

**theatre
for young
america**

STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Sheryl Bryant, Director of Education, Theatre for Young America

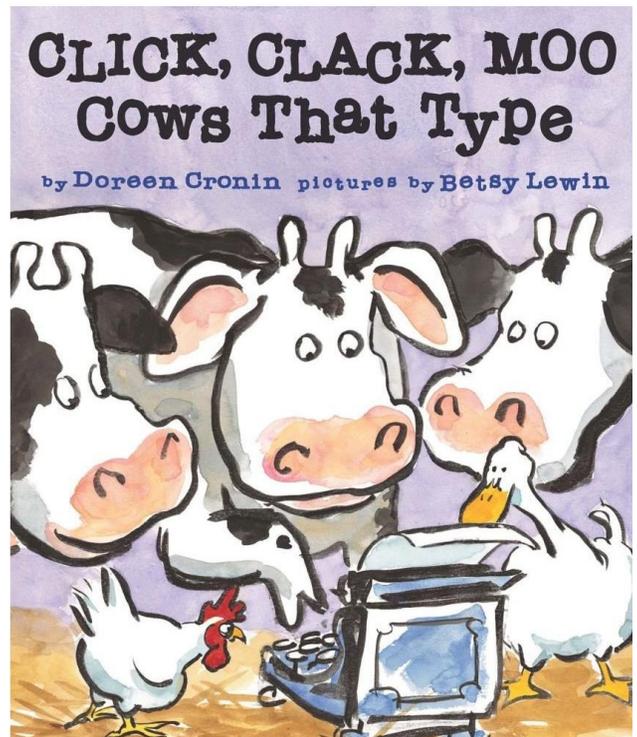
An educational supplement to the live production of
**Click, Clack, Moo:
COWS THAT TYPE**



This program is presented in part by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.



CLICK, CLACK, MOO: COWS THAT TYPE is based on an extremely popular book for young people by Doreen Cronin with illustrations by Betsy Lewin. The book won an award as a Caldecott Honor Book. It also won the National Education Association TEACHERS' TOP 100 BOOKS FOR CHILDREN. The book also was chosen one of the TEACHERS' TOP 100 PICTURE BOOKS of all times in 2012. It was written in 1995, but the book was not published until 2000. Other books followed such as: DIARY OF A SPIDER, DIARY OF A FLY, DIARY OF A WORM, and DUCK FOR PRESIDENT. In 2013 this award-winning author wrote CLICK, CLACK. BOO! A TRICKY TREAT which made the New York Times High Profiles List. Reading the book to your class and showing them the illustrations is recommended before attending the play adaptation. Have the students read it themselves if they are able. On YOUTUBE you may especially enjoy the reading of the book with some of the illustrations slightly animated and an American Sign Language Specialist interpreting the book for the hearing-impaired or deaf viewers. It is found on the Internet at www.youtube.com/PBSKIDS-watch?vHL5JO6-fxbg.



SYNOPSIS OF THE MUSICAL PLAY ADAPTATION

The book has been adapted into a lively musical comedy by James E. Grote with original music by George Howe. It was first adapted for the Lifeline Theatre in Chicago, Illinois. The musical play tells the same hilarious story of disgruntled farm animals, but with fewer animals—two Cows, a Hen, and a Duck—who desperately want to improve their accommodations. The play emphasizes the problem-solving skills and negotiation of the livestock and poultry to get what they need and cooperation from their owner. The singing and dancing Duck serves as the narrator in the play and introduces his Storyteller's Master, Universal, Digital, High-Def, 3-D Remote Control that enables the animals to translate their talk into English language so the audience can understand. (Farmer Brown does not have one so he cannot understand farm animal talk.)

There is some unhappiness at the farm. The Cows and the Hen want electric blankets to warm them up at night because the barn gets cold. The Duck finds his lily pad and pond boring and he sings and dances about it! They want to get some help from Farmer Brown but he doesn't speak Cow, Hen or Duck.

One day Farmer Brown brings out from his home some boxes of books and a typewriter to store in the barn. After honing their English language and typing skills by reading the farmer's books, especially ANIMAL FARM by George Orwell, the animals proclaim "Power to the animals!" Farmer Brown hears a lot of "click, clack, moo" coming from the barn. One Cow gets the idea that they will type a note of their concerns to the farmer. The Cows type a note requesting electric blankets so the Cows can be warm in the barn at night. The Duck delivers the note to Farmer Brown, who refuses to do it. "Whoever heard of such a thing!"

The farm animals keep reading and thinking of a way to get Farmer Brown to cooperate with what they need. They even learn some basic conflict resolution skills. The next day Farmer Brown returns to see a notice on the barn: "SORRY. WE'RE CLOSED. NO MILK TODAY." Still no electric blankets arrive for the cows. Now the Hen gets in the act and refuses to give him any eggs either. The Cows write another message explaining that.

