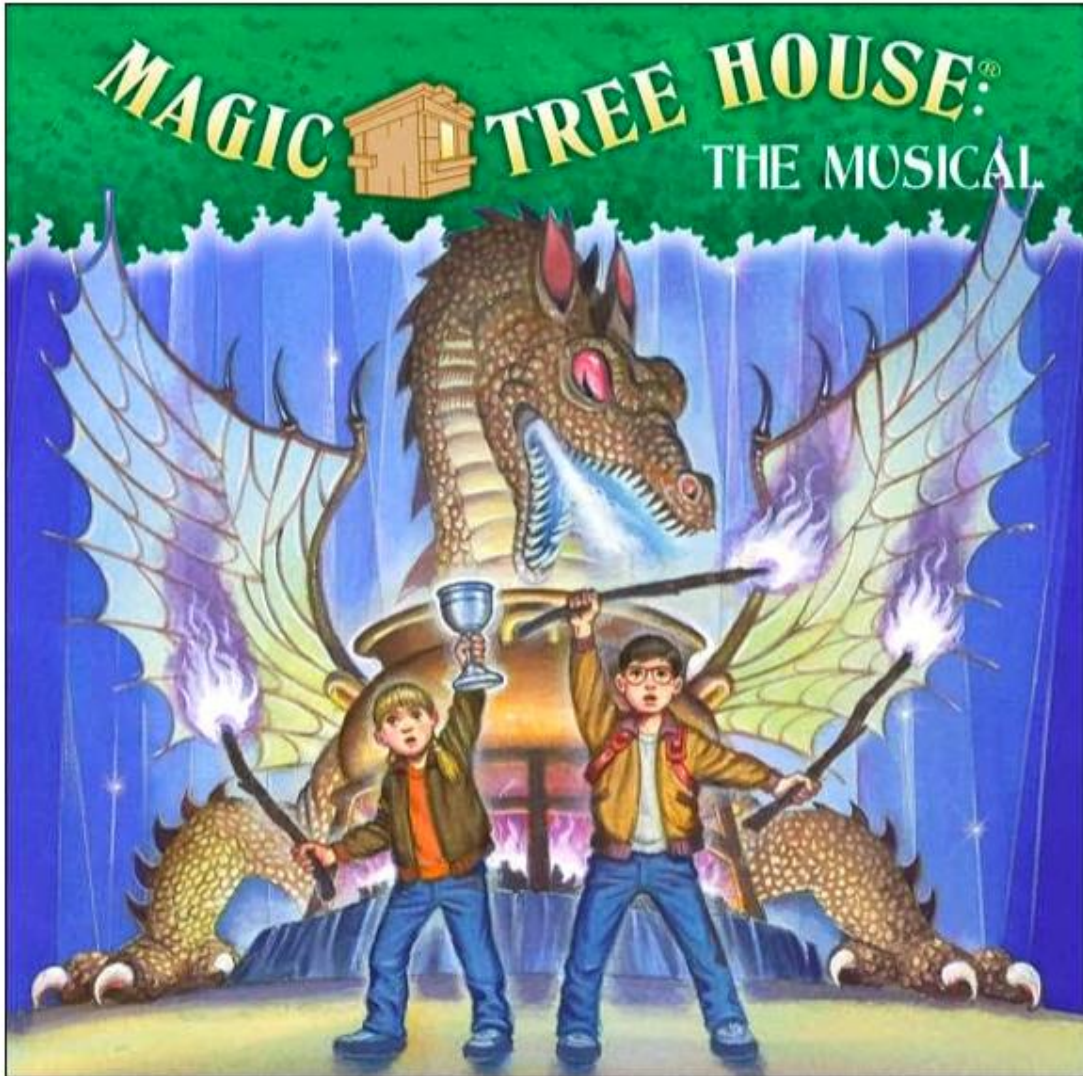


*Porchworthy Productions  
Presents:*



**A STUDY GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND  
CLASSROOM TEACHERS**

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## About the Play

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### Synopsis

#### ACT ONE

In the opening number (How Far Can You See?), which takes place in the Frog Creek Woods, Morgan le Fay recounts the story of Jack and Annie's discovery of the Magic Tree House and their first adventures. As the song ends, Jack and Annie breathlessly wonder where the Tree House will take them next.

In Scene 2, which takes place in Camelot, a feast to celebrate King Arthur's victory over a sinister Dark Wizard is interrupted by a mysterious force (Banquet In Camelot).

