ACROSS

THE

CURRICULUM

There are numerous possibilities for using *Elf The Musical, Jr.* 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 the musical *Elf, Jr.* into your classroom studies as well as a guide to help your students more fully embrace the live-theatre experience.
BIG IDEAS
- Family
- Friendship
- Identity
- Believing in the Power of Giving
- True Meaning of the Season

ABOUT THE STORY
Buddy, a young orphan, mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole. The would-be elf is raised, unaware that he is actually a human, until his enormous size and poor toy-making abilities cause him to face the truth. With Santa's permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Faced with the harsh reality that his father is on the naughty list and that his half-brother doesn't even believe in Santa, Buddy is determined to win over his new family and help us all remember the true meaning of the season.

(Taken in part from www.mtishows.com)

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION
Stages Theatre Company's production of Elf the Musical, Jr. is based on the New Line Cinema film, Elf, which was first released in 2003. It features songs by Tony Award-winners, Thomas Meehan and Bob Martin.

The musical debuted on Broadway in 2010 and ran throughout the Christmas seasons of 2010-11 and 2012-13. It toured the U.S. in 2012 - 2016. Elf, Jr. is a 60-minute version of the original full-length Broadway musical. Stages Theatre Company brings this modern classic to our stage for the first time this holiday season.
PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

BEFORE SEEING THE MUSICAL:

Stages Theatre Company’s production of *Elf the Musical, Jr.* is based on the New Line Cinema film and there is also a TV animated version based on the Musical. Before seeing the play, view or listen to some of the material the musical is based on. Prep the students by reviewing the full story synopsis (below) and key events. Some students may be familiar with *Elf*, the movie, but some may not. Discuss that the musical adaptation may be different from the film and that the TV version is based on the musical adaptation, so in a way is an adaptation of an adaptation. 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 for the story to be presented in a dramatic live musical production? Students may keep a journal of their expectations.

- Watch the Stages trailer for Elf Jr.
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7yulcrX33c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7yulcrX33c)
- Watch the Movie version, Elf.
  - Available through several streaming services online.
- Watch Elf: Buddy’s Musical Christmas – the animated TV version based on the Broadway Musical.
  - Available for streaming online.
  - Link to the trailer of the animated version:
- Listen to some of the musical numbers in the show.
  - [https://www.mtishows.com/elf-the-musical-jr](https://www.mtishows.com/elf-the-musical-jr)
FULL SYNOPSIS

The story begins at the North Pole as Santa Claus and his Elves sing a Christmas Carol in his shop ("Happy All the Time"). Their song is interrupted by the arrival of Buddy the Elf, who, despite an abundance of enthusiasm, falls short in his toy-making abilities. Charlie, the boss, expresses disappointment, but the elves quickly chime in to make Buddy feel better. Charlie tells Buddy to take a break and asks Shawanda to pick up the extra slack. Unaware that Buddy is listening, they reveal that Buddy is, in fact, a human and not an elf. Buddy approaches Santa for confirmation and Santa reveals that Buddy, as an orphaned baby, had crawled into his toy sack and was accidentally taken back to the North Pole, where he was raised by the Elves. Handing Buddy a New York City snow globe, Santa explains that Buddy's father works in the Empire State Building, doesn't know about Buddy's existence and is on the "Naughty List" for his lack of Christmas spirit. Buddy sets off from the North Pole to New York City ("World's Greatest Dad").

Upon arriving in Manhattan, Buddy is surrounded by the sights and sounds of the city: a Business Woman yells for a taxi; a Jogger in a red suit; two Flyer Guys: and lots of New Yorkers rush by. Asking a passing Teenager where to find the Empire State Building, Buddy sets off to meet his father. Meanwhile, Walter Hobbs and Sam are discussing the unfortunate situation with their latest title, "Jingles, The Jolly Christmas Puppy," from which the last two pages are missing. Secretary Deb shows in Walter's wife, Emily, and his twelve-year-old son, Michael, who want to go Christmas shopping. Suddenly, Buddy bursts in, excited to meet his father for the first time. Stunned with Buddy's declaration that he is Walter's son, Walter demands that the Security Guards escort Buddy out, dropping him at Macy's Christmas department.

