The possibilities are numerous for using both the Mary Poppins' books and the stage musical of *Mary Poppins* as a jumping off point for cross-curriculum and interdisciplinary study in your classroom. From lessons on character perspective to comparing and contrasting multiple story versions this production and story offers many chances to reach any number of curriculum goals.

Below are a few suggestions for curriculum that incorporates both the book and the musical *Mary Poppins* into your classroom studies.

Please also refer to the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCE** section at the end of this guide for links and resources to more curriculum ideas and lesson plans.
ABOUT THE STORY

Anything can happen if we recognize the magic of everyday life. The tale of Mary Poppins, the mysterious nanny who teaches a troubled family to appreciate the important things in life, is a beloved classic written by P.L. Travers. The musical adaptation is based on the Disney movie created 30 years after the publication of the original book. Beyond the theatrical magic and the unforgettable characters, the message behind Mary Poppins remains an important one for young people to understand: that hope and optimism can be powerful tools in the face of hard times.

The story concerns the banks family. Mr. and Mrs. Banks are involved with other things and cannot give their children—Jane and Michael—the attention they need. Jane and Michael, in turn, are misbehaving to get this attention. The “winds of change” are literally blowing, and Mary Poppins arrives on the Banks family doorstep. Using a combination of magic and common sense, Mary Poppins teaches this distressed family how to value each other again. Above all, Mary Poppins teaches the Banks family (and us) to find the magical in the every day. In her hands—umbrellas fly, carpet bags hid endless treasures and a day at the park becomes a journey to fantastical new worlds. Through her capable hands, we learn to value the important things in life: family, friendship, and imagination. Mary sings, “Anything can happen if you let it.” Through her we discover the extraordinary works around us, even when things look bleak. As Mary says, “Broaden your horizon, open different doors, you may find a you there that you never knew was yours.”
ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Stages Theatre Company's production of *Mary Poppins Jr.* is based on the musical film version of *Disney’s Mary Poppins* which was first released in 1964. The musical adaptation is based on the original book written by P.L. Travers and first published in 1934. The production includes some memorable musical numbers from the film, including *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, *Step in Time* and *A Spoonful of Sugar*.

Watch the Stages trailer for Mary Poppins  
https://youtu.be/2FeATnaA-rM?list=PLldYxTB0teVwhheHh7-28jUzVMrRwQT_J

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSIONS

TIME & PLACE

The play is set in London in 1910. Discuss how the production might show that the play is set in London, England in the early 20th century. How might this be shown through set, costumes and props?

LINKS TO WEBSITES ABOUT Life in England in 1910:

- https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/minipage&CISOPTR=2063&CISOMODE=print

MARY’S MAGICAL FEATS

Mary Poppins is thought to be a slightly magical character. Throughout the production she performs some magical feats. She pulls a coat rack and vase out of her carpet bag. She pulls flowers out of her sleeve. She repairs a destroyed letter. She magically ices a cake. And, of course, she flies. Discuss these magical features with your students and have them think about how these things may be portrayed on stage.
PRE-SHOW DISCUSSIONS

(CONTINUED)

Stages Theatre Company's production of Mary Poppins Jr. is based on the musical film version of Disney's Mary Poppins, first released in 1964, and based on the original book written by P.L. Travers and first published in 1934. Before seeing the play, read one P.L. Travers book from which the musical is adapted. Prep the students by reviewing the story synopsis and key events. Some students may be familiar with the 1964 Disney classic, but most may not. Discuss that the musical adaptation may be different from the book or the film. Why would the versions differ? What actions or events might be seen on stage or in film that are different? What characters might be different in the different versions? What might be omitted in order for the story to be presented in a dramatic live musical production? Students may keep a journal of their expectations.

