



TM ©

The Broadway Musical

Study Guide

NETworks
Presents



The Broadway Musical TM ©

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and

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Study Guide

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Note from the Director

Don't you wish you were able to carry the "spirit" of the holiday season with you during a dreary day in March or a tough time in the middle of August? Working on *ELF The Musical* has helped me to hang on to that special feeling all year round.

Just look at things the way Buddy the Elf does! Buddy has tremendous belief in the world and a unique faith in people, even in challenging times. He has a knack for getting right to the heart of the matter. Buddy looks beneath the surface to see that there may be more than meets the eye in any given situation. He sees that Jovie is not a hardened New Yorker, but a lonely person with her guard up because her heart has been stomped on. He sees past Walter's gruff exterior and connects to his heart buried under the stress of daily life. We can all relate to that!

Even when Buddy finds out he's not an elf, his Dad disowns him, and his girlfriend tells him goodbye, he never stops believing. He realizes that holiday spirit is more than just Santa and presents; it's about family and sharing special moments with the people you love.

So, on that dreary day in March or that sweltering day in August filled with frustrating challenges, just look to your inner Elf and be grateful for all the people in your life for whom you care and who care about you. The day will get better. I hope *ELF The Musical* brings you laughter and joy while bolstering your faith in the people and world around you. May the show help you see past the rough exterior and into the heart of the "holiday spirit"! Happy Holidays all year long!!

Sam Scalamoni, Director
ELF The Musical



Photo by Joan Marcus

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Introduction to the Study Guide

Welcome to the hilarious and touching world of *ELF The Musical!* Not only does this show provide delightful holiday fun for all ages, it has a huge heart. In turn, it opens our own hearts and minds to the importance of our connections to one another; our need to balance expectations and disappointments; our struggle to establish a work-life balance; and our capacity to believe in the power of collective spirit and the magic of Christmastime.

In this Study Guide you will find three complete StageSmart experiential lessons for the classroom with instructions from start to finish. StageSmart lessons are anchored in Common Core Academic Standards and you will find the Standards addressed alongside each lesson plan. While the lessons are aimed at 6th grade, they are easily adapted to most grade levels.

Each lesson includes inquiry, art making, and reflection in the context of *ELF The Musical* and your students' lives. You'll find that assessment is integrated into each lesson through reflection questions and tasks that readily demonstrate understanding and learning along with creativity you may not even realize your students possess. The lessons invite students to explore the conventions of both storytelling and musical theatre that intersect to create this modern holiday classic.

Designed to prepare your students for a more deeply engaged experience of the performance, the lessons will guide students in tackling some of the same artistic challenges faced by the show's creators. As a result, students will find themselves drawn to the artistic choice making on stage – everything from the delightful set

design, clever lyrics, and joyful singing, to the deeply felt emotional core of the musical.

But wait – there's more fun! We have had the good fortune of speaking with Sam Scalamoni, director of *ELF The Musical* and you'll find his thoughts, tagged "SAM Speaks," throughout the Study Guide placed where they will be most useful to you and your students – like the note included on this page!

We encourage teachers to make these lessons your own. After all, no one knows your students better than you do! We would also love to hear your feedback and/or answer any questions along the way. Feel free to reach out to us through twitter: @StageSmartTAs, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/StageSmart> and www.stagesmart.org

Enjoy the journey that is *ELF The Musical!*

**Beth Anne Musiker,
StageSmart Teaching Artists**

SAM Speaks

Sam Scalamoni on what he'd like people to think about when they see *ELF The Musical*:

I want people to know the show is not just about Christmas. It's about believing – having faith.

The character of Buddy has tremendous faith in Santa and in the magic of Christmas. It's hard for people to wrap their heads around having that kind of deep true faith in anything, today. Not faith in a religious way; just believing in yourself and in other people. Believing that something special or magical is possible. I think that's a great message!

This production is about much more than Christmas and still full of the magic of Christmastime in New York City. I love that we're able to share that magic!

Character Descriptions

Buddy	Born a human but raised at the North Pole as a Christmas Elf, Buddy is eager to find his place in the world. He is a child at heart and that childlike curiosity makes him both endearing and gets him into trouble.
Jovie	Buddy's girlfriend. She works at Macy's and has a bit of a cynical outlook on life and love because of the men she has dated. She is caught off guard by Buddy's genuinely big heart.
Walter	Buddy's workaholic father. He is a children's book publisher, but lacks the childlike spirit that Buddy has. He is selfish, tense, and generally angry at life.
Emily	Walter's wife. Though she is sweet and willing to take him in, she thinks Buddy is crazy at first. She wishes Walter would spend more time with their family.
Michael	Buddy's stepbrother who is excited to have a new friend and brother. Unlike his parents, he doesn't take much convincing to have Christmas spirit. He wishes his father would spend more time with him.
Deb	Walter's secretary. Takes an instant liking to Buddy simply for the novelty of it. Though she aims to please and is a bit of a suck-up, she feels under appreciated.
Manager	A manager at Macy's. A good, friendly person just trying to do the job and get by.
Mr. Greenway	Walter's boss. He is what Walter will become if he continues down the path he is on. A tyrannical, workaholic who cares nothing about the people around him or who work for him.
Santa	Just another workingman. Loves his job and Christmas, but also likes to relax and watch the game when a rare opportunity arises. A natural storyteller.
Chadwick	One of Walter's right-hand men. He is desperate to keep his job, and is the more simple-minded of the two.
Matthews	One of Walter's right-hand men. He is desperate to keep his job and is the schemer of the two.
Ensemble	They play elves, New Yorkers, office workers, etc.