Back in their Frog Creek bedroom, Jack and Annie wait in vain for the tree house to return (Tick Tock), then finally receive a sign from a mysterious white dove that the Tree House is back! Racing to the Frog Creek Woods, Jack and Annie discover that the Tree House is indeed back – and find an invitation to join King Arthur and Queen Guinevere for a banquet in Camelot (Banquet in Camelot, Reprise).

When the kids arrive outside King Arthur's castle, however, they find a Camelot that is dark, cold, and sad – and Morgan tells them the story of how the Dark Wizard has cast a spell over the kingdom, robbing it of its joy (The Curse). On Merlin's advice, King Arthur has sent his three best knights to break the curse by retrieving water from the Cauldron of Memory and Imagination, which is hidden in a secret cave in the dreaded Otherworld. The knights never returned, and, despondent and angry, Arthur has banished Merlin – and magic – from the kingdom forever.

Meanwhile, in the Great Hall of Arthur's castle, two knights argue over their supper and Arthur angrily ends the meal. Deeply depressed, he apologizes to Guinevere for his behavior, and Guinevere tries to comfort him. Morgan brings Jack and Annie to the Great Hall in hopes of cheering Arthur up; as they enter, they overhear Guinevere grieving over the king's sadness (Not The Man He Was). Surprised to see Jack and Annie, Arthur agrees to let Morgan use enough magic to send them home, but declares that the Magic Tree House must then be destroyed!

At that moment a terrifying Red Knight bursts into the hall on horseback, demanding that someone else travel to the Otherworld to retrieve the magical water that will save the kingdom (Who Will Go?). Annie volunteers, and when Arthur protests, the Red Knight freezes everyone except Jack and Annie, then offers cryptic instructions for completing the quest (Four Gifts) and disappears.

Outside the castle Jack and Annie argue about how to proceed, then Annie spots the first of their gifts: a magical white stag who has come to deliver them to the Otherworld

(Fly!). Jack and Annie mount the stag, which carries them over the heads of the audience toward the Otherworld.

Arriving at the iron gates of the Otherworld, Jack and Annie discover two guards debating the wisdom of Arthur's decision to ban magic from the kingdom (What's So Great About Magic?). When their debate escalates into a fistfight, Jack and Annie slip past them through the gates.

On the other side of the gates, Jack and Annie discover that, rather than being scary, the Otherworld is in fact quite beautiful. Hearing music in the distance, Jack uncharacteristically decides to join a circle of mysterious, ethereal dancers. He races off to join the dance, leaving Annie alone and worried.

## ACT TWO

Jack becomes trapped in the enchanted dance, and Annie discovers that the dance has also snared King Arthur's lost knights. The knights have been dancing for months and are near death. Annie rescues Jack from the circle and together they free the knights and the dancers magically fade away (The Dance).

Grateful but too exhausted to continue, the knights give Jack and Annie the remaining gifts they will need to find the secret cave and complete their quest, then fall fast asleep on the grass. As they leave the sleeping knights and set out for the cave, Jack thanks Annie for rescuing him from the dance (What Would I Do Without You?).

Jack and Annie find the entrance to the secret cave and Jack uses a glass key given him by the knights to reveal the cave interior. Inside the cave, the huge golden cauldron that holds the water is truly magnificent. Working together, Jack and Annie retrieve a cup of the magic water and speculate about the source of its power (Remember and Imagine). As they are about to leave, believing they will never be scared again, they are surprised by a quartet of fierce dragons. Terrified, they sip the water -- and suddenly spring into action like two martial-arts experts, subduing the dragons long enough to escape. Outside the cave, they collapse on the ground, amazed at what has just happened. (Remember and Imagine reprise). Jack and Annie return to Camelot on the white stag.

When Jack and Annie arrive at the great hall, Jack accidentally spills the magic water onto the stone floor. They are devastated, until Jack comes up with a plan to use the power of memory and imagination to awaken the frozen members of the court (I Remember). Merlin and the lost knights return, Arthur declares a royal holiday to honor Jack and Annie, and, at the height of the festivities, Jack and Annie are hoisted onto the Round Table, which spins them, Magic Tree House fashion, back to their home in Frog Creek. (Banquet in Camelot/Finale)

As they look out their bedroom windows remembering their adventure, Annie convinces Jack he should write it all down in a story. Jack begins to write, beginning with the familiar tag line in every Magic Tree House book: "The tree house started to spin...."

