

**theatre
for young
america**

STUDY GUIDE

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An educational supplement to the live theatre experience of



SKIPPYJON JONES

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



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THE ORIGINAL BOOK

SKIPPYJON JONES began with Judy Schachner writing and illustrating the first book in 2003. Now she has written and illustrated many more books about Skippyjon and his family and his adventures. Her first book tells about a family of Siamese cats. The mother is Mama Junebug Jones and her three daughters are Ju-Ju Bee, Jezebel, and Jilly Boo Jones. There is one boy in the family and he likes adventure and his name is Skippyjon Jones. When he looks in the mirror, he notices that his ears are too big for his head and his head is too big for his body so he thinks he is not a Siamese cat but a Chihuahua dog! He loves to play like he is a superhero Chihuahua with a black mask, green cape, and rubber sword. He enters his closet where he can have adventures with other make-believe Chihuahuas. One day after he is sent to his room, he bounces on his big boy cat bed and decides to go into his closet. When he begins to play in there, he pretends he is “El Skipito Friskito” in Mexico with a whole pack of Chihuahua friends he calls “The Chimichangos”. He saves this unusual pack of dogs by defeating a humongous bumblebeeto that is tormenting them. Just as he is defeating the Alfredo Buzzito in a sword fight, Mama opens the closet door and tells him it is time for bed. The book ends with him settling down in his big boy bed and saying, “Buenas noches, mis amigos, “ as he falls asleep.

THE PLAY SCRIPT AND THE PLAY SYNOPSIS

Linda Daugherty wrote the spoken words of the play and Nick Martin wrote the music and lyrics you are coming to see at Theatre for Young America. They closely follow the basic outline of the original books. Nick Martin has added music to go with the words of the book. The two collaborators added a few extras that we hope you enjoy. To extend both the story and the opportunity for clever cat humor is an added “Quiz Kitties” game show. The three girl kitties and the mama cat are watching this program on TV as Skippy is having his adventure in the closet. The “Quiz Kitties” has a cat emcee called “Cat Nip” who brings on various cat guest stars. There is a mean tomcat named Scar, a Russian Blue female cat named Princess, who wears a diamond collar, and an old theatre cat, called Sir Mew Mew. The guest stars are asked by the emcee to answer silly questions about cats. The humor relies heavily on cat puns and jokes. Here is an example from Sir Mew Mew: “Who helped Cinderella get to the ball? Her furry godmother, of course.” During another scene when the family is watching TV, the emcee gives the girl kitties a chance to win a t-shirt if they can spell a word meaning “mouse eater” with three letters. The girls do it and win the shirts. (See if the students can guess that answer-CAT.) The show closes the same way as the book but it adds a finale with all the characters singing and dancing about imagination and having fun.

SPANISH-ENGLISH GLOSSARY

Both the book and the play contain Spanish words. Words that some of the audience may not understand. Judy Schachner provides context clue in her books to aid people in understanding the new words.

Here are some of the Spanish words and phrases used in the book and the play:

amigos.....friends

fiesta.....party

siesta.....nap

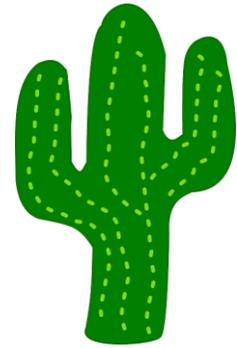
frijoles.....beans

castanets.....wood percussion music makers

por que?.....why



muy.....very
compadre.....partner
cabeza.....head
Por que la marscara, hombre?.....Why the mask, dude?
Venimos de un gran linea de protectors de la gente!.....We come from a long line
of protectors of the people!
Chihuahua de sus suenos.....dog of our dreams
Buenos noches, mis amigos.....Good night, my friends.