At Macy's, a Saleswoman greets Buddy, and the Manager mistakes Buddy for a corporate employee who has been sent to check on the store. Buddy falls in love at first sight with Macy's elf, Jovie, and inspires other Macy's Employees to decorate with some Christmas Spirit ("Sparklejollytwinklejingley"). Jovie agrees to go on a date with Buddy just as Santa's Helper announces the arrival of Fake Santa. Children and Parents line up, but just as a Mother leads her Child to see Santa, Buddy announces to everyone that it is not the real Santa. The two fight, and Buddy is escorted away by Policemen, who take him to the Hobbs'
apartment, where Michael is trying to build a science project. Buddy agrees to help if Michael and Emily will write letters to Santa Claus ("I'll Believe in You"). When Walter arrives home, Emily reveals that Buddy is, in fact, Walter's son, as the results of a DNA test have proven.

The next day, Walter takes Buddy with him to work. Office Staff, including Sarah, are bustling around as Mr. Greenway demands a Christmas book to replace "Jingles, The Jolly Christmas Puppy." Deb entertains Buddy, telling him the shredder makes snow. Later, Buddy takes Jovie to a souvlaki stand for their dinner date, where she confesses, she's always wanted to see snow. Buddy promises to take her to Christmas Eve dinner at Tavern on the Green ("A Christmas Song"). Back at the office, Walter and Chadwick desperately try to come up with ideas for a new children's Christmas story. Matthews claims to have found a lost manuscript that could save their jobs. Buddy bursts in to tell Walter he's in love and, while Walter talks with colleagues, Buddy decides to make "snow" by putting the manuscript through the shredder. The manuscript destroyed, Walter explodes with anger and tells Buddy to get out of his life ("World's Greatest Dad – Reprise"). A group of Carolers passes as Buddy leaves a goodbye note for Hobbs.

Buddy realizes he forgot all about Jovie. She's been waiting for hours at Tavern on the Green ("Never Fall In Love – With an Elf"). He arrives and apologizes, giving her the snow globe Santa gave him when he left the North Pole. Still upset, Jovie leaves.

Meanwhile, Michael and Emily see Santa out the window while reading Buddy's note ("There Is a Santa Claus"). They go to Walter's office to tell him, but he's preoccupied with trying to think up a story for Mr. Greenway. Suddenly, Buddy returns and suggests his own story ("The Story of Buddy"). Mr. Greenway loves the idea, but is rude to Michael and Buddy, demanding Walter work on Christmas Day. In response, Walter quits his job in order to finally spend time with his family.

When Michael tells Buddy about seeing Santa, everyone rushes to Central Park to help Santa gather the Christmas spirit he needs to make his now-broken sleigh fly. A large crowd gathers around Santa's broken sleigh, including New York One reporter, Charlotte Dennon. To prove to the crowd that it's actually Santa Claus, Buddy reveals what Darlene Lambert and Emma Van Brocklin received as gifts on past Christmases. Buddy urges everyone to get into the Christmas spirit, and Jovie arrives to help him ("A Christmas Song – Reprise"). The New Yorkers sing, and Santa's sleigh rises into the air, Christmas spirit restored, and everyone gets what they want for Christmas!

(Taken from www.mtishows.com)
Elf the Musical, Jr. is set in modern-day New York City, including the iconic sites of the Empire State Building, Macy's department store in Herald Square; and Central Park. Below is a short history of New York City as well as these famous locations. Links to more information that capture the setting of the story are also included.

BRIEF HISTORY OF NYC

The first native New Yorkers were the Lenape, an Algonquin people who hunted, fished and farmed in the area between the Delaware and Hudson rivers. Europeans began to explore the region at the beginning of the 16th century—among the first was Giovanni da Verrazano, an Italian explorer. The first European settlement came in 1624 with the Dutch West India Company. In 1626, Peter Minuit purchased the much larger Manhattan Island from the native peoples and named it New Amsterdam. It was settled by less than 300 peoples. But it grew quickly, and in 1760, the area now called New York City had a population of 18,000. Fifty years later, with a population 202,589, it became the largest city in the Western hemisphere.