Time:

Present Day & The Middle Ages.

Places:

Frog Creek, Pennsylvania, Camelot, The Otherworld.

Characters:

**Jack**

**Annie**

**Morgan Le Fay**

**King Arthur**

**Queen Guinevere**

**Merlin**

**Sir Kay, Sir Gallahad, Sir Bors, Sir Bedivere, Sir Tristram, Sir Percival, Sir Lancelot:** King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. The Knights were known for their chivalry, their sense of duty, their bravery, and their loyalty to King Arthur.

**Guard #1**

**Guard #2**

**Fairy Dancers**

## **About the Author of The Magic Tree House® Series, Mary Pope Osborne**

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Mary Pope Osborne is the author of over eighty books for children and young adults, including novels, picture books, mysteries, biographies, and retellings of mythology and fairy tales. Many of her books have been named to the Best Books of the Year Lists of School Library Journal, Parents' Magazine, Publishers Weekly, the Bulletin of the Center for Children's Book and Bank Street College. Her books have received honors from such organizations as the National Council of Teachers of English, the Parents Choice Foundation, the American Bookseller Association, the Children's Book Council, and the International Reading Association. She has received the Ludington Memorial Award from the Educational Paperback Association and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Random House Sales Force. She has also received awards from the Boston Public Library, the Atlanta Public Library, the University of North Carolina, the Virginia Library Association, and the Delaware Library Association. Ms. Osborne's New York Times #1 bestselling Magic Tree House Series has sold over 50 million copies and has been published in more than 20 other languages. Ms. Osborne is a former twice-elected president of the Authors Guild, the country's oldest and most established organization for published authors.

### **A letter from Mary Pope Osborne**

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Dear Friends,

For the last fifteen years I've been taking journeys in my imagination in the Magic Tree House. I've gone to the times of dinosaurs, knights, mummies, Shakespeare and Leonardo da Vinci, as well as dozens of other amazing times and places. The most wonderful thing about all these journeys is that millions of readers have traveled with me.

We've all been exploring the world together, using our imaginations and our reading skills to go wherever Jack and Annie go.

Now we're about to embark on a brand new adventure: We're going to experience a Magic Tree House musical on the stage by Will Osborne and Randy Courts. Get ready -- Will and Randy's magic is about to send us soaring with Jack and Annie to even more wondrous, faraway places.

Hold on to your seats!

*Mary Pope Osborne*

## **Before You See Magic Tree House®: The Musical**

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### **Activity One: The Arthurian Legend**

**King Arthur** is a fabled British leader and a prominent figure in Britain's legendary history, said in many medieval tales to have taken the mantle of rulership over Britain through a mystical “sword in the stone” episode.

Arthur's story includes considerable elements of legend and folklore, and his very existence is widely debated and has become a point of fierce controversy among modern historians.

Whether or not Arthur was an actual historical person or not, the influence of his story on society's values and ideals, especially the notions of chivalry and honor, cannot be denied. King Arthur is associated with bravery, kindness and honesty and many writers have tried to capture his chivalric spirit in poems, stories and even in modern day movies.

There is no one true version of King Arthur's story. For a stripped down retelling, drawing from many different versions, please visit Merrie Haskell's King Arthur's Site. [www-personal.umich.edu/~merrie/Arthur/kidstory.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~merrie/Arthur/kidstory.html)

Another excellent resource for students is **The Camelot Project, University of Rochester, NY**  
<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot>

Have the students independently research King Arthur and Camelot and answer the following questions:

1. How did Arthur become King?
2. What was Camelot?
3. Who was Merlin?
4. Who was Guinevere?
5. Can you name three knights of the round table?
6. Why was the table round?

7. Look up the word chivalry in the dictionary. Discuss with the class what it means.
8. Do you think chivalry still exists today? Why or why not?
9. Do you think King Arthur's ideas about honorable behavior have any influence over your expectations of yourself? (For example: Do you hold the door open for an elderly woman? Do you let your baby brother take the last piece of raisin bread? Do you keep your promises to friends?)

### **Activity Two: Puppets**

More than two dozen puppets are used in the production of Magic Tree House: The Musical. Puppets need an audience to “believe” in them to bring them to life. Puppets can make a person or animal seem bigger than life, but puppets can also feel very real. Puppets can convey emotions and take on very human qualities.