LIST OF MARY POPPINS BOOKS

- Mary Poppins (1934)
- Mary Poppins Comes Back (1935)
- Mary Poppins Opens the Door (1943)
- Mary Poppins in the Park (1952)
- Mary Poppins From A to Z (1962)
- Mary Poppins in the Kitchen (1975)
- Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane (1982)
- Mary Poppins and the House Next Door (1988)

RESOURCES TO THE AUDIO BOOK VERSION

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-8alaK_KDI
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoXlqv0NUDk
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uDekEtV8yM
POST SHOW DISCUSSIONS & WRITING IDEAS

Revisit the expectations to see how any were realized and how much more the students understand the story as it was dramatized on stage. Discuss the similarities and differences from what the students thought they would see on stage and what they saw in terms of plot, characters, and action. Were the characters as portrayed on the stage what you thought you would see from reading the story or seeing a different adaptation? How or why? How would you describe the main “message” of the play? How was it similar or different from what you originally thought? What different theatrical storytelling techniques were used to tell the story?

WHERE DID SHE GO?

Fans of her books used to ask the author, P.L. Travers where Mary Poppins went after she leaves the Banks family. Her reply, “...Mary Poppins didn’t explain and neither can I, or neither will I. If the book hasn’t said that, then it’s up to you to find out.” After seeing the production, take up Travers’ challenge. Where does Mary Poppins go when the story ends? What happens after the end of the production? Talk or write about where Mary Poppins goes after she flies away from the Banks family.

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN, IF YOU LET IT

Sometimes the good things in life seem out of reach because we forget to stop and look around at the extraordinary world we live in. Mary Poppins asks us to measure the value of our lives by spending time with those we love and enjoying the moments of happiness that are right in front of us. Sometimes, we all need to just “go fly a kite.” Discuss this concept with your students. Or have them write about what the “kite flying” is in their lives.

ENJOY THE SIMPLE THINGS IN LIFE

Mary Poppins teaches us that the simple things in life done well can bring us the greatest joy. In a world that is constantly moving and striving for more and more, this lesson can be a big one to remember and learn well. Discuss with your students what it means to enjoy the simple things in life. What are some of the simple things you enjoy? What are some of the simple things you enjoy with your friends and family? Use this concept as a writing prompt for student journals.
THE HOT SEAT: GAINING PERSPECTIVE

A story can change depending on who tells it. People see the world form different viewpoints. A group of people might see the same event from completely different perspectives and tell about the event in very different ways.

OBJECTIVE: Students will analyze events in the story through the perspective of different characters.

Step 1: Set up the “hot seat”: a single chair in front of your classroom.

Step 2: Have students or a group of students choose one of the characters from the story.

Step 3: One by one, each student or group of students takes the “hot seat.” Have them introduce themselves in the voice and manner of the chosen character.

Step 4: Using the list below (important events in the story of Mary Poppins) ask the “characters” in the “hot seat” questions about how these events affect them.

Step 5: After the class has interviewed several “characters,” discuss how the characters’ viewpoints differed. How were they alike? Was there a point in the story when most of the characters’ viewpoints were the same?

EVENTS:
- Katie Nanna Leaving
- Mary Poppins Arriving
- Visiting Mr. Banks at the Bank
- Fighting over the toys
- Miss Andrew Arriving
- Mr. Banks Being Fired from his Job
- Meeting with Von Hussler
- Meeting with Northbrook

RELATED WRITING ACTIVITY

Describe Mary Poppins and the other characters in the show: write down 10 adjectives describing Mary and the other characters then use your adjectives to write a paragraph description of each character. Now write about one of the characters, describing them as another character sees them. Describe one character from the perspective of a different character.
ACTIVITY (GRADES 2-6)

CREATE IMAGINARY WORLDS - LANDSCAPES

When Mary Poppins takes Bert and the children into the magical world of the paintings in the park, it's a leap of imagination. Every time we look at a landscape painting or photo, we might imagine what that world must be like beyond the confines of the picture frame. We imagine what it must be like to be IN the painting or photo. Study some landscape paintings or drawings. Talk about what life might be like beyond the “picture frame.” Imagine what it must be like to IN the painting or photo.

Have students study some landscape paintings or drawings. Write a story about what it would be like to be in the painting. Have students then create their own landscape drawing and then switch pictures between students and have them write about what it must be like to be in the drawing by another student.

LEARN ABOUT LONDON

Mary Poppins takes place in London in 1910. Throughout the story we travel throughout London to various places, including parks, shops, banks, the steps of St. Paul’s Cathedral and even the city’s rooftops. Take the opportunity to learn a bit more about London—its history and architecture.