There are ultimatums, emergency meetings, and discussions, but the Cows and the Hen will not break down and give the farmer his milk and eggs until they get their electric blankets. Eventually, there is a resolution! Farmer Brown brings electric blankets and the Hen and Cow give him their eggs and milk.

Alas, the story is not completely over. Now it is time for a surprise ending. Farmer Brown receives a note that the storyteller Duck wants a diving board for his pond. Farmer Brown gets him one!!!

OLDER STUDENTS AND ADULTS

The playwright refers to several passages of the book ANIMAL FARM by George Orwell that older students might enjoy reading as a tie-in to their play experience.

SOME CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS TO EXPLORE

WHAT IS A TYPEWRITER AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

To some in the audience a manual typewriter is going to be a strange thing. Some people may never have seen a typewriter. Mr. Brown stores one in his barn and the cows learn how to use it to write. In the play Theatre for Young America uses a very old, antique that used to be used by the director's ancestors. According to Britannica Kids, a typewriter is a machine that produces letters on paper when the user strikes a key on a keyboard. This causes a steel type to hit an ink ribbon and transfer ink from that ribbon to a piece of paper. If you could locate one to show to the playgoers, it would be fun and helpful to notice the click and clack sound and how they work. See how hard it is to press the keys. There is a long carriage which needs to be pushed by one hand to the other side, raising the paper on a roller for the next line of printing.



Typewriters were invented about 1860 and were used for writing bills, letters, and other business uses.

In 1870 Thomas Edison invented an early type of electric typewriter, and many other inventors created a variety of styles. The manual typewriter became very popular by 1910 and were mainly manufactured in Germany.



The electric typewriter became popular after electricity became readily accessible to business and homes around 1925. By the end of the 1980s, word processors and personal computers had really replaced typewriters in the Western World. According to Wikipedia, as of the 2010s, typewriters were still being used in many parts of the world including India. We know they are used in Theatre for Young America's play. Research the history of the inventions of the typewriters and share photos of them with the class.

FARM LIFE

Depending upon the age and backgrounds of your students viewing the play, you may want to have your students research the animals that are portrayed in the classes. For example, every time Hen sneezes an egg falls out of her nest. Research for information on the lives of these animals: the hen laying eggs, cows giving milk for the farmer to sell, and duck loving the water. If your group is older, research how many people in the United States live on farms and raise livestock and poultry to make a living. What is involved in that operation? How many such farms are located in your region or state?



CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Farmer Brown and his animals learn the art of compromise and negotiation to get what they need from others. Conflict Resolution skills come into the play to solve the problems of electric blankets, milk, and eggs. The play provides us a good opportunity to review conflict resolution skills. What methods do you use at your home or school. One of this writer's favorite ways to work on a solution is "POP". Find a friend to do it with you. There are three steps. First, you identify the PROBLEM that you are having with your friend. Next you identify the OPTIONS you both could try to solve the problem. Then you need to agree on a PLAN that is agreeable to both. Try the plan. If the first plan doesn't work, try "POP" with another of your options. Farmer Brown's animals learn some good strategies on how to resolve their conflicts once they learn to type.

VOCABULARY WORD

The book and the play are both examples of the **personification** of animals. Although the farm animals are dressed to resemble real animals, their thoughts and actions are those of humans. We see this literary form often in literature for young people. What other examples of personification can you think of that you have read or seen on stage? Sometimes we give human characteristics to objects or ideas too. Can you think of some? Here are a couple of examples to get started: "My bike is a beauty" or "Time marches on."

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS AND WRITING PROMPTS TO REFLECT ON THE EXPERIENCE

Before attending the play, brainstorm with the class about good audience behavior. What can each do to help the actors show you a good play? What do you do at the end of the play?

Theatre for Young America will also have some time at the end after the bows when you can ask the actors some questions. What might you ask ?

What in the play surprised you? Why?

What was your favorite part of the book? What was your favorite part of the play? Were they the same? Why or why not?

Name some of the differences you noticed between the book and the play? (Hints: fewer characters in the play, the addition of music, the addition of dance, the play is longer than the book, etc.)

The Cows learn how to communicate with Farmer Brown when they use that typewriter. Write a letter like the Cows did to ask for something that you need to have a better life. You could use a pencil or a laptop for your letter. You don't need the antique typewriter.

How did the actor's succeed in bringing the book to life for the play? Did you enjoy the costumes, the scenery, the dancing, and the music? Why?

A costume designer worked with the director and actors to make the costumes. What costume was your favorite? How did it show you in the audience something about that character in the play?

Where there any sound effects in the play? Did they help you understand the story of the play?

If you could change one thing about the play you attended, what would you want to change?

What did you learn by reading the book and watching the play?

