Teacher Resource Guide
and Lesson Plan Activities

Featuring general information about our production along with some creative activities to help you make
connections to your classroom curriculum & community service, before and after the show.

The production and accompanying activities address North Carolina Essential Standards in Theatre Arts,
Goal A.1: Analyze literary texts & performances. Look for this symbol for other curriculum connections

About The Musical
Eight-year-old Virginia O’Hanlon has always loved Christmas. After one of her classmates asked “Is there a Santa Claus?” Virginia ventures into the city to find out for herself. Along the way she consults some unusual characters: a scraggly Santa ringing a bell, an excitable librarian with a shelf full of Christmas books, and her quirky doctor father. Unable to find the answers she’s looking for, Virginia writes to The New York Sun newspaper. Her letter makes its way to the desk of curmudgeonly editor Francis Church, who has better things to do than respond to a little girl's questions. But through Virginia's determination (and a little help from a scraggly Santa), Mr. Church is persuaded to write his answer…his response became the most famous newspaper editorial of all time.

About Thalian Association & Children’s Theater
Thalian Association was founded in 1788, to provide arts education & bring the excitement of the performing arts to Wilmington, North Carolina & produces five major productions annually on the Main Stage at historic Thalian Hall. In fact, Thalian Hall was proudly named for our organization in 1858. Our mission is to present quality live theater that illuminates the human experience for the citizens of Wilmington, New Hanover County and beyond. We teach life skills through theater education and provide an outlet for artists and technicians to develop and exercise their crafts. Established over 34 years ago Thalian Association Children's Theater (TACT) is an extension of Thalian Association Community Theater non-profit organization & is dedicated to the enrichment of arts education for our community’s youth. We offer academy classes (in drama, voice, playwriting, story telling & theatrical makeup) that are aligned with the National Standards for Arts Education. Through generous support from: PPD, Cape Fear Rotary, Wilmington East Rotary an affiliate of the North Carolina Community Foundation, Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, Landfall Foundation, and the Dan Cameron Family Foundation, we provide Community Outreach Scholarship Classes to over 300 at risk students, every week. We want to turn out great theater artists as well as great doctors, lawyers, teachers and bankers. Thalian Children's Theater is about developing collaborative & thoughtful members of our community.

Like us on Facebook for a chance to win a FREE Theater Workshop for your Class!

Additional Teacher Resource Guides, Lesson Plan Activities & Student Contests are available on our website:
thalian.org
The Setting:
December, in New York City

The Characters:

Virginia:
An eight year old who lives in New York City, one of the biggest cities in the world. Virginia loves one thing more than anything else: Christmas. But when her faith in Santa Claus is shaken by a fight with a schoolyard bully, she embarks on a quest to discover the truth—is there a Santa Claus?

Ollie:
Virginia's best friend. He's a few years younger than she is, and they're almost like brother and sister. He's talkative, full of energy, and knows for certain that Santa Claus is real. In fact, he sees him all the time on the streets of New York City.

Charlotte:
A snooty, self-absorbed little rich kid, Charlotte is a year or two older than all the other kids, but already acts like a grown-up. She's convinced that Santa isn't real, and will stop at nothing to make sure all her little friends know that. Together with her accomplice, Mrs. Whiskers, they cast a cloud of doubt upon Virginia.

Editor Francis Church:
Francis Church is the gruff and grumpy editor of The New York Sun newspaper. He prints the facts, and only the facts. He doesn't have time for charity, little girls or Santa Claus—that is, until a letter from Virginia comes across his desk.

Miriam, The Librarian:
The head librarian at the New York Library, Miriam enthusiastically helps Virginia and Ollie hunt down proof of the existence of Santa Claus. Maybe she helps a little too enthusiastically. She is also the narrator of the story in the musical.

Scraggly Santa:
Once a reporter for The New York Sun, Scraggly Santa now stands on the corner of Herald Square raising pennies for the poor. He believes in helping others, just like Santa would.

