

presents

The Balsters'
DUCK SOUP
Study Guide

DUCK SOUP is a fun-filled magic show in which Tim and Robin Balster dazzle audiences with their display of prestidigitation! This fast-paced spectacle features large illusions such as the "Broomstick Suspension," an amazing defiance of gravity; "Metamorphosis", Houdini's mysterious masterpiece; and "Duck Soup," in which kids learn to follow instructions. Below, Tim and Robin have provided some suggestions and background informatio to help you integrate the performance into your curriculum; adjust activities according to the age of your students.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Review the following vocabulary words before or after the show; or have children look up the definitions.

evaporate
psychic
examine
escape

recipe
ingredients
chef

gimmick
publicity
stunt

Extra credit (for older grades): metamorphosis, prestidigitation

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

During the DUCK SOUP trick, we talk about using lists and following instructions. In the case of DUCK SOUP, we use a list of ingredients and a recipe as our instructions. Use this -- and the "results" of our recipe -- as a springboard for a discussion on how important it is to read through and understand instructions before beginning something. Also, talk about the importance of making and using lists so that things are not forgotten.

MUSIC

One of the pieces of music that is used in the show is Aram Khachaturian's "Sabre Dance" from the ballet *Gayaneh*. Before the performance, play this piece for your students and tell them to listen for it during the show. After the performance, ask them if they recognized it and if they can remember which trick the music was played during. (*HINT: it is played during the show's signature piece, DUCK SOUP.*)

HISTORY

HARRY HOUDINI (1874-1926) was born in Budapest, Hungary. When he was four years old, the young Ehrich Weiss (he later changed his name to Harry Houdini as his "stage name") came to the United States with his family; they settled in Appleton, Wisconsin. In addition to being one of the greatest magicians of all time, he was a master showman and an extraordinary escape artist. He staged spectacular escapes as publicity stunts in order to draw attention (and thereby sell tickets to his performances in theatres). We perform one of his most famous tricks as the finale of our show: the METAMORPHOSIS.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Have younger students draw a picture of their favorite trick from the show. Older students can describe the trick in writing. (How do they think the trick was done?)

Teach students some magic tricks from this study guide (see pages 2 & 3) or find a book about magic in your school library. After the students have mastered a trick or two, have a discussion about showmanship and acting skills. Using examples that they remember from the performance, talk about: speaking clearly and loudly, making eye contact with the audience, using facial expressions and body language, using music to enhance the performance, etc. Have students perform them for other classmates or as part of school assembly or talent show.

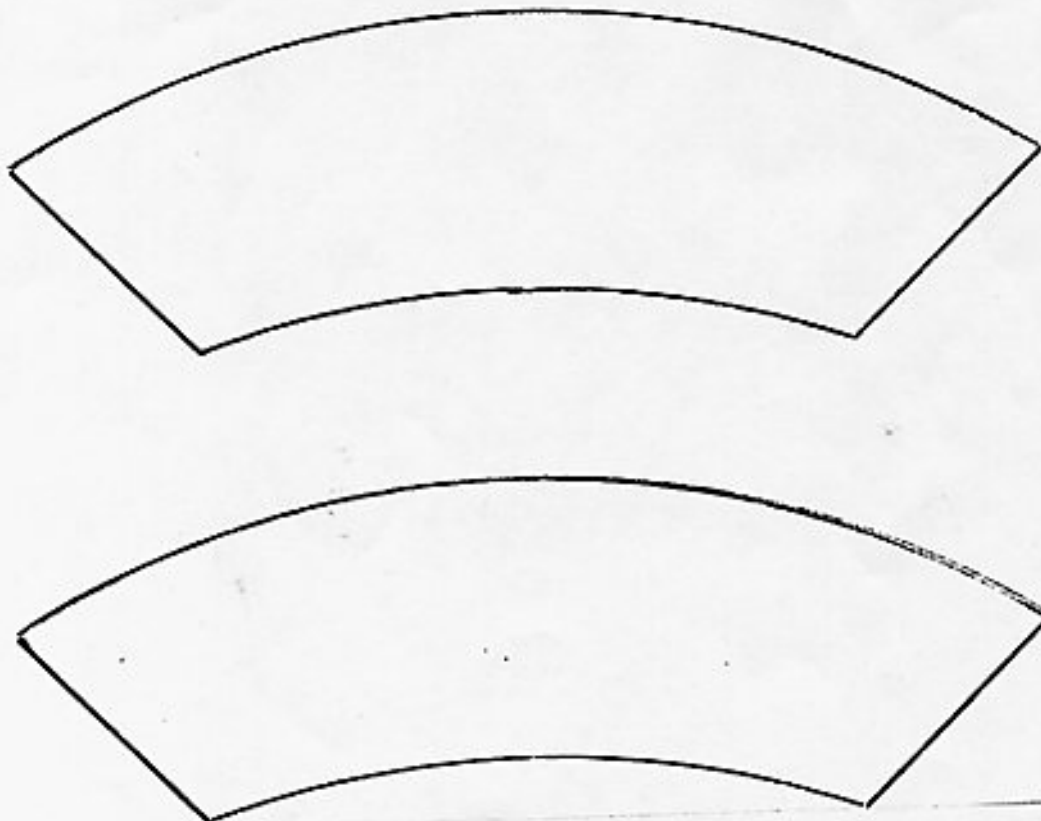
Stretching Paper An optical illusion.