During the American Revolution, the city, as a port, was strategically important, and the British tried to seize it almost immediately. In August 1776, despite the best efforts of George Washington’s Continental Army the city fell to the British and served as a British military base until 1783. The city recovered quickly from the war, and by 1810 it was one of the nation’s most important ports, and with the building of the Erie Canal in 1825, it was the trading capital of the nation.

Throughout the 1800’s an increasing number of immigrants from all over the world continued to change the face of the city and increase its population and cultural significance to the growing country.

At the turn of the 20th century, New York City became the city we know today. In 1895, residents of the independent cities of Queens, the Bronx, Staten Island and Brooklyn—joined with Manhattan to form a five-borough “Greater New York.” As a result, on January 1, 1898, New York City had an area of 360 square miles and a population of about 3,350,000 people.

Today, more than 8 million New Yorkers live in the five boroughs—more than one-third of whom were born outside the United States. It is also a tourist magnet, with over 40 million visitors each year. Thanks to the city’s diversity and vibrant intellectual life, it remains the cultural capital of the United States.

(Taken in part from www.history.com)
**THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING**

On May 1, 1931, New York City’s Empire State Building was officially opened and at the time, standing at 102 stories and 1,250 feet was the world’s tallest skyscraper. It was a titled it held until 1972.

The idea for the Empire State Building was born of a competition between Walter Chrysler of the Chrysler Corporation and John Jakob Raskob of General Motors, to see who could erect the taller building. Chrysler had already begun work on the famous Chrysler Building, the gleaming 1,046-foot skyscraper in midtown Manhattan. Not to be bested, Raskob assembled a group of well-known investors and employed the architecture firm Shreve, Lamb and Harmon Associates to design the building.

The Art-Deco plans, largely based on the look of a pencil sketch, were builder-friendly: The entire building went up in just over a year, under budget (at $40 million) and well ahead of schedule. During certain periods of building, the frame grew an astonishing four-and-a-half stories a week.

The Depression-era construction employed as many as 3,400 workers on any single day, most of whom received an excellent pay rate, especially given the economic conditions of the time.

The new building filled New York City with a deep sense of pride, desperately needed in the depths of the Great Depression, when many city residents were unemployed. The building still stands as an iconic silhouette in the NYC skyline. It is open 365 days a year from 8AM to 2AM regardless of weather conditions and is visited by 3.5 million people a year.

(Taken in part from www.history.com)

**LINKS TO SHORT HISTORIES & FUN FACTS ON THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yi8sbvKxt8c (Fun & Informative Video link)
https://www.ducksters.com/history/us_1900s/empire_state_building.php
In 1858, Rowland Hussey Macy opened his "fancy dry goods" store on New York's 6th Avenue, and soon New Yorkers began to flock to the store with the big red star logo (inspired by Mr. Macy's tattoo) for the finest in shopping experiences. It began a journey one of the most legendary stores in retail history.

In 1862, the R. H. Macy Co. was the first department store to have an in-store Santa at Christmas time. Soon after, Mr. Macy began decorating his large windows with huge displays that would attract the attention of passers-by and prompt them to enter and shop.

By 1902, Macy's had outgrown their 6th Avenue location and moved to a much larger location at 34th and Herald Square, which is still its present location. This expansion was done in three stages (completed 1902, 1924 and 1938.) When the 1924 expansion was completed, Macy's became the largest department store in the world and retained that designation for eighty-five years.

The building still draws crowds who enjoy peering into its elaborately decorated windows, especially at Christmas, when they're resplendent with moving figures that tell a favorite holiday story.

Macy's is also recognized for its connection with the annual Thanksgiving Day Parade. The parade - which began in 1924 - was originally called the Christmas Parade and was started by Macy's to attract customers to their new store. The store was also the setting for the 1947 classic film, *Miracle on 34th Street*, which touted it as home to "the one and only true Santa Claus".