Synopsis

Act I

The curtain opens on Santa in front of the TV following his Christmas deliveries. Frustrated that the football game he TiVo'd has been recorded over, Santa decides instead to share the story of *Buddy the Elf*.

Santa opens the oversized pop-up book to reveal a replica of the set, and the action soon moves to Christmastown where the audience is introduced to Santa's elves who are "Happy All the Time." The happiest and by far the tallest is Buddy!

After a disappointing day in the toy factory, Buddy is shocked to learn that he is not an elf after all, but a human being. Santa explains that when Buddy was living in an orphanage following his mother's passing, he crawled into Santa's sack of toys and was accidentally transported to the North Pole where he was raised as an elf.

Santa tells Buddy that his birth father, Walter Hobbs, is alive and living in the "far off magical land of New York City." At Santa's urging that he "leave the nest," Buddy embarks on a journey to meet his birth father. As Buddy departs the North Pole he shares his wish that Walter will turn out to be the "World's Greatest Dad."

In his Empire State Building office we see that Walter, an overworked book publisher, is so busy that he has forgotten his plans to go Christmas shopping with his wife, Emily, and son, Michael. For Walter, Christmas always gets "In the Way."

When Buddy arrives at Walter's office wearing elf clothes, everyone thinks he's there to deliver a singing Christmas Gram. Walter, family and staff are all stunned to hear Buddy sing that he is Walter's son. Upset and disbelieving, Walter has security escort Buddy from the building to the North Pole.

The security guards drop Buddy at the nearest "North Pole" around – Macy's Department Store. Buddy's "Sparklejollytwinklejingley" spirit inspires the employees at Macy's as they decorate and prepare for Santa's arrival. Buddy finds himself smitten with the no-nonsense Macy's elf, Jovie and asks her on a date, which she reluctantly accepts.

The next morning, Buddy is very confused upon meeting the department store Santa, accusing him of being a fake. Following a scuffle in Macy's, the police take Buddy to the Hobbs' household.

Buddy arrives as Emily and Michael are trying, unsuccessfully, to build Michael's science project. Buddy offers to fix the project if Emily and Michael will agree to make an effort to get in the Christmas spirit by writing a letter to Santa. In their letter they bargain with Santa, saying that if he can provide the one thing they never get, quality time with Walter, then "I'll Believe In You."



Photo by Joan Marcus



Photo by Joan Marcus

The science project is completed just as Walter arrives home. Emily convinces Walter to allow Buddy to stay for just one night. The following morning a FedEx worker delivers the results of a DNA test secretly arranged by Emily. Results confirm that Buddy is Walter's son. Buddy is elated. Walter is not. To top it off, he must take Buddy with him to work so Emily can attend a meeting.

Sporting a new business suit very similar to his father's, Buddy is excited to accompany Walter to work where he confides to Walter's secretary, Deb, that he wants to be "Just Like Him." When Walter's boss, Mr. Greenway, arrives demanding that Walter come up with a blockbuster children's book by Christmas Eve or lose his job, Buddy's childlike curiosity and enthusiasm are not welcome distractions.

Buddy learns of Jovie's Christmas wish on their first date and promises Jovie a real Christmas, complete with her dream of Christmas Eve dinner at Tavern on the Green. A romantic connection is made and the date raises Jovie's reluctant expectations. Jovie is particularly moved when Buddy encourages her to sing "A Christmas Song" because the "best way to spread Christmas Cheer is singing loud for all to hear."

Back at Walter's office, waiting to share the news that he is in love, Buddy begins making snow to cheer up his father by unwittingly shredding the very manuscript Walter is hoping will save his job. Walter becomes furious and throws Buddy out, declaring that he wants him out of his life forever.

The act ends with Buddy alone in New York City, crestfallen that he has disappointed his father.

Act II

Santa returns from intermission and informs the audience that Buddy returned to the apartment to leave a goodbye letter for the Hobbs family. Wandering the streets of New York City, hungry and alone on Christmas Eve, Buddy ends up at a Chinese restaurant filled with disgruntled, disillusioned and now unemployed fake Santas from whom he learns that "Nobody Cares About Santa."