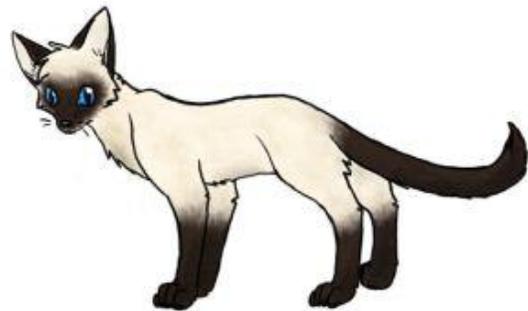


MUSIC AND DANCE

The book and the play both make use of the tune “Mexican Hat Dance” when Skippyjon Jones is going into his Skippito act. “*My Name is Skippito Friskito (clap, clap).*” Locate a recording or video of Mexican Hat Dance. (There are some on YouTube.) Have the students warm up by learning when to clap to this familiar tune. They can clap along when they come to the play. Also the students would enjoy trying some of the Mexican dancing like they will see in the play.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A CHIHUAHUA AND A SIAMESE CAT

The original author Judy Schachner lives in Philadelphia, PA with her family and a Siamese cat named Skippy. This cat served as the inspiration for THE SKIPPYJON JONES book series. In the books and play the cat is convinced that he is really a Chihuahua. Siamese cats are the most distinctly recognized breeds of Oriental cats. Thailand was formerly known as Siam, and that is where the Siamese cat is thought to have originated. They have light blue almond-shaped eyes, a triangular head shape from the ears to the chin, and elongated slender bodies. The breed is very social, intelligent, and playful. The tail is long and tapering. The coat pattern is very important on a Siamese cat. The darkest coloration is on the coolest parts of the body, such as the tips of the ears, feet, face, and tail. The lightest part of their fur is cream or white and on their warmest parts nearest the center of their bodies. The points on the extremities are generally one of these four different colors: seal point (blackish), blue point, chocolate point or lilac point (pale warm gray).



On the other hand, most people think the Chihuahua breed of dogs originated in Mexico long ago. Scholars have found paintings of the dogs on ancient pots in the Chihuahua region of Mexico. They were and are very small dogs. There are two main varieties recognized by kennel clubs, the short-haired or the long-haired. Some have heads shaped like apples while others have heads shaped like deer. Height ranges from 6 to 15 inches tall. Six pounds is the ideal weight of breed but many weigh up to 10 pounds. Chihuahuas have large eyes and large, erect ears. Chihuahuas come in many different color combinations. The tail is medium size and generally curls up at the tip.

After you have studied these two animals, try to answer these two questions. In what ways do you think Siamese cats and Chihuahua dogs are **alike**? What are some of the special **differences** in the two animals? Also, locate on a world map where Thailand is. That is where Siamese cats were thought to have originated. Locate Chihuahua, Mexico, where the dog breed is thought to have begun.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS OR WRITING PROMPTS

- What did you enjoy most about the book SKIPPYJON JONES? What did you enjoy most about the play of the book SKIPPYJON JONES? Why?
- What caught your eye first when you started reading the book? Why? What caught your eye first when the play started? Why?
- Did the setting or scenery for the play make the play look like the book or not? Why do you think that might be?
- What was your favorite costume in the play? Why?
- What character did you enjoy the most while watching the play? Why?
- Do you like to imagine things like SKIPPYJON JONES does? What do you like to pretend or imagine?
- Can you remember or look up in the book to see some of the names Skippyjon's mother called him in the book and play? What were some of them?
- When was Skippyjon Jones scared in the play? When was he the happiest in the play? Why, do you think?
- Could you understand the actors?
- If you were doing this play, what would you have done differently?
- Would you recommend the musical play SKIPPYJON JONES to a friend? Why or why not?
- What are the some differences between these three styles of entertainment: plays, movies, television?
- Which of the other SKIPPYJON JONES books have you read? If you have not read any of them, which one would you like to read now?

SKIPPYJON JONES LOST IN SPACE

SKIPPYJON JONES AND THE BIG BONES

SKIPPYJON JONES IN THE DOGHOUSE

SKIPPYJON JONES: CLASS ACTION

SKIPPYJON JONES: SNOW WHAT