*(Taken in part from [https://www.aviewoncities.com/nyc/macys.htm](https://www.aviewoncities.com/nyc/macys.htm))*

**LINKS TO SHORT HISTORIES OF MACY'S:**


On July 21, 1853, the New York State Legislature set aside about 750 acres of land in the center of Manhattan to create America’s first major landscaped public park. It was soon referred to as Central Park. Socially conscious reformers understood that the creation of a great public park would improve public health and contribute greatly to the formation of a civil society.

The design, one of the great masterpieces of American art, was the result of the 1858 competition won by Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and Calvert Vaux (1824-1895). Their plan was to create landscapes of sweeping meadows and vast water bodies designed to appear limitless within the park’s long and narrow rectangle. These grand pastoral scenes were intertwined with picturesque woodlands of dense plantings, meandering streams, and dramatic rockwork. It was constructed to relieve the crowded conditions of the populated city.

Central Park was also designed as a vital cultural resource, offering flexible spaces for music and the visual arts, passive recreation such as sketching and birding, and active sports such as boating, ice skating, baseball, tennis, and croquet, and an outdoor classroom for the appreciation and study of botany.

Today, about 150 years later, the park serves the city much as it was originally planned to do and is one of the most iconic features of the bustling metropolis. It is difficult to conceive of New York City without Central Park.

(Taken in part from http://www.centralparknyc.org/visit/park-history.html)

**LINKS TO SHORT VIDEOS OF CENTRAL PARK**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjn8QcZzmQA  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xm-s9yMZePc  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64erNyJWPIs

**LINKS TO SHORT Histories & Videos of NYC:**  
https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/new-york-city  
https://www.britannica.com/place/New-York-City/The-boroughs  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqYNNOsgpqc
POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

REVISIT EXPECTATIONS

After seeing the show, revisit the pre-show expectations to discuss how many were realized and evaluate students' understanding of the dramatized story. 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 stage different or similar than expected? 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?

COMPARE & CONTRAST

How do different art forms approach the same story? Elf, The Musical, Jr. is based on a full-length movie and the animated TV special is based on the musical adaptation.

Each form tells the story in a different way:

1) Movies are dramatic stories recorded by either film or video with footage edited to construct the story.

2) 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. The music is also a strong element that moves the story forward through song.

3) Animation uses technology to create character and setting of a story. Human voices are used for character dialogue, but human actors are not what the audience sees.

Try to see the movie (or parts of it), the animated version and experience the stage musical of Elf. 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](http://unmasadalha.blogspot.com/2016/01/venn-diagram-template.html)
- [https://www.studenthandouts.com/00/200801/venn-diagram-three-concepts.pdf](https://www.studenthandouts.com/00/200801/venn-diagram-three-concepts.pdf)
WRITING PROMPTS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
Buddy makes a huge impact, in the end, on the life of his new family. What does it mean to “make a difference” in someone's life? Do you remember a time in your life when someone made a difference? What happened? How did it make you feel? Have you ever tried to make a difference in someone else's life? What happened? How did it make you feel?

SPREADING JOY
One thing Buddy is committed to doing is spreading joy in the world. What does it mean to “spread joy”? How do we spread joy in our families? How do we spread joy in our community? How do we spread joy in the world? Why would spreading joy be important as human beings?

BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE
At this time of year, we often hear the phrase, “it is better to give than to receive.” What does this statement mean? Why is it important to think about giving rather than receiving? Why does giving gifts to people make us feel good? Can you think of a gift that you could give that does not cost any money? Why would it be important to not always think about the cost of a gift but rather the thought of it? Or the impact the gift has on the person you are giving it to?