Meanwhile, Jovie has been standing in front of Tavern on the Green, waiting for Buddy for over two hours. She processes her anger and frustration declaring that one should "Never Fall In Love (With an Elf)." Buddy finally arrives and admits that he forgot about the date. In apology, he gifts Jovie the snow-globe Santa gave him before leaving the North Pole. Still hurt and disappointed, Jovie leaves.

Upon reading Buddy's note, Emily and Michael want to find and help him. Just then, Santa's sleigh flies past the apartment window spotted first by Michael and then Emily, leaving them without a doubt that "There is A Santa Claus." Emily, Michael and Buddy all end up



Photo by Amy Boyle



Photo by Joan Marcus

at Walter's office just as he is struggling to pitch a book idea to Mr. Greenway. Buddy jumps in saving the day for Walter by pitching "The Story of Buddy the Elf." Mr. Greenway loves the story, but wants to change the Elf to a Horse and insists that Walter work on the story right through the Christmas Day. Mr. Greenway goes too far when he insults Walter's sons, and Walter stands up for his family by quitting his job. Mr. Greenway storms out of the office.

Michael tells Buddy they saw Santa's sleigh land and Buddy realizes the sleigh must have run out power due to a lack of Christmas spirit in New York City. The entire family rushes to Central Park to help Santa. Buddy has an idea and borrowing Santa's iPad, which is storing everyone's Christmas letters, he heads towards a news crew covering what they think is a UFO event. He takes hold of the reporter's microphone and asks all New Yorkers to believe and spread Christmas cheer so that Santa can continue his deliveries.

Jovie arrives, and begins to sing "A Christmas Song" (reprise). She is joined by other New Yorkers and together their Christmas spirit allows Santa's sleigh to fly once more. Santa invites Buddy to return to the North Pole with him but Buddy, finally feeling like he belongs, decides to stay. The power of Buddy's beliefs, his infectious holiday spirit, and genuine show of optimism having restored hope and Christmas cheer to everyone he's encountered.

Epilogue

The story ends back where it started, at Santa's North Pole home on Christmas Day. Santa closes the storybook to answer the knock at the door. In walk Michael, Emily, Walter, Buddy, Jovie, and their new baby, Buddy Jr., ready to celebrate Christmas with Santa as they now do every year.



An Interview with the Director

Sam Scalamoni, director for *ELF The Musical*, was very generous in sharing his time and thoughts during a wide-ranging conversation about the production. You will find additional excerpts from the conversation throughout the Study Guide where they seem most useful to both students and teachers.

Can you tell us about your experience directing *ELF The Musical* for the tour?

When they were planning to produce the show on tour four years ago, the original Broadway director and his team were unavailable. So they passed it along to me and I brought on my choreographer, Connor Gallagher, and my design team, and we re-imagined the whole show from scratch, creating a new production.

It was an amazing experience! We were able to work with the original writers. Matt Sklar (music) and Chad Beguelin (lyrics) were very generous, as were Bob Martin (book) and Tom Meehan (book). They were incredible collaborators, very open to our ideas on the show, and they continue to work with us each year to refine it. *ELF The Musical* on tour is really its own entity and we're very proud of that.

You've said the writers are great collaborators. Was there any resistance to the kind of changes you wanted for the show?

Not at all – in fact they really embraced our ideas. Of course they had strong opinions about things, not only

things that they wanted to keep, but some they wanted to change. For example, the second year the show was on Broadway they added a new song and the first year we went on tour we didn't have that particular song and we've added it since.

Which song is that?

It's called, "Happy All the Time." It's a very funny opening number Santa sings about how happy the elves are *all* the time and how he just needs a little break from how happy they are, all the time.

Did it replace another number?

"Happy all the Time" replaced "Christmastown." Chad and Matt came to us and said, "Your version of "Christmastown" is great, but we have this new song we feel is a stronger opening." Connor and I listened and said, "This is hysterical. Yes – absolutely we have to put it in the show!"

It continues to be a collaborative process, which is great. They see the tour or a run-through in the studio every year. So Tom Meehan will see it and he might say, "This isn't funny. This joke is working – this isn't." Matt is very hands on, as well. He goes to see the tours and spends some time with the music directors. It's still an ongoing collaborative process, which is *amazing!* I mean you really never get that opportunity. It's a very inspirational situation, creatively.

It has been a truly wonderful experience. We keep doing it every year and it's just a joy.



Photo by Joan Marcus

I am very curious, whose idea was it to put the elves at the North Pole on their knees?

We came to the idea together. It was really a “no brainer.” When we came to Gregg Barnes, (the original Broadway costume designer who redesigned the show for the tour) with it he said, “Oh great, because I designed these amazing things; they’re called ‘knee shoes!’”

Gregg designed these shoes that wrap around the actors’ knees with a built-in kneepad. The actors are as comfortable as they can be and the shoes lay flat on the floor. It’s really brilliant.

Why do you think both the movie and now the musical have become such instant classics?

It’s one of the few contemporary films about the holidays that really connects with audiences. The fact that the story is present day with current content really strikes a chord with people. Also, children and grown-ups can see it and they all have a great time.