Here is an optical illusion that's easy to do and is a real fooler!

The effect is that two paper or cardboard semi circles or "collars" are displayed. They are shown to be the exact same size but when one of them is "stretched" it appears to be larger than the other one. The smaller looking one can then be stretched and made to look bigger than the other.

To prepare carefully cut out the two collars below. They may be used as is or you may use one as a pattern and trace it onto a piece of poster board or use cardboard from a cereal or cracker box. (*This is recommended so that the paper collars don't accidentally rip during the performance.*)

To perform, hold the two collars together and show on both sides so that the audience can see that they are the same size. Next lay one of them on the table. Take the other and pretend to stretch it out. Here is where your acting skills are used. Pretend to strain your muscles and make your face turn red as if you were exerting a lot of effort to stretch it. Of course you do not really pull on or stretch the collar. Just pretend! Place the one that you have apparently stretched on the table just underneath the other one, Just like they were before you cut them out, only closer together. The bottom edge of the top collar should be just touching the top edge of the bottom collar. When properly placed, the bottom collar will look larger than the top one. You may then take the top one and pretend to stretch it. Place it under the collar that was left on the table. Now it will appear larger!



Handkerchief Control

The effect that the audience sees is that you show a handkerchief and pull it up through your hand. The handkerchief stands by itself. You wrap an imaginary hair around the handkerchief and it moves mysteriously back and forth.

To perform hold the handkerchief as in the first sketch, in your right hand. Now pull the handkerchief up thru your left hand as in the second picture. Pull the handkerchief up about four inches in your left hand and it will stay when you take away your right hand as in the third picture. Now with your right hand, wrap an imaginary hair around the handkerchief, and then with your left thumb you can move the handkerchief back and forth as you see in the drawing.



Stars and Circle Trick

The effect is that a circle and two stars are drawn on a rectangular piece of paper. It is then torn into three pieces and the pieces are placed in a hat or a bag. The magician is blindfolded and is asked by the audience to pull out either a piece with a star or a circle. To the amazement of the audience, the magician gets it right every time.

To prepare note figures A,B, and C. Draw circles and stars in the corresponding positions on a rectangular piece of paper.

To perform show the paper with the drawings on it. Tear it into three pieces and place them in the hat or bag. Have someone blindfold you and request either a circle or a star to be pulled from the bag. The secret is that the circle will have two ragged edges. The stars will only have one ragged edge. All you have to do is feel for the correct number of ragged edges!

STARS AND CIRCLE TRICK



FOR MORE INFORMATION

BOOKS

Blackstone, Harry. *200 Magic Tricks Anyone Can Do*. Citadel Publishers, 1999.

Borland, Kathryn Kilby. Helen Ross Speicher & Fred Irvin (Illus.) *Harry Houdini : Young Magician (The Childhood of Famous Americans)*. Aladdin Paperbacks, 1991. (Ages 9-12).

Broekel, Ray . Laurence B. White (Photog.). *Abra-Ca-Dazzle : Easy Magic Tricks*. Albert Whitman & Co., 1982.

Frederick, Guy. Jason Hurst (Illus.). *101 Classic Magic Tricks*. Sterling Publications, 1995. (Ages 9-12)

Gordon, Lynn. Susan Synarski (Illus.). *52 Cool Tricks for Kids (52 Deck Series)*. Chronicle Books, 1996. (Ages 4-8).

Kulling, Monica. Anne Reas (Illus.). *The Great Houdini (Step into Reading : A Step 3 Book)*. Random Library, 1999. (Ages 9-12).

Longe, Bob. *The Little Giant Encyclopedia of Magic*. Sterling Publications, 1999.

ON THE INTERNET

There are many websites about magic, but a good place to start is **MAGICTRICKS.COM** which has information about tricks and history, plus a glossary of magic terms (in addition to information on ordering from their catalogue): <http://www.magictricks.com>

Also check out the many links listed at **ABOUT.COM**'s section on **Magic and Illusion**:
<http://magic.about.com/hobbies/magic/>