LINKS ABOUT LONDON

• [https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/a-brief-history-of-london](https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/a-brief-history-of-london) - a brief and kid-friendly history of London
• [https://londontopia.net/history/a-brief-history-of-londons-parks/](https://londontopia.net/history/a-brief-history-of-londons-parks/) - a brief history of London’s parks
• [www.london-sighseeing-guide.com/parks.htm](http://www.london-sighseeing-guide.com/parks.htm)
• [www.londongardenstrust.org](http://www.londongardenstrust.org)

Have students write a travel blog or a travel brochure about visiting London, including the history of different landmarks and what is important about visiting each one.
ACTIVITY (GRADES 1-5)

COMPARE & CONTRAST

How do different art forms approach the same story? Mary Poppins is that rare tale that has appeared in a variety of art forms: books, a live feature film and a stage musical.

Each form tells the story in a different way:
1) Novels are extended fictional stories created in a written form.
2) Movies are dramatic stories recorded by either film or video.
3) Musicals are live theatrical productions which mix songs and story. Unlike other forms, which are documented in time and never change, each performance of a musical is unique.

Try to read the books, see the movie (or parts of it) and experience the stage musical of Mary Poppins.

Using a Venn Diagram compare these three different versions of the same story.

Where are they different? Where are they the same? In your opinion, which one tells the story best? Why?

LINKS TO VENN DIAGRAMS:

- http://unmasadalha.blogspot.com/2016/01/venn-diagram-template.html
- https://www.studenthandouts.com/00/200801/venn-diagram-three-concepts.pdf
ACTIVITY (GRADES 3-6)

CHARACTER STATUS

Different characters have different views on the world and events. One thing that can change a character's view of the world and also how other characters view them is status. Status is a person's position in society. In 1910 England (when and where the play is set) status was pretty much set in stone; your position in society was dictated mostly from the moment you were born and stayed with you throughout your life. But your status can be different depending on who you relate to: Mary Poppins’ status is high compared to the children (she is their caregiver) but Mr. Banks can fire her (she is his employee.) Think about your own status within the community of your school, and how that can change depending on whom you relate to (fellow students, teachers, administrators, and parents.)

In 1910, English society was built on a vision that everybody had his/her place in the ladder of society, and those lower rungs of the ladder served those higher up. As you’ll see, there were even servants to raise the children of the wealthy. It was a time when having a nanny became a status symbol; the middle classes hired nannies even if they couldn’t afford them.

THE STATUS LADDER (ENGLAND, 1910)

- Upper Class: Royalty, nobility, and the very rich
- Upper-Middle Class: The wealthy, bankers, lawyers, doctors, merchants and manufacturers.
- Lower-Middle Class: A growing class in early 20th century Britain, consisting of shop keepers, managers, civil servants and small manufacturers.
- Working Class: chimney sweeps, farmers, factory workers, shop employees, house servants, clerks
- Lower Class: The homeless and destitute were still a grave and growing concern during this era.
Place the characters from Mary Poppins on the status ladder. Which of the following factors might be used to determine each character’s status: economics, age, community respect, impact on Michael and Jane?

BERT
MR. BANKS
MRS. WINIFRED BANKS
MICHAEL & JANE
MRS. BRILL
THE BIRD WOMAN
VON HUSSLER
JOHN NORTHBROOK
MISS ANDREW
THE BANK CHAIRMAN

DISCUSSION AROUND STATUS
Discuss how class and status affect each character in the story. Consider how Mr. Banks’ status changes whether he is at work or at home.

How are we affected by class and status today?

Where did you place Mary Poppins on the status ladder? Discuss how Mary Poppins fits on the status ladder. Does she fit at all? Why or why not?

PLAY A BRAINSTORM GAME
In Mary Poppins, John Northbrook convinces Mr. Banks to invest in his new factory. With what you’ve learned about this era in England, consider what Mr. Northbrook might be making in his new factory. Split your class into two groups. One group will brainstorm what could be made in Northbrook’s factory. Once that decision is made, the other group will decide if the new factory is worth investing in.