But I have to give it Will Ferrell, it might be one of his best performances ever. It’s so genuine and so sincere.



Photo by Joan Marcus

I think one of the key components to taking a known property and turning it into a musical is that it has to feel familiar like, “I know this! There are new shiny things on it, like big Broadway dance numbers, some fresh humor and we get to explore the characters more closely. Best of all it’s happening live in front of me.” I think all of these things help make it work.

Can you talk about the challenge of casting the role of Buddy?

It is a huge challenge to cast that character but it’s not because of Will Ferrell! You don’t have to be Will Ferrell but you do have to be believable. You have to be funny and honest. You also have to be something of a marathon runner because these guys are put through their paces between the dancing, the singing, and the amount of time on stage. Quite a task in elf shoes! We take great care in casting the role. It’s one of those roles that is a real “tour de force” for the right person and we’ve been very lucky to find some great guys to play it.

Do you find that you have a particular process or way of working that you brought to this show or is your process dictated by the show itself?

That’s a great question! I do have my own process and I’ve been lucky – knock-wood – that it’s worked on most projects. Of course, you still have to tailor your approach to each specific project.

I find it very difficult for the actor to work and collaborate until they’re up and moving around. So I lay the framework of what the blocking should be very very quickly, “You go here. You go there. You go here. Just write it down and give me an opportunity to get it up on its feet and I promise you we’ll go back through it all and if something doesn’t feel right we will work to make it your own.”

This process allows the actors to work, to be actors, and not sort of plod through the process of blocking the show. We can create together, try things and adjust to make it their own. That’s what gives it the energy the actors we cast can bring to it. That’s what makes a show – any show – crackle!

Lesson 1

Pop-up and Into the Snow Globe of *ELF The Musical!*

SAM Speaks

Sam Scalamoni on the set design for *Elf the Musical*:

Christine Peters, who is a brilliant set designer, came on board and started re-imagining *ELF The Musical* for tour life. She understands that touring is different than a sit-down production. She came up with the concept of creating a set that feels like a pop-up book and we got very excited about that idea. She even made the prop book that Santa reads to the audience in the opening scene. It's an oversized pop-up book and some of the scenic design actually pops up out of the book. You see it pop up and then there it is on stage!

We loved the idea that the magical feeling you get with a pop-up book is the same feeling you get around Christmastime in New York City. We also likened it to the snow globe Santa gave to Buddy. All those things tied together really well. It was a great seed for what the show could look like. It would tour well and still look exciting and magical.

When I started working on the show I hadn't seen the Broadway production, so I came to the work without any preconceived notions. All I had was a script to work from and that was really key to the success of the production.

Common Core State Standards - English Language Arts - 6th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5

Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Entry Point:

Exploring the influence of Pop-Up Books and Snow Globes on the scenic design for *ELF The Musical*.

Objective:

Students will begin to develop knowledge of how the scenery in *ELF The Musical* impacts the visual and overall storytelling.

Lesson Overview

- Students will be introduced to one of the many ways in which storytelling, story framing, and storybooks are all fully integrated into *ELF The Musical*.
- Students will examine pop-up books and snow globes.
- Students will consider how these objects might be incorporated into the scenic design for *ELF The Musical*.
- Students will develop their own ideas for how to incorporate these elements into a design concept for one of the locations presented in the show.
- Students will present their design concepts to the class

Materials Needed: Pop-up books, snow globes, paper and pens, pencils, crayons, colored pencils, or markers. Possibly scissors and tape or glue sticks. Option to allow students to include swatches of fabric, magazine photos, greeting cards, as well as computers, tablets, or other tech that will assist in executing the assignment.

Instruction:

Activity I - Warm-up (10-15 minutes)

1. Divide class into pairs or small groups of students.
2. Distribute one pop-up book per group. **Note:** If there are not enough pop-up books and/or snow globes to go around, consider providing half the class with pop-up books to start and the other half with snow globes then swap. It is *not* necessary that the content be holiday specific.
3. Ask students to explore the books/snow globes and consider their personal response to them. Responses may be documented in writing or simply shared with teammates:
 - What do you notice about the books/snow globe?
 - How does the pop-up book/snow globe share the story visually, in a way that a traditional book, even an illustrated one, cannot?
 - How do these differences impact your experience and understanding of the story?
 - Are the scenes in the pop-up book depicted in a realistic or more imaginary way?
 - Ask students to examine how the books are actually put together and engineered. How do the parts and pieces open up and reveal themselves?
4. Facilitate a brief large-group sharing of observations and personal connections to the pop-up books.
5. Swap books for snow globes and repeat steps 1-4.
6. After students have looked at both pop-up books and snow globes ask:
 - What do you imagine it would be like to live in the world of a pop-up book or inside a snow globe?
 - Would it feel normal, magical, scary or something else?
 - How would this world impact your lifestyle, mood, clothes and behaviors?