1. Have students make a simple hand puppet from a sock and other found materials. Students should play around with characters, voices, and expressions until they've found their puppet's personality. Once they know who they want their puppets to be, students should name their puppets and introduce their puppets to the class, using the puppet's voice and seeing how many “facial expressions” can be created in the process.

For a wonderful resource on everything you could ever want to know about puppets, please visit: [www.puppet.org](http://www.puppet.org)

### **Activity Three: The Role of Music in helping to tell the story in a Musical play.**

Magic Tree House: The Musical is a musical piece of theatre. This means that actors will sing songs throughout the play. This doesn't mean that the story stops and people just start singing a song, but rather that characters sing “through” an event, a problem, or an emotion. A song is often the way characters get from point A to point B.

Songs help to tell the story in many ways. Lyrics are the words of a song. Lyrics are very important in the storytelling because they tell you what is happening at a particular moment in time or how a character is feeling or what a character wants. Lyrics nearly always rhyme, and good lyrics follow a rhyme pattern without seeming forced or artificial.

The music in a show like Magic Tree House: The Musical is also very important. It underscores the action and creates a mood. Music can sometimes tell you more than words. For example, if a character were singing lyrics about how happy she is that her husband is leaving a long trip, but the music is sad, the audience will understand that the character isn't being truthful with her words. It is often said that music is the “language



of emotion”, so if you listen to the music without the lyrics, you should be able to understand what is happening throughout the story, at the very least in terms of emotional mood and tension.

1. As a class activity, bring a piece of evocative instrumental music to class and ask the students to listen to it with their eyes closed. Afterwards, discuss the moods within the piece and what images, memories, feelings the music may have stirred up for each student.
2. Have students improvise a scene together. Then have them repeat the scene with musical underscoring, using several different types of music. Discuss how music affects the actors as well as the audience.

#### **Activity Four: Irish Dance**

**Magic Tree House: The Musical** features an Irish dance. Irish dancing is a unique kind of dancing, traditionally referred to as stepdance. Irish stepdance, popularized by the world-famous show "Riverdance," is notable for its rapid leg movements and intricate, precise dance steps, with the upper body and arms being kept largely stationary. This lively and entertaining performance dancing is more difficult than it looks. Students can learn to appreciate this unique art form by:

Researching the history and development of Irish dance at:  
[www.irelandseye.com/dance.html](http://www.irelandseye.com/dance.html)

### **After You See **Magic Tree House**<sup>®</sup>: The Musical**

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#### **Activity One: Respond to the Play**

1. Which character did you like the most? Why?
2. What was your favorite “part” or scene from the play? Why?
3. Were you surprised at any point in the play?
4. Describe some of the puppets used in the show. Did you ever forget that the puppets weren’t “real”?
5. Can you remember the music? Did the music and the lyrics help to tell the story? How?
6. How is being at a theatre with actors on stage different from being in a movie theatre with actors on screen?

7. Would you ever want to try acting? Or building sets? Or making puppets? For more information on a wide variety of jobs in the theatre, students and teachers can visit Kids Work, a website that allows kids to explore different jobs in a typical community, including a host of jobs in a community theatre.  
<http://www.knowitall.org.kidswork/>

### **Activity Two: What Would I Do Without You?**

The power of two. The role of friendship in the play and in your life.

In this scene/song, Annie has just rescued Jack from the fairy dance and they discover how important they are to one another. They sing about the power of two and how grateful they are for their friendship. Here are some of the lyrics from the song:

JACK:  
WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU?

ANNIE:  
I DON'T KNOW.

JACK:  
IF I STUMBLER I'D JUST FALL  
THERE'D BE NO ONE THERE AT ALL  
TO GRAB MY HAND  
TO UNDERSTAND  
TO HELP ME LAND  
BACK ON MY FEET AGAIN  
WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU?  
YOU'RE MY FRIEND.

1. Do you have a friend that you can count on in your life? Or someone who counts on you? Can you think of a situation in which a friend helped you out of a "sticky situation" and made you aware of how grateful you were for their presence in your life?
2. If you could sing this song to someone in your life, who would you sing it to?
3. Make a list of all of the people you are grateful for in your life.

