

Study Guide prepared by
Catherine Bush
Barter Playwright-in-Residence

All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth

Adapted by Catherine Bush

Inspired by the song *All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth* by Donald Gardner

*Especially for Grades K-6

By the Barter Players, Barter Theatre, Christmas 2022

Virginia SOLs

English – K.1, K.5, K.6, K.8, K.9, 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 1.9, 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.12, 2.14, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.9, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.9, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.9, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9

Theatre Arts – 6.5, 6.18, 6.23, 6.24, 6.25

Tennessee/North Carolina Common Core State Standards

English/Language Arts - Reading Literacy: K.1, K.3, K.5, K.7, 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.3, 5.4, 5.6, 6.4, 6.6, 6.7

English Language Arts – Writing: K.1, K.3, 1.1, 1.3, 1.8, 2.1, 2.3, 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 5.9, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7, 6.9.

Tennessee Fine Arts Curriculum Standards

Theatre – K.4.1, K.4.3, 1.4.1, 1.4.3, 2.4.1, 2.4.3, 3.6.2, 3.6.4, 3.7.1, 3.7.2, 3.8.1, 4.6.1, 4.6.4, 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.8.1, 5.6.1, 5.6.4, 5.7.1, 5.7.2, 5.8.1, 6.1, 6.2

North Carolina Essential Standards

Theatre Arts – K.A.1, K.CU.1, 1.A.1, 1.CU.2, 2.A.1, 3.A.1, 3.CU.1, 3.CU.2, 4.A.1, 5.A.1, 5.CU.1, 6.C.1, 6.C.2, 6.A.1, 6.CU.2

Setting

A small town in the northern United States; a place where ponds freeze before Christmas and every kid knows how to play Crack the Whip. The present.



Characters

Lucy Lesprit – a spirited seven-year-old who still has her baby teeth

Gus Merriweather – Lucy’s friend and classmate, talks like a surfer

Mena Benafield – Lucy’s friend and classmate, wears glasses, timid

Joel Maxwell – Lucy’s friend and classmate, a hypochondriac

Anna-Lori Pringle – Lucy’s classmate and playground bully

Sister Susan – Lucy’s teacher at St. Catherine’s Academy

Mr. Greenbaum – the school janitor, grouchy

Mother – Lucy’s mother

Father – Lucy’s father

Santa – a Santa Claus at the Mall

Note: Cast Size and Doubling of Actors

In this production, we will be using only six actors. Some actors will be required to play more than one role. Doubling of actors requires distinction between characters. In this production, characters will be distinguished by costume, voice and other physical character traits.



Synopsis

When Sister Susan announces her plans for the second grade’s Christmas Extravaganza, no one is more excited than lively Lucy Lesprit. She is determined to come up with a talent routine that will help her class win the coveted Christmas Trophy. Then her father teaches her how to whistle – and a star is born! Lucy’s talent even impresses the meanest man in town, Mr. Greenbaum, the school janitor. But Lucy’s classmate and baton-twirling expert Anna-Lori Pringle has no intention of sharing the spotlight. She challenges Lucy to a game of ice hockey at recess and “accidentally” knocks out Lucy’s two front teeth. Lucy can no longer whistle! Determined to get her whistle back, Lucy and her friends visit Santa at the Mall. Santa, after hearing her request, convinces Lucy that whistle solos aren’t important – that the real secret of Christmas is being nice to people who aren’t always nice to you. Lucy takes his advice to heart; the next day at school, Lucy invites Mr. Greenbaum to be her guest at the Christmas Extravaganza. When she explains to him that she won’t have a big part because she can’t whistle anymore, Mr. Greenbaum pulls out his dentures and teaches her to whistle without her teeth! Lucy is reinstated in The Extravaganza, much to Anna-Lori’s fury. Anna-Lori tries to outshine Lucy by twirling fire batons, but on the night of the performance, they burn to a crisp and Anna-Lori will be reduced to playing the finger cymbals. Remembering Santa’s words, Lucy convinces Sister Susan to allow Anna-Lori to twirl her hockey stick instead and from that moment on, Lucy and Anna-Lori are fast friends. The show goes on and Sister Susan finally wins that first place trophy.

History of the Song

All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth is a novelty song written in 1944 by a grade school music teacher. One day Donald Gardner asked his class of second graders what they wanted for Christmas. As each student lisped his or her answer, Gardner noticed almost all of them were missing at least one front tooth. He wrote the song in thirty minutes. It was published in 1948 after an industry professional heard Gardner sing it at a music teachers' conference; later that year it was recorded by Spike Jones & His City Slickers. It reached the top of the pop charts in 1949 and has received many other recordings since.