Activity II - Main Activity (15-20 minutes)

1. Activate and assess students' prior knowledge of *ELF The Musical* (the movie and/or the musical), theatre and scenic design with a brief discussion. Possible questions:
 - Who can describe and define scenery?
 - How does the scenery contribute to the storytelling in a play or musical?
 - What does the scenery help us to understand?
 - How is a story shared differently on-stage than in a book?
 - What time of year does *ELF The Musical* take place?
 - Where does *ELF The Musical* take place?
 - What do you know about Buddy the Elf?
2. Congratulate the students on their new careers as set designers and let them know that their design team has been asked to pitch an idea for the scenic design of *ELF The Musical* to the show's director.
3. Explain that each group will be assigned one location from the musical for which they will develop a design concept that creates the look and feeling of a living pop-up book and/or snow globe on stage.
4. Randomly distribute location assignments. If assignments are made secretly on separate slips of paper it will provide an element of surprise when students present their ideas.
 - Locations include: North Pole, Santa's Toy Factory, Macy's "Santaland", the skating rink at Rockefeller Center, Central Park/Tavern on the Green, The Empire State Building, Walter Hobbs' Office, The Hobbs' Apartment.
5. Tell students that they will want to consider what the audience will need to see in order to understand their pop-up book/snow globe concept.
6. How will this set design create a special experience or magical feeling like you had with the pop-up books and snow globes?
7. How will this set design change the way the audience experiences the story?
8. Allow students to choose the form their design presentations will take. This may include descriptive writing, drawings or compiling images and color swatches from the internet, cards, fabrics or magazines.
9. Remind students to plan how they will share their ideas with the class. What will they say? Who will do what?
10. Remind students that they are presenting a work in progress and are not expected to be perfect or finished in any way. Instead it is a sharing of their collaboration, creative thinking and ideas.

Activity III - Sharing and Reflection (10-15 minutes)

1. Each group will present their design concept to the class. Impose time limits as needed.
2. This sharing should include reflection questions about their process and choice making. Some suggested reflection questions include:
 - What were some of the challenges you faced while doing this assignment?
 - How did you work through these challenges?
 - What did you notice in the choices of the other groups?
 - If you could revise your design plan, what would you change?

The images that follow Lesson One have been provided by *ELF The Musical* set designer, Christine Peters. We encourage teachers to show these to your students *after* they've created their own designs.



**Tavern on
the Green**



**Christmastown
Backdrop**

**Santa's Toy
Factory**



Lesson 2

Managing Expectations!

Common Core State Standards - English Language Arts - 6th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 6 here.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

SAM Speaks

Sam Scalamoni discusses the importance and impact of expectations on the characters in the story.

Jovie’s character has squashed expectations. We see her as someone who came to New York with great expectations, but her hopes and dreams for her life there have been squashed. She’s put up a lot of defenses and it takes someone like Buddy to open that door again.

He’s able to do that for Walter, as well. Walter is very guarded and put upon. People find these characters very relatable.

I think it takes someone like Buddy to knock down those defensive walls and make it OK to have hopes, dreams and expectations. Just because you get knocked down doesn’t mean you can’t have faith in something else and that theme carries throughout the show.

I love that the show is able to explore these characters with a little more depth than in the film. We get to learn what Buddy cares about and how he gets hurt as well.

Buddy thinks he’s going to walk in the office, his Dad is going to give him a big hug, and they’re going to live happily ever after. Buddy has his own expectations crushed but he doesn’t give up hope or faith, and that rubs off on everybody around him. I’m hoping people glean that message from the show and walk out a little more open to believing and a little less guarded.

Entry Point:

Exploring the many ways in which personal and professional expectations appear throughout *ELF The Musical*.

Objective:

Students will develop an understanding of the social and emotional themes in *ELF The Musical* and its impact on the characters, the story, and how it relates to their own lives, as well.

Lesson Overview

- Students will be introduced to a recurring theme in *ELF The Musical*.
- Students will consider the impact of their own experience of expectations.
- Students will explore how to adapt their experience into a sharable story.
- Students will develop a short scene based on their personal and shared writings.
- Students will present their short scenes to the class.

Materials Needed: Journal and pen or pencil; enough space in the room for students to stand in two parallel lines facing each other at least 3 feet apart

Instruction:

Activity I - Warm-up (8-10 minutes)