The Songs:

Fa-La-La Fugue (Prologue)
Santa Claus Will Soon Be Here
A Broadway Carol
Spending Christmastime With You
Baby Stuff
Santa By The Book
Dear Editor

Fa-La-La Fugue (Reprise)
We Two!
We Two! (Reprise)
Dear Editor (Reprise)
Ollie's Observation
Mr. Church's & Virginia's Observation
Yes, Virginia (There's A Santa Claus)
Virginia O’Hanlon was born in 1889, and was eight when she wrote the New York Sun her famous letter. Her family had a tradition of writing the paper when they had questions. Little did she know, her letter would be published eventually in papers all over the world! People started writing letters to her too! In fact, she received letters for the rest of her life regarding this article. Virginia grew up and graduated from Hunter College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1910. She received her Master's degree from Columbia in 1911. In 1912, she began a 47-year career as a teacher in New York City and later became a school principal. Virginia believed that her letter and its answer shaped the direction of her life. In December 2012, two years before she passed away in a nursing home in Valatie, New York, radio station WGNA-FM in Albany, NY secured a never before published photo of Virginia, finally meeting Santa Claus on Christmas Eve 1969.

Francis P. Church was born in 1839. In his younger years, he wrote as a war correspondent during the Civil War. Church’s brother, William, owned The New York Sun, where Francis worked as an editor for 20 years. Virginia’s letter, and his response became an immediate sensation - actually one of the most famous editorials ever written. It wasn’t until after his death in 1906 that it became publicly known that Francis Church had written the editorial reply to Virginia O’Hanlon's 1897 letter. The editorial was reprinted in The New York Sun annually from the late 1920’s until the paper went out of business in 1949. It is still famous and cherished today.

The retail giant Macy's, engaged its creative team, Wesley Whatley and William Schermerhorn, to conjure the stage musical, based in part, on the 2009, Macy's-produced animated television special "Yes, Virginia." Both the stage show and TV special were inspired by the famous 1897 New York Sun editorial which answered a letter written by 8-year-old Virginia O’Hanlon, who wrote to the newspaper asking if there is a Santa Claus. Whatley and Schermerhorn also wrote the beloved stage production of Miracle on 34th Street which has played the Macy's puppet theatre, on the eighth floor of New York’s 34th Street store, for many years & a 25-minute puppet-theatre version of the Yes, Virginia musical premiered in 2012 at Herald Square. They also wrote the song "Yes, Virginia" for the 2010 Thanksgiving Parade as part of the store's holiday-oriented "Believe" ad campaign. The tune won the duo a Daytime Emmy Award.

Listen for Lines

**Playwrights** are people who write plays. They write lines of dialogue for the actors to speak. The dialogue gives us information about the story, the characters, and the way the characters feel about one another and their situation. The way the actors deliver (speak) their lines also tell you a lot about the character- something that makes the character convincing or believable.

**Actors** experiment with different ways to deliver their lines before they decide which best works to both the story and shed light on the character. Try delivering these character's lines in different ways (happily, sadly, proudly, angrily, etc.)

> “Oh, my word! Instead of me babbling on, why don’t we get right to it, shall we? After all, everything is possible when you just open... a... book!”
> - The Librarian

> “Yeah, well, the real fact is this: When people believe in something, they make the world a better place.”
> - Scraggly Santa

> “Where are you going Virginia?”
> - Ollie

> “To the place that holds the answer to every question in the world. The Library!”
> - Virginia

When you attend “Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus!” listen for these lines and for how they are delivered & observe what that tells you about how the characters feel.

North Carolina Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy: R.L.1.2: Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message and lesson.

Theater Resource Guide Thalian Association Children’s Theater www.thalian.org
Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy

RL.9. Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

Pick two characters from Macy’s Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus, to compare and contrast. What do they have in common? What makes them different?

Compare and Contrast

Word Jumble

What’s the magic word?
Unscramble the letters to find magical words

G M C I A
E E B V I E L
S I H W
L O Y J L
A L O D I Y H
C M Y S A
I R V I A N G I

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy

L1.4a: Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

SL.2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Vocabulary Enrichment

The following sentences are drawn directly from the musical, Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus & the famous editorial. Assist students learn meanings of the highlighted words by hearing them in context.

• They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age.
• They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.
• He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.
• Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus!
• The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.
• Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.
• No one is truly merry with this monetary chill.
• “Life’s Hunky Dory!”
• A sensational headline? You can’t lose!