NEVER TO LATE TO GROW
“Maybe the point of the story is it’s never too late to grow.” This line is not talking about growing up (getting bigger, older, wiser) but more about the willingness to change and become a better person. Buddy doesn’t apologize for who he is and rather than caving into the pressures to conform to the world he finds himself in, he makes others rediscover the child inside of themselves and joy in living life. Write your own biography. Tell us about your accomplishments, what makes you different from others and where you see yourself in the future. Do you have any similarities to Buddy?
CHARACTER HOT SEAT: GAINING PERSPECTIVE

A story can change depending on who tells it. People see the world from 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 Elf) 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:
1. Buddy learns he is not a “real” elf
2. Buddy arriving in Manhattan
3. Buddy meeting his father for the first time at the Empire State Building
4. Buddy at Macy’s department store
5. Buddy at the office with his father
6. Buddy with Jovie after forgetting about their date
7. Everyone in Central Park helping Santa restore the Christmas spirit
RELATED CHARACTER ACTIVITIES

CHARACTER TRAITS
Describe the other characters in the show: write down 10 adjectives describing Buddy 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.

CHARACTER CHANGES
In stories characters often change from who they are at the beginning of the story to who they are at the end of the story. Discuss how different characters in different stories change from the beginning to the end. Choose a character from Elf, Jr. that changed through the course of the musical. List the characteristics/traits the character has when we first meet them in the story. Then, think about the different factors that influence a change in these characteristics/traits. Then, list how the character is different at the end of the story. What are their new characteristics/traits?
HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

OVERVIEW & RESOURCES

The month of December offers a vast array of traditional celebrations around the world, including Christmas and Hanukkah, but also Las Posadas, Sinterklaas, Boxing Day, Kwanzaa Ramadan, St. Lucia Day. This fact offers the opportunity for many curriculum connections.

Below are several websites with offering dozens of different lesson plan ideas for this cross-cultural learning:

- [http://mrsnelsonsclass.com/lesson-units/thematic-units/holidays-around-the-world-unit/](http://mrsnelsonsclass.com/lesson-units/thematic-units/holidays-around-the-world-unit/) Lesson plan for a unit on holidays around the world for Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- [http://www.todayschild.us/education/holidays%20around%20world.pdf](http://www.todayschild.us/education/holidays%20around%20world.pdf) – Lesson plan ideas for holidays around the world. (Pre-K-Grade 3)
- [http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/](http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/) - Interactive site to learn about Christmas celebrations around the world.
- [https://www.readinga-z.com/newfiles/levels/lesson_plans/t/holidays/holidays_print.html](https://www.readinga-z.com/newfiles/levels/lesson_plans/t/holidays/holidays_print.html) - A comprehensive lesson plan for learning about holiday traditions around the world. (Grades 3-6)
- [https://www.readinga-z.com/book.php?id=140](https://www.readinga-z.com/book.php?id=140) – Main website with the link above (Grade 3)
- [http://lessonplanspage.com/sschristmasaroundtheworldk1-htm/](http://lessonplanspage.com/sschristmasaroundtheworldk1-htm/) - Lesson plan for learning about winter holidays around the world (Grades K-1)
- [https://images.epals.com/holidays/Holidays%20Around%20the%20World%20Unit%20Plan.pdf](https://images.epals.com/holidays/Holidays%20Around%20the%20World%20Unit%20Plan.pdf) – A comprehensive lesson plan and project guide for learning about holiday traditions around the world. (Grades 3-6)
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS ON HOLIDAYS AND HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Varying Ages
- [http://archive.parentschoice.org/article.cfm?CFID=dab4a5b4-f990-47c8-a0bc-3d69f0f1ad42&CFTOKEN=0&art_id=130&the_page=points_of_interest](http://archive.parentschoice.org/article.cfm?CFID=dab4a5b4-f990-47c8-a0bc-3d69f0f1ad42&CFTOKEN=0&art_id=130&the_page=points_of_interest)

Picture Books

VIDEOS ON HOLIDAYS AND HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ux2QpVYPM1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ux2QpVYPM1s)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp3xpaLeasM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp3xpaLeasM)
- [https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/holidays/](https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/holidays/)

*Photos of Buddy the Elf by Fischeye Films for Stages Theatre Company*