1. Assess students' familiarity with and understanding of the word "expectation". Can they provide a definition and examples from their own lives? Model if needed.
2. Have students stand up and form two lines that face each other. Students should stand shoulder-to-shoulder and paired with someone in the opposite line.
3. Have one line turn their backs on the other by simple turning around where they are.
4. Explain the challenge: Students with their backs turned to you have had a big disappointment; they have either not met the expectations placed on them or their own expectations have been defeated. Your job is to cheer up your partner. Find a way to convince your partner to turn around and smile. No touching or leaving the line allowed unless you, the teacher, are comfortable permitting these options.
5. If you have your back to the other line please think about one specific incident that comes to mind. Examples:
 - Maybe you did not receive the grade you were hoping for in class
 - Didn't receive the birthday gift you hoped for
 - Maybe you neglected your responsibilities at home and disappointed your parents.Your job is to make it as difficult for your partner as fits the circumstance before you turn around and smile.
6. Encourage your students to try a number of different tactics for turning their partner around:
 - Will it take a soft voice?
 - An expression of compassion?
 - Will being funny or telling a joke help?
 - Will singing turn your partners head?Remind the students facing away not to turn around just to be nice but rather because they were genuinely moved to do so.
7. Switch roles. The front facing line turns their backs and the line with their backs turned now face front. Repeat steps 3 through 5.
8. If your students need to work harder to get the desired result, consider encouraging them to make bigger, bolder choices. If they are familiar with Buddy have them try again asking, "How would Buddy handle it?"
9. Reflect on the experience. Invite the students to share:
 - What did it feel like to have someone try to cheer you up?
 - Was it hard to cheer up your partner?
 - What worked? What didn't? How did it change your efforts that your partner's back was to you?

Activity II - Creating a Short Narrative (5-10 minutes)

1. Have students return to their seats and journals. The following prompts are just examples:
 - How are our expectations for ourselves often different from the expectations others have of us?
 - Do people in your life have expectations of what you will do and when?
 - Do people have expectations of you based on your appearance or background?
 - Do people have different expectations of you at home and at school?
 - What are your expectations for the holidays?
2. When students have collected some thoughts, prompts can shift toward the feelings that go with those experiences:
 - Have you ever had your expectations dashed?
 - Have you ever let someone else down by not meeting his or her expectations?
 - How did it feel not having your expectations met?
 - What do you do when expectations are not met?
 - Have you seen the impact of expectations on friends and family?
3. Ask students to review their journal responses and pick one moment or experience that stands out to them, good or bad. Have students expand on that experience by writing a short personal narrative on what took place during the incident.

Activity III - Creating a Scene (8-10 minutes)

1. Divide students into groups of 4. Each group needs their own space in which to work.
2. Ask the students to be brave enough to share the moment they were writing about with their group. Group members each take a turn sharing their story.
3. Have students select one team member's story or find a way to combine their stories to create a new one.
4. Have students think about writing and/or improvising the story as a script.
5. Let students know the following parameters for their story/scene. You may wish to provide these in writing:
 - Scenes need a beginning, middle and end
 - Keep it short enough to feel good about it
 - Consider what your audience will see and hear to help them understand the story
 - Scenes should involve expectations
 - Ask students to include an interaction where one person aims to cheer another up
 - The story should take place during the holiday season
 - Encourage students to use their imaginations and develop the story beyond the initial idea
 - All group members should be included in the scene
 - Let students know that they will share their scenes with the class
6. Remind students that perfection is not the goal – just their process.
7. Allow students to rehearse their scenes and prepare to share their work.

Activity IV - Sharing and Reflection (10-15 minutes)

1. Each group will present their scene in progress for the class. Impose time limits as needed.
2. This sharing should include reflection questions about the process and choice making.
Suggested reflection questions include:
 - How did all the steps in our process impact your choices in the storytelling and performance?
 - Have your ideas and understanding of the impact of expectations changed?
 - Did you discover new ways to bring good cheer to someone who needs it?
 - What would you change if you could revise your scene and do it again?

Lesson 3

Singing Loud for All to Hear

SAM Speaks

Sam Scalamoni on his own connection to Christmastime in New York City:

I grew up twelve miles west of Manhattan in New Jersey going to New York every year to see the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center. Now I bring my own kids every year. We have a family tradition of going to Radio City Music Hall and seeing all that Christmas in New York has to offer. No matter where you go at Christmastime, there's just something very magical and special about Christmas in New York City and I love that we get to share that with the rest of the country.

Entry Point:

What does it take to write a song that is clever and funny like the songs in *ELF The Musical*?

Objective:

Students will be introduced to writing lyrics that tell a story.

Lesson Overview

- Students will be introduced to the ways in which storytelling through song is integral to *ELF The Musical*.
- Students will experience the physical comedy present in *ELF The Musical*
- Students will create their own holiday themed song lyrics
- Students will share their holiday songs with the class

Common Core State Standards - English Language Arts - 6th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7
Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5
With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 6 here.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5
Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Materials Needed: Lyrics to your students' favorite holiday standards such as Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman. Paper and pencil or pen. Space to move in.

Instruction:

Activity I - Warm-up (5-10 minutes)

1. Clear enough space for students to stand in a circle.
2. Ask them to imagine that they were raised at the North Pole with Santa Claus and the elves.
 - How do they think their lives might be different than they are now?
 - Do you think elves might move differently than people?
 - Ask students to move around the room the way they imagine elves might.
 - After some practice, students return to their place in the circle.
 - Ask students to imagine that they are leaving the North Pole and going to a big American city for the very first time.
 - What would you notice about your city if seeing it for the first time? What places and everyday activities would seem strange and might be scary or funny the very first time you experience them? For example: Maybe taking a first ever subway ride? Or eating a food they don't have at the North Pole?
 - Choose an idea that everyone agrees is funny and exciting and invite students to demonstrate that first time experience using their bodies only – no voices
 - After some practice time, you may want to have half the class share their work while the other half observes, then swap and repeat.
 - Have students share their observations about the choices people made. What made them clear to the viewer or not?
 - Repeat with another “first time” scenario, asking students to incorporate what they learned in round one.
 - Return to the circle to transition.

