Wiley and the Hairy Man

Ideas Packet

Prepared for the Blackfriars of Agnes Scott College
Production of
Wiley and the Hairy Man
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A Note to Teachers

Thank you for your interest in the Theatre program at Agnes Scott College. Your participation actively involves you in several facets of life on our campus. Attendance at one of our productions brings you into contact with Blackfriars, the oldest theatrical production organization in the Atlanta area, the production season of the Theatre program, the results of the curricular offerings of the Department of Theatre and Dance, and the grounds and facilities of Agnes Scott College. Providing this packet offers one means of demonstrating our appreciation.

The items in the packet reflect themes drawn from the script (fear, confidence, pride) as well as some ideas related to theatre (art, interpretation, creativity). Whenever possible the items are grouped according to category. However, many items may fall into multiple categories. Teachers should take the categories as representative, not exhaustive. You may with to shuffle items among categories or create your own.

When reviewing the Ideas Packet for *Wiley and the Hairy Man*, please take the name literally. The collection of questions and statements that follow should serve as a source of ideas to help stimulate the imagination of your students. The ideas generated from the packet could serve as the basis for a wide range of activities including classroom discussions, creative writing opportunities, art projects, and storytelling. You may even elect to stage your own version of our production.

Similarly, please do not feel limited by the items in the Ideas Packet. Our intent involves providing you with material that will expand the world of your classroom not limit it. For example, some items may seem more appropriate for use prior to attending the performance while others may facilitate post-production activities. If a given question or activity suggests a new direction, explore it as you see fit. Feel free to add, subtract or alter items, as you desire.

In short, the Ideas Packet is meant as a beginning, not the end. You remain in the best position to gauge the level and direction of your curriculum. The pages that follow represent a tool. Like any tool, each user must find the appropriate technique for its use.
Wiley and the Hairy Man
Character Analysis

**Chorus:** The Chorus functions as the swamp. They are the agents of action, aiding both Hairy Man and Wiley in their conflicts. They function as atmospheric entities, adding a sense of eeriness to the swamp and the play. Almost like sprites, they are both creatures of and a part of the swamp itself. They also give the audience a lot of information, such as what happened to Wiley's father and Hairy Man's fear of dogs, maintaining the Chorus' important function in the play.

**Dog:** Dog is Wiley's dog. He is extremely loyal and protective of Wiley. He is playful while still being more intelligent than he seems. Because he is so protective, he helps Wiley out a lot. His role in the play is very important as Hairy Man is terrified of dogs. Without Dog, Wiley might never feel safe. Dog is much like Wiley. He is very playful, yet also lazy; very intelligent and seemingly dumb simultaneously.

**Mammy:** Mammy is a lot of the reason that Wiley does anything. Without her pushing, Wiley might never leave the house. She is an intelligent "conjure woman". A firm believer in tough love, she won't allow her son to be ruled by his fears. She has an attitude that makes you know not to cross her and is very forceful. She also has a lot of pride in herself, claiming to be the best conjure woman in the southwest county. Her pride gets the best of her at the end of the play, giving Wiley the opportunity to prove his worth on his own.

**Hairy Man:** The Hairy Man is the antagonist of this play, providing most of the conflict. The Hairy Man is a magical man. He is after Wiley and knows how to make nature do his bidding. He is powerful, scary, and arrogant. He doesn't believe that he can be outsmarted or out-magicked. We know that he has already gotten Wiley's father and he's trying to get Wiley. He is extremely stubborn and quick-tempered. He also likes to cruelly play with his prey. The only way to get him to leave you alone is to trick him three times, which proves easy if you play on his pride.
**Wiley**: As the title character and protagonist, Wiley and his conflicts are the main focus of the play. Wiley is a 10-year-old fatherless boy who's afraid of many things. He's very unsure of himself and lets his fears get the better of him. At the same time, he is somewhat proud and tries to pass himself off as unafraid. Without his Mammy and that little bit of pride to push him, he might never face his fears. Ultimately, he's more intimidated by his Mammy than by anything else. He wants to make his Mammy proud on his own merit.
Wiley and the Hairy Man

Story Synopsis

A young boy, Wiley, lives in the swamp with his mother and dog. His father, we learn, has been killed by the Hairy Man, a "conjure man" covered in hair who terrorizes the swamp. Wiley's Mammy is likewise a "conjure woman" and relies on magic for many things. She tries to teach her son how to conjure so that he can go into the swamp feeling safe. All Wiley feels is afraid, but he goes to the swamp to find wood for his dog's house. Dog follows Wiley in order to protect him.