**All I Want For Christmas Is
My Two Front Teeth**

Words and Music by
Don Gardner

The image shows a musical score for the song. It includes a vocal line with lyrics and guitar chords. The lyrics are: "Ev-'ry-bod-y stops and stares at me. These two teeth are gone as you can see. I don't know just who to blame for this ca-las-tro-phy! But my one wish on Christ-mas Eve is as plain as it can be!" The score includes guitar chords such as Cmaj7, C6, Cmaj9, C6, C, Am, Dm7, G7, C6, C, C, Dm7, G7, F#m7, D7, G7, C7, G7, and C7. It also includes performance instructions like "Brightly", "mp", "Rit.", and "poco rall.". At the bottom, there is a copyright notice: "© 1948, 1947 WARDEN BOOK, INC. Copyright Renewed 1976. All Rights Reserved." and a disclaimer: "NOTICE: Permission of this website for any extent to use it for their personal enjoyment and/or educational purposes. However, any reproduction, storage, copying, or distribution of this copyright notice by the author or creator of the content is prohibited. All rights reserved. Public Domain as of 2013. Unauthorized use or distribution of this content is strictly prohibited. All other trademarks and other notices are the property of their respective owners."

Biography of the Playwright



Catherine Bush lives in beautiful Abingdon, VA where she is Barter Theatre's playwright-in-residence. Her plays for young audiences include *Cry Wolf!*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Frosty*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *My Imaginary Pirate*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*, *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Aesop's Fables*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*, *Jingle All the*

Way, *Antigone*, *Mother Goose: The Musical*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Clementine the Musical*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Peter Pan*, *Robin Hood*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Tarzan*, and *Great Expectations*. Catherine would like to give a shout out to all the wonderful teachers out there who have orchestrated and endured countless Christmas programs. Bless you.



A Brief History

Barter Theatre was founded during the Great Depression by Robert Porterfield, an enterprising young actor. He and his fellow actors found themselves out of work and hungry in New York City. Porterfield contrasted that to the abundance of food, but lack of live theatre, around his home region in Southwest Virginia. He returned to Washington County with an extraordinary proposition: bartering produce from the farms and gardens of the area to gain admission to see a play.

Barter Theatre opened its doors on June 10, 1933 proclaiming, “With vegetables you cannot sell, you can buy a good laugh.” The price of admission was 40 cents or the equivalent in produce, the concept of trading “ham for Hamlet” caught on quickly. At the end of the first season, the Barter Company cleared \$4.35 in cash, two barrels of jelly and enjoyed a collective weight gain of over 300 pounds.

Playwrights including Noel Coward, Tennessee Williams and Thornton Wilder accepted Virginia ham as payment for royalties. An exception was George Bernard Shaw, a vegetarian, who bartered the rights to his plays for spinach.

Today, Barter Theatre has a reputation as a theatre where many actors performed before going on to achieve fame and fortune. The most recognized of these alumni include Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, Ernest Borgnine, Hume Cronyn, Ned Beatty, Gary Collins, Larry Linville and Frances Fisher. The list also included James Burrows, creator of *Cheers*, Barry Corbin, and the late Jim Varney.

Robert Porterfield passed away in 1971. His successor, Rex Partington, had been at Barter in the 1950s as an actor and in the 1970s as stage manager. Rex returned as chief administrator from 1972 until his retirement in 1992. In March 2006, he passed away.

Richard Rose was named the Producing Artistic Director in October 1992. During his tenure, attendance grew from 42,000 to more than 163,000 annual patrons. Significant capital improvements were also made, including renovation of the main stage (now Gilliam Stage) in 1995 and the 2006 addition of The Barter Café at Stage II (now the Smith Theatre). Rose retired in December of 2019 and Katy Brown, who had been at Barter since 1998 as the Director of the Barter Players and as an Associate Artistic Director, was named the fourth Producing Artistic Director – and is the first woman to hold the position.

Barter represents two distinct venues of live theatre: Barter Theatre’s Gilliam Stage, and Barter’s Smith Theatre. Gilliam Stage, with over 500 seats, features traditional theatre in a luxurious setting. Barter’s Smith Theatre offers seating for 167 around a thrust stage in an intimate setting and is perfect for more adventurous productions. Barter Theatre is also home to The Barter Players, a talented ensemble of actors who produce plays for young audiences throughout the year.

History is always in the making at Barter Theatre, building on legends of the past; Barter looks forward to the challenge of growth in the future.

FUN FACTS ABOUT TEETH!

50% of Americans say a smile is the first feature they notice about a person!



An average person has 32 teeth. That number includes 4 wisdom teeth, 8 incisors, 4 canines and 8 pre-molars



Colgate Total toothpaste is the best selling toothpaste in the United States!

You get two sets of teeth in your lifetime. The first set is your baby teeth. You will start to lose your baby teeth at 6 – 7 years of age. By the time you are 21, you will only have permanent teeth.

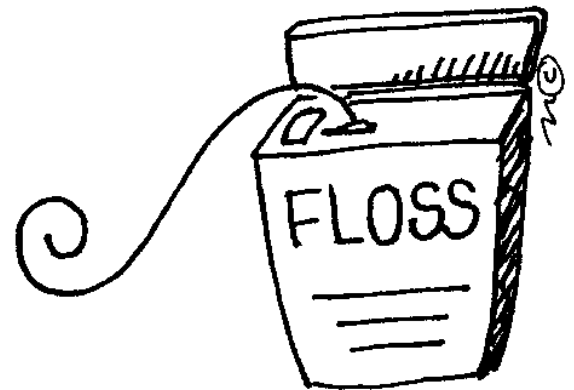


40% of people over the age of 65 do *not* have all their teeth!