Activity II - First Steps (10-15 minutes)

1. Activate and assess students' prior knowledge of songs and experience with singing while preparing them for the next steps. These questions are just a starting point:
 - How many of you like to sing?
 - Do you ever make up your own songs?
 - When and where are you most likely to sing? Shower? In a chorus or choir? Christmas caroling?
 - Do you have a favorite holiday song? Why is it your favorite? How does it make you feel?
 - What's the funniest song you know?
 - What songs do you know that tell a story?
2. Has anyone here ever changed the lyrics to a song for fun?
 - If students are willing, invite one or two sing their altered lyrics.
 - Ask students if they would like to try to change the lyric to a song?
3. In the large group, ask students to contribute holiday song titles that most of the students will already know.
4. Song selected, have a quick sing along to jog everyone's memory
5. Ask students how they might change a few of the words and give the song new meaning. Humor is encouraged here! Focusing on the rhyming words helps.
6. Invite students to sing their new lyrics or have the whole group sing with them. Try several ideas.
7. Ask students how someone coming to their city from the North Pole for the first time might perform their new lyrics differently? Try it!

Activity III - Main Activity (15-20 minutes)

1. Divide students into groups of 3-5 students. Each group with their own workspace.
2. Let students know that they are now a songwriting team and they are going to write new lyrics to a well-known holiday song.
3. Allow each team to select their song or teacher may assign them. Be sure to provide a printed copy of the lyrics available for students' use.
4. Ask students to read lyrics aloud and/or sing the song in their groups.
5. Randomly assign song ideas by distributing slips of paper – one per group – with a song idea on it. The ideas listed here can all be found in *ELF The Musical*:
 - A song about how decorating for Christmas brings good cheer at the holidays
 - A song that is a letter to Santa
 - A song about being a Santa for others
 - A song about Buddy the Elf
6. Take students through a process of generating material for their writing:
 - When students have received a song idea, have them discuss the topic. What do they know about it? What images come to mind? Can they build a story around it?
 - How can they begin to alter the lyrics to the original song to create their assigned song topic? Can they make it funny? How can they include the feeling of experiencing something for the very first time, like they did in the warm-up?
 - Ask groups to select their favorite idea from their discussion.
 - Remind students that songs are like mini stories and should have a beginning, middle and end!
7. Have students move into rewriting the lyric to their song. Remind students to notice how the rhymes fall in the original song and do their best to rhyme in the same places.
8. Students may also choose to write their own melodies if it will help them sing their story.

Activity IV - Sharing and Reflection (10-15 minutes)

1. Each group presents their songs to the class.
2. Encourage students to be bold and sing out!
3. This sharing should include reflection questions about their process and choice making. Some suggested reflection questions include:
 - What were some of the challenges you faced doing this assignment?

- How did you work through these challenges?
- Were you able to tell a story through a song?
- What would you change if you could do it again?

SAM Speaks

Sam Scalamoni discusses the traditional elements of the show:

What Tom (Meehan) and Bob (Martin) have delivered with the script and Matt (Sklar) and Chad (Beguelin) with the score is an old-fashioned Broadway musical with great old-fashioned humor, within a contemporary story. There is a lot of traditional Broadway musical theatre humor, gags and shtick in the show. Tons of sincerity as well, but when we get to the comedy it gets kind of “yuck-yuck” in style and I think it happens in a good way. It’s one of the funniest films ever created and you come in expecting that kind of humor because it’s this new classic.

When I say I work on *ELF* or I wear a T-shirt that says *ELF The Musical*, people stop me all the time, “Oh that’s my favorite movie! We watch that every Christmas with my family.” It’s really has turned into the new *Rudolph* or *It’s A Wonderful Life* – it’s the new one for this generation.

Using songs familiar to students will go a long way to eliminate any concerns about singing. Don’t hesitate to remind students to be brave and remember that Buddy says, “The best way to spread Christmas Cheer is Singing Loud for All to Hear!”

Flat Buddy

Simply cut Buddy out and glue him to a craft stick and you're ready for adventure!

Buddy has many first time experiences once he leaves the North Pole and finds his way to New York and his new life. Consider using this "Flat Buddy" as a way to help your students see their world with fresh compassionate eyes.

Encourage students to take Buddy on an everyday adventure, and remember that Buddy is seeing everything for the first time. What everyday experiences might seem completely foreign, funny, sad, or difficult the first time? Who do they encounter needing some holiday cheer?