At the end of the song Jack and Annie sing a list of pairs of things that go well together:

YOU'RE THE CORNFLAKES  
I'M THE MILK

YOU'RE THE SILWORM  
I'M THE SILK

YOU'RE THE SADDLE  
I'M THE STIRRUP

YOU'RE THE PANCAKES  
I'M THE SYRUP

I'M THE ARROW  
YOU'RE THE BOW  
I'M THE TIC-TAC  
YOU'RE THE TOE!

YOU'RE THE ENGINE  
YOU'RE THE STEAM

I'M THE PEACHES  
I'M THE CREAM

WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU?  
WE'RE A TEAM.

4. Make your own list of pairs of things that go together.

Teachers can extend this idea by discussing things that work better together than separately. Peanut butter tastes better to most people when paired with jelly. Bananas are transformed when paired with ice cream and chocolate sauce. Annie and Jack solve problems by combining their individual gifts, etc. How many other things like this can students think of ...?

### **Activity Three: The Quest**

A quest is a search for something valuable or important. It is always difficult to find. In medieval tales, princesses would send suitors on quests to prove the suitors' worthiness. The suitors would be commanded to retrieve vital knowledge or magical objects needed to save the kingdom, and if they returned with the precious object or vital knowledge they would win the love of the princess.

A quest is never easy. There are always challenges and obstacles along the way. These challenges are necessary, because as the questors successfully overcome them, they build knowledge, self-confidence and determination. Without these attributes, they would be unable to reach their goal, but it is the "building up of these attributes", or the journey, that is just as important as reaching the goal itself! You know you're on a real quest if

the searching is just as important as the finding!

Everyone should take on quests during their lives. Whether big or small, quests help to make us better than we were before. Quests teach us valuable things about ourselves and others and help us grow into confident people.

In the play, *Magic Tree House: The Musical*

1. What is Jack and Annie's "Quest"?
2. What obstacles do they overcome?
3. Can you think of any ways in which Jack and Annie are better at the end of their quest than at the beginning? (Did they learn anything important about themselves or each other? Discussion ideas: Jack and Annie learn how important they are to one another after getting trapped in the Fairy Dance. Jack and Annie learn how to use their powers of memory and imagination to defeat dragons and then to wake-up the frozen kingdom, once they have spilled the water.)
4. Sometimes we are on "a quest" and we don't even know it. We are on a mission to find something important or to accomplish something wonderful and what we learn along the way turns out to be the real prize. Can you think of a time in your life when this might have happened to you? For example: Did you ever practice really hard for a game and lose the game, but learn a lot about yourself or your friends during practice? Or have you worked hard at some sort of chore to earn money to buy something for yourself or for someone else and been surprised at how much you enjoyed the work itself? Have the class write about their own personal "quests" and what they learned about themselves on their "journey", or share their experiences with the group.

#### **Activity Four: Remember and Imagine**

Discovering the Writer in You.

At the end of the play, Jack discovers that if he wants to remember his adventures, he better write them down. Annie tells him, "and what you don't remember, you can imagine".

Not all stories are a combination of fact and fiction, but all writers draw from their memories and their imaginations to tell their stories.

Exercises for students:

When you write a story, you use your imagination to see everything that happens. When someone reads your story, you want them to see everything, too. To help your readers, you need to include details about the things that you imagine.

In Christmas in Camelot, when the tree house lands in Camelot, *there is a cold wind blowing and all is dark*. (LOOK UP DETAILS in BOOK) It is not at all like the Camelot Jack and Annie remember from their previous visit. This lets the readers (and Jack and Annie) know that something terrible has happened to the magical kingdom.

You can use details to make anything in your story come alive for your readers. Details help readers understand how something looks, how it feels, how it sounds – even how something smells or tastes!

Pick a place you know well for a Magic Tree House Adventure (for example, your grandmother’s garden, your neighborhood playground, your school)

Pretend the tree house has just landed in that place

Imagine Jack and Annie looking out the window

Write about what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel

Use as many details as possible

You might be surprised how many different details you can use to describe something.

Try this:

Pick something in your room

Bring it to class

Put it on your desk

Look at it for a few minutes

Take out a sheet of paper

Write the name of the thing at the top

Fill the rest of the paper with details!

For example:

My sneaker

My sneaker is red

My sneaker has white laces

My sneaker is very dirty

My sneaker is six months old

My sneaker is brown on the bottom

My sneaker has stars on the side

My sneaker has a hole in the toe

My sneaker was a birthday present from my dad

My sneaker smells like dirt and sour milk

(and the list could go on!) You get the idea?