We buy 14 million gallons of toothpaste every year!

The average American uses 1 foot of floss every time he flosses his teeth



An average American spends 38.5 days brushing their teeth over a lifetime.

Questions/Activities

1. Lucy Lesprit needs a talent for the second grade's Christmas Extravaganza. What is a "talent?" Do you have any? Is a talent something that comes naturally or is it something you have to practice? How important is it to have your talent recognized? Pretend you have the same homework assignment as Lucy; go home and work on a talent routine then bring it into school the next day and **present it to your class.**

2. Lucy and her friends play "Crack the Whip" on the frozen pond at recess. How is this game played? Is it only played on ice? Using the internet, research the origin of this game. How does "Crack the Whip" compare to other playground games? What games do *you* play at recess?



Discuss.

3. Why was winning the Christmas Trophy so important to Sister Susan?

4. Lucy told Santa that all she wanted for Christmas was her two front teeth. What did Lucy *really* want? If you could only ask Santa for one gift, what would it be? Why do you want this? **Discuss.**

5. **Write a letter** to your favorite actors from this production. Tell them what you liked about the play, their performance, etc. Mail your letters to:

The Barter Players
c/o Barter Theatre
P.O. Box 867
Abingdon, VA 24212-0867
ATTN: Two Front Teeth

6. Why was it important to Sister Susan that Gus juggle five golden rings? Why not three or four?



Questions/Activities (cont.)

7. Is ice hockey a sport you associate with a girl? Why or why not? What happens when we develop preconceived notions of what a person is or what sport they should be allowed to play? Look up the word “stereotype” – how does its definition apply to this story? **Discuss.**

8. Why were the children so afraid of Mr. Greenbaum? Why did he decide to teach Lucy how to whistle without her teeth? **Discuss.**

9. Why does Anna-Lori challenge Mena to a game of ice hockey? What kind of person is Anna-Lori? Do you like her at the beginning of the play? How about at the end of the play? What makes some people bully other people? What can you do as a class to prevent bullying on the playground? What can you do as an individual? **Discuss.**



10. This play took a character and lyrics from a song and built a story around them. Pick another favorite Christmas carol like *Suzy Snowflake* or *Jingle Bells* and **write the story behind the song. Present it to your class.**

11. Lucy’s two front baby teeth are knocked out by a hockey stick. Do you still have your baby teeth? If you don’t, how did you lose them? **Write the story** of how you lost your baby teeth. **Illustrate your story** with a picture. **Present it to your class.**

12. Why didn’t Lucy want to play the finger cymbals? **Discuss.**

13. **Using the Internet, research the history** of the following: the xylophone, ballet and baton twirling. **Present your findings to the class.**

14. This story takes place over a week. Pick a character from this play and keep a journal as that character during this week. Keep your journal entries as specific and imaginative as possible. For example, what might Anna-Lori have written in her journal the night Lucy got her whistle back?



15. Lucy’s school puts on a Christmas program every year. Does your school do anything special for the holidays? What about your family? Are there any traditions that you keep year after year? What are your favorites? What other holidays besides Christmas are celebrated at this time of year? What are their traditions?

Color the picture!



WORD SEARCH

Find the following words below: Lucy Lesprit, pond, ice hockey, Extravaganza, Christmas Trophy, two front teeth, Sister Susi, whistle, Gus Merriweather, juggling, five golden rings, Anna Lori Pringle, bully, fire batons, Mena Benafield, glasses, ballet, Joel Maxwell, xylophone, Mr. Greenbaum, janitor, Santa

C H T E E T T N O R F O W T A
U H S D B L X B T J I R J Y Z
D L R E D U G A D U V O O E N
G L U I S O L O L G E T E K A
S R E C S S F L X G G I L C G
A N E I Y T A F Y L O N M O A
N Q O E F L M L B I L A A H V
T V Y T N A E A G N D J X E A
A E R S A B N S S G E M W C R
G P W S V B A E P T N F E I T
B A L L E T E U B R R C L W X
E L T S I H W R M A I O L W E
I S U S R E T S I S N T P D T
X Y L O P H O N E F G E A H O
V L W D N O P J M R S W M Q Y

Vocabulary

recess	trophy	kung fu
radical	extravaganza	twirl
pneumonia	assignment	baton
bronchitis	talent	congratulations
influenza	finger cymbals	incessant
frostbite	juggle	gloating
bully	xylophone	invitation
playground	ballet	miracle
punks	herniate	rehearse
score	janitor	
concussion	ventriloquism	

Suggested Further Reading:

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson

The Hockey Book for Girls by Stacy Wilson

Face-off! (Girl Talk) by L.E. Blair

The Bully Blockers Club by Teresa Bateman

Berenstein Bears and the Bully by Stan and Jan Berenstain

Bullying by Elizabeth Raum