Through their travels in the swamp, we learn what Wiley prides himself on: "wigglin' and squigglin'", standing still as a statue, and leapfrogging. The Chorus provides the audience with the information that Hairy Man is terrified of dogs. Soon, Wiley must face Hairy Man with dog off chasing a magical bone. With some magical items his mother gave him and the help of his dog, Wiley is able to get away from Hairy Man.

Upon his return, Mammy tries and fails to teach Wiley how to conjure, emphasizing the importance of magic in this battle. As a last resort, Mammy turns to an old magic book to find out how to keep Hairy Man away. The book reveals that Hairy Man can only defeated if tricked three times in a row. Once tricked, he will leave the tricker alone for good.

Mammy makes Wiley go back to the swamp alone with a trick in mind. Wiley again faces Hairy Man and is able to trick him twice in a row. Now the pressure is on and Hairy Man is mad. Wiley races back to Mammy who is in the midst of a deep conjure to come up with one more trick. While Mammy's trick works, Hairy Man won't let it count for Wiley and freezes Dog like a statue. Then Hairy Man tricks Mammy into thinking he has gone away for good. The trick works because he plays to Mammy's pride and she lets him into her house. Immediately Hairy Man freezes Mammy. Hairy Man, playing with his prey, allows Wiley two chances to better him.

After being foiled in "wigglin' and squigglin'" and leapfrogging by Hairy Man's cheating, Wiley convinces Hairy Man that he has turned himself to stone. Now all that Hairy Man can do is unfreeze Wiley, unfreezing Dog and Mammy as well. Dog promptly bites Hairy Man, making him bald and comical. Wiley has successfully tricked and banished Hairy Man with only his abilities. Wiley goes to bed and once again the Chorus take up the part of a nightmare. This time, however, Wiley is not frightened by the nightmare and instead banishes it from his mind.

The End
Imagination & Interpretation

1. What does a Hairy Man look like?
   • How does he spend his time?
   • How did he get so hairy?
   • Make up the story of how Hairy Man became so hairy and mean.

2. What would it be like to live in a swamp?
   • What would your chores be like?
   • How would you pass the time?
   • Make up a swamp game that you think Wiley would enjoy.

3. What would you do if you were Wiley?
   • How would you feel if the Hairy Man were after you?
   • How would you outfox the Hairy Man?

4. If you could learn magic, what would you want to learn?
   • How to be invisible?
   • How to fly?
   • How would knowing magic affect your everyday life?
Perceptions & Diversity

1. How do you react when something scares you?
   a. Do you run away or face your fear?
   b. How hard is it to overcome your fears?
   c. What are the things that scare you?

2. Were Wiley’s fears reasonable?
   a. What frightened Wiley?
   b. Did he handle his fears well?
   c. How was he able to beat his fears in the end?

3. Have you ever felt that you weren’t good at something?
   a. How did that make you feel?
   b. Did you not being good at that thing make you want to give up?
   c. Was it hard to have confidence in yourself?
   d. Can being too confident be a bad thing?

4. Have you ever told someone they aren’t good at something?
   a. How do you think that made them feel?
   b. How would you feel if it happened to you?

5. Have you ever cheated at something?
   a. How did that hurt others?
   b. How did it make you feel to know that you cheated?
   c. Is cheating okay?

6. Have you ever been a bully to someone else?
   a. How do you think that person felt?
   b. How did you feel?
   c. How would you feel if you were being bullied?
What did you think about…

1. Scenic/Lighting Design
   1. How did the set contribute to the show?
      1. Did you think the swamp was creepy?
      2. How did you like the Chorus being part of the swamp?
   2. Did you like the lighting effects?
      1. What lights would you have used for the house?
      2. What lights would you have used for the swamp?

2. Costumes/Makeup
   1. Whose costumes did you like best?
   2. Whose costumes did you like the least?
   3. What did you like or dislike about the Chorus’s makeup?

3. Acting
   1. Did you like the Hairy Man?
      1. Did you think he was scary?
      2. Do you think he should have been?
   2. Did you like how the Chorus went between both sides?
      1. Did you they seem good or bad to you?
      1. Did you think of them as people or something else?
   2. Did you feel sorry for Wiley?
      1. Did he seem really frightened of the Hairy Man?
      2. Did you believe our actors when they said they were in big trouble?
Theatre & Performance

1. Have you ever been to a live performance in a theatre? What was it like?

2. How is theatre different from movies, television, radio, or computers?

3. What do/did you expect when you went to the theatre to see *Wiley and the Hairy Man*?
   - How was the performance at Agnes Scott College different than what you expected?
   - Do the differences mean something is better or worse (or just different?)

4. What was your favorite part of the performance?

5. Do you think you could put on a play?
   - How would you do it?
   - What things do you have to do before you perform?
   - What kind of play would you do?
   - How would your play look?

6. Try to write a brief play or scene and act it out.
   - Is it easy? Hard? Fun?