Ask students to take photos or videos of Buddy in these new environments and with new people. They may even wish to take "selfies" with their friend Buddy to share on social media. Their photos may be used in the classroom as narrative writing prompts.

This may be particularly effective if tied to challenging life-changing events your students may have faced and/or will face in coming years. For example:

- Did you see things differently by putting yourself in Buddy's shoes?
- How does it feel or how will it feel to move away from your families?
- How can you be like Buddy and inspire Christmas spirit in someone who needs it?

Students' photos are a great way to tap their intrinsic motivation for creative writing:

- The next chapter in Buddy's life
- Their own holiday children's book or play
- A funny song or poem about their Flat Buddy adventure

These suggestions may work best as an extension of the pre-show lessons and attending the performance. You may even want to collect their photos and writings into their own mini-publication or exhibit as both documentation and assessment of the entire experience.



Photo by Joan Marcus

More Fun with Elf

Extending the Fun in Lesson 1

To continue their experience with set design, students may wish to go beyond their concept and rough sketch created during the lesson by:

- Drawing a floor plan to scale with the layout of furniture and large props is a great way to integrate math into their study of *ELF The Musical*.
- Building a miniature model of their design concept to scale.

Extending the Fun in Lesson 2

If the experience of Lesson 2 resonates with your students, they can be guided toward more writing around the idea of expectations as it applies toward other areas of study. For example: studying and writing about the impact of expectations on history.

Following the performance, consider facilitating a discussion examining the expectations of the main characters in the show and how those expectations impacted their journeys.

Extending the Fun in Lesson 3

Follow Buddy's lead and spread Christmas Cheer while providing service to the community. Challenge students to take the lead on collaborating and planning a trip to sing carols for a local community group that would welcome a boost to their Christmas spirit, such as a retirement community, homeless shelter, or children's or VA hospital, etc. There are many steps to making these arrangements and with your support students can become active, engaged members of the community.

Prior to the Performance

Encourage students to be on the lookout for elements of the show that remind them of the work they've done to prepare. Let students know that there will be more discussion following the performance and you look forward to hearing their thoughts. Review the etiquette and rules for the trip and for the theatre. Consider that the sharing in each lesson is an opportunity to practice theatre etiquette.

During the Performance

Give your students a challenge for their experience of the performance: Ask them to count the number of different ways in which stories and books are mentioned and incorporated into the musical. This will be interesting and rewarding because *ELF The Musical* is a story framed within a story, told in a storybook setting and in which a new storybook is created and then some!

Following the Performance

Don't miss the opportunity to have a final reflection activity to process the experience of having the lessons and seeing the show! In addition to extending any of the lessons in the Study Guide, you could continue the fun with discussion, journaling, a service project, Flat Buddy, and on and on.

Questions for discussion or journaling might include:

- Do you think having the lessons prior to seeing the show changed the way you experienced the performance? In what ways?
- What surprised you the most about the show?
- What questions do you have about *ELF The Musical*?



Theatre Etiquette

As a courtesy to the performers, the people working behind the scenes and those around you, we urge you to share the following information with your class and chaperons before attending a performance:

A live performance is a unique experience – no two performances are ever exactly alike. A live performance is also a shared experience with a flow and exchange of energies between the performers and the audience. When you attend a live event you actually become part of the experience and there is no rewind button! Unlike television or movies, the actors on stage can hear the audience and any noise will impact their performance. Here are some tips to help you make the most of the experience:

- Let the actors know that you appreciate the show by responding appropriately during the performance. While it is okay to laugh or clap when something is funny, remember that it's not appropriate when actors are portraying romantic, sad or fighting scenes. Respond respectfully and appropriately at all times.
- Create an atmosphere of good, attentive listening. Part of your job as an audience member is to care about the enjoyment of others. This means do not talk, or whisper during the performance, rattle paper, or use your cell phone to talk or text.
- Stay with your group at all times and present yourself in a way that will make your teachers and school proud.
- Consider leaving the following at home, school, or on the bus – laser light pens, portable mp3 players, cameras, and cellular phones. These items can be extremely distracting, or in the case of laser lights, even dangerous to the actors. You must turn off or silence all cell phones, pagers, beepers and beeping watches before the performance begins.
- No photography, audio or video recording of any kind is allowed.
- Leave any food, gum, and/or drinks on the bus or at school. No one, child or adult, is allowed to eat or drink in the theater during the performance.
- Once you are in your seat, you may talk quietly until the performance begins.
- Keep your feet off the seats and do not step over seat backs.
- Never lean over balcony railings or attempt to throw or drop anything from the balconies.
- When the lights dim for the performance to begin, that's your cue to stop talking, turn your attention to the stage and enjoy the show.
- Stay in your seat during the performance.
- At the end of the performance, thank the performers by applauding.
- Please continue this respectful behavior when exiting the building with your group.



Happy Holidays from Buddy the Elf!

“The best way to spread Christmas cheer is
singing loud for all to hear!”

Photo by Amy Boyle

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