would.
  - » For example: How would Pooh Bear share a story through song? Allow students to get creative with this!

- ★ At the end of the presentations, discuss the exercise as a class.
  - » What was different about the story when sharing it as a character?
  - » Was it harder or easier to share the story you created as a character? Why?

### **Poetry Writing Exercise**

- ★ Throughout the play Pooh writes poems about their thoughts and the adventure the group is going on. Have students take inspiration from Pooh's poems and write a poem about an adventure they went on.
- ★ Remind students to focus on the rhymes in the poem and on sharing their emotions and thoughts throughout the poem.
- ★ After everyone is done, have volunteers share their poems.

### **Animal Characteristics Compare and Contrast**

- ★ In the pre-read section, you created characters based on animal characteristics.
- ★ Compare and contrast your characterization with the characters in the play.
  - » How are the animals portrayed in the play?
  - » What are the similarities and differences?

### **Scientific Animal Comparisons**

- ★ Compare and contrast the characters in the play to the animals they're based on. For example, compare Winnie-the-Pooh to a bear.
  - » What are the similarities and differences?
  - » What surprised you about the character compared to the animal it's based on?
  - » What species would the character be?



## Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward.
  - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
  - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
  - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

## **Playwright Process**

*Playwright Lindsay Price talks about her process of writing and adapting Winnie-the-Pooh. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the playwright's.*

### What was the inspiration for writing this play?

I was so excited when I found out that the first *Winnie-the-Pooh* was in the public domain. I started working on this adaptation as soon as I found out. It's such a classic story with fabulous characters — I knew that it would be a great theatrical adaptation.

### What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

Texts that are meant to be read never translate directly into plays that are meant to be performed. There's always a bit of give and take. For this text specifically, there is so much joy in the writing on the page that actually is specifically for a reader rather than a viewer. I wanted to try and incorporate that theatrically and that was my biggest challenge.

## **As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play and why?**

Piglet is by far my favourite character in the original and as such in the play. My memory of Piglet from the animation is that they are very cute and small and that is played up. In the original stories, Piglet is someone who tries time and time again to be brave and fails miserably. That's fun to watch. They also want the spotlight quite a bit, which is a great character flaw to play with. Eeyore is also much more of a blowhard in the original text than I remember in the animations. Another great character flaw to play with.

## **Which is harder for you, first drafts or rewrites?**

I adore first drafts. The act of getting everything on the page without judgement is freeing and fun. I fully embrace messy first drafts with lots of plot holes and things that need to be solved. And then you actually have to solve those problems in the rewrites which is always more a challenge for me.

## **What's your writing process like?**

I love to write initial ideas down in notebooks. I always start with pen and paper. I keep writing notes and ideas and characters until I feel that pen and paper is actually getting in the way of my progress. That's when I know I'm ready to move to the computer and start compiling a first draft. I often start my writing process thinking about the play and letting it roam in my head for a while. So after thinking and taking notes I'm ready to dive into something more tangible.

## **What engages you about playwriting?**

I love seeing characters live a story and I love watching it happen right in front of me (rather than be distant from the experience through a movie screen). It's an intimate experience and that is very engaging!