Trading Details

Play this game with a classmate

Pick an object in the classroom

Take turns naming details that describe that object until you've exhausted all possibilities. Remember to use all of your senses (what does the object look like, feel like, smell like, sound like, etc.)

How can you write details about something you've never seen before? Or a place you've never been to? Easy! You do research!

Think of something you've heard about but never seen before. You can choose something from this list, or pick something of your own.

An Egyptian pyramid  
A wooly mammoth  
The space shuttle  
A Hawaiian volcano

Go to the library. Take a notebook. Ask your librarian to help you find details about the thing that you've chosen.

Now imagine a story in which Jack and Annie have landed in your grandmother's garden and Jack loses his favorite sneaker, then has a surprise encounter with a wooly mammoth. (YOU CAN MAKE UP YOUR OWN STORY AND FILL IN YOUR DETAILS and as you can see, with a little memory and imagination, the possibilities are endless!)

### **Activity Five: How Far Can You See?**

In The Magic Tree House Series, Jack and Annie discover a Tree House full of books which possess a magic quality: all the kids have to do is open any one of the books to a picture of a place they want to go and make a wish to go there and the tree house magically spins and transports them through space and time to the exact locale in the book. With this magic, Jack and Annie have traveled through history and met many important people and taken many adventures around the world.

In a sense, all books have the ability to transport us through time and space and to take us on adventures. All we really need is the desire to go on an adventure and our imaginations to take us there.

In the opening song of the play, Morgan Le Fey sings:

“HOW FAR CAN YOU SEE  
FROM THE TOP OF A TREE

SO MANY PLACES TO GO  
WHEN YOU VENTURE OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW.”

1. Class Discussion: What do you think these lyrics mean?
2. Class Project: The “HOW FAR CAN YOU SEE?” Journal. Each Student should begin with a blank spiral bound notebook. The journals should eventually become very personal to each student. If appropriate, no grades should be attached to the work included in the journal, but rather the journal should be a place where the students are encouraged to “dream out loud on paper,” to get in touch with their inner adventurer, to “venture outside their windows”.
3. Begin with a simple writing exercise: If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Why? Next: Have the students look through old magazines (National Geographic, etc.) and cut out visual images that appeal to them and paste them in their journals. Tell them that they can cut out anything that looks like fun– a beach, a jungle, a sky, a forest, a city, a hot air balloon – anything.
4. The next day, ask them if the visual images changed their minds at all, or expanded their ideas about where they might want to go.
5. If you could meet anyone from history, who would you choose to meet? What questions might you ask your chosen person? What would you tell them about the world today?
6. Find a good picture (or likeness) of this person and make a copy of it to paste in your journal. Find three admirable facts about your person and write those things underneath your picture. It is good to have people that we admire, and to know *why* we admire those people. Let the students know that they can add to their “admirable people” list at any point. The journals do not need to be in order. If they have other people they wish to include they may do so on their own.
7. If you could do one great thing in your lifetime, what would you do? Would you travel to the moon? Would you find the cure for cancer? Would you become a teacher and teach children how to read? Why? If students aren’t sure about what they would like to do, help them to find their “passion” with these discussion and/or writing prompts:
  1. Write for ten minutes “I really love it when ...” (Can be anything – “I really love it when it snows so much that school gets cancelled and I get to go sledding with my friends.” “I really love it when my Mom takes me out for ice cream after a long day of soccer practice.” “I really love it when my Dog licks my ears when she’s happy to see me.”
  2. Make a list of 10 things that you love most in the world (can be people, places, animals, things.)

3. Make a list of 5 jobs you might want to try. (Pilot, actor, chef, veterinarian, clown, sumo wrestler, writer -anything!)
  
8. Gather together all of the magazines you can acquire from student/parent donations. Students should bring A COPY of their favorite picture of themselves to paste in the center of a large piece of poster boards. Students will then cut out images AND words and or phrases from the magazines to create a visual/collage self portrait. Encourage students not to “think” too hard about what to put on their poster board, but rather to just fill the space with images that “speak” to them or remind them of themselves or things that they like. The images could be of cars and beaches and people or they could be of dogs and lions and bears and books and sunsets and violins and telephones. There is no limit and no judgment. And if students find phrases or words that they like, they should be encouraged to include the words in their collage. Once completed, display the posters in the classroom to remind students to always look inside of themselves for answers and to venture outside of themselves for new experiences.