Answer using Complete Sentences

1. Ask students if they ever thought they saw Santa Claus putting their presents under their christmas tree. See if you can elicit any good stories about how they came to not believe. Did they see their parents putting the presents out? Did their friends older brother tell them?
2. Now ask why the think little children believe? Follow up by asking if it is important for children to believe in Santa Claus or is it better to tell them the truth, that Santa Claus is not real?
3. Now, ask about the symbol of Santa Claus and holiday spirit. What does Santa Claus stand for? Try to elicit the spirit of giving, kindness to others, happiness, childlike qualities, magic. Ask if they believe in those qualities?
In 1897, a young girl named Virginia wrote a letter to The New York Sun newspaper, asking if there really was a Santa Claus. Below is Virginia’s letter, and the editor’s response.

**Dear Editor—**

*I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, “If you see it in The Sun, it’s so.” Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?*

*Virginia O’Hanlon*

Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

_Pretend you are a newspaper editor and write your own response to Virginia. How are the words we use today different from the ones used in 1897?_
Holidays Around the World

The legend of Santa Claus and holiday traditions are celebrated around the globe. Below are some international examples of holiday traditions. After exploring celebrations around the world, compare different ways that friends and families celebrate the holidays. Ask your students to discover how many different winter holidays their classmates celebrate. As a class, compare and contrast how the holidays are similar and how they are different.

Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday, not a religious one, which emphasizes seven cultural values: Unity, Self Determination, Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and Faith. Each night one candle is lit to represent each cultural value.

Le Re'veillon is celebrated in France and some parts of Canada. A late supper is held on Christmas Eve and a large candle, symbolizing the light of the world, burns all night long. Children leave their shoes or wooden clogs called sabots in the hearth for Pere Noel to fill.

In Holland, St. Nicholas wears Bishops robes and arrives in a boat or on a white horse. December 5th is called Sinterklass Eve, when presents are given and received. Farmers in Holland blow long horns at sunset every night during Christmas to announce the joyful day.

Los Posados is celebrated in Mexico beginning December 16 and lasting for 9 nights. Children and their families reenact the story of Mary and Joseph by traveling house to house with lighted candles.

Celebrated by millions of people across the globe, Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday known as the “Festival of Lights”. Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days. The lighting of a candle each night during Hanukkah represents the rededication of the temple of Jerusalem where oil burned in the temple for eight days straight.

Omisoka is a Japanese tradition which celebrates the year and longevity. People gather to eat long noodles called toshikoshi which symbolize crossing over from one year to the next. A kadomatsu decoration is placed on each side of the front door. Made of pine, bamboo and straw, the decoration symbolizes longevity, prosperity and purity.

Islam is a widespread religion practiced in Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as certain countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Russia, China, Europe and North and South America. Each year, Muslims observe Ramadan for 30 days. During this time, they honor their religion by fasting, praying, receiving religious instruction and feeding the poor. At the end of Ramadan, Muslims observe a three day celebration called Eid al-Fitr (the Festival of Fast Breaking). During this time, celebrants give in charity to those in need and celebrate with family and friends.

Chinese New Year is one of the main holiday festivals in China. Families celebrate by sharing food, honoring ancestors and giving “lucky money” in red envelopes to symbolize a prosperous new year.

Boxing Day, Celebrated in Great Britain, Australia, Bermuda, Canada and some Caribbean Islands, occurs on the day after Christmas and represents the opening of alms boxes (offerings) for the poor.

The Winter Solstice is celebrated by many countries throughout the world. The word solstice literally means “sun standing still”. At the moment of the winter solstice, the path of the sun has reached its furthest southern position and begins its turn northward. Festivals of the Winter Solstice have ancient origins. It is celebrated by adorning the home with herbs and evergreen and joining friends and family for food and festivities.
“It’s the thought that counts, not the gift itself.”

The Commercialism of the holidays has most people so wrapped up in Gift Giving that the original intention of the event is lost. Have a question and answer session in your classroom about the following topics:

- How many times have we heard “It’s the thought that counts, not the gift itself”? What does it mean? Are gifts from the heart more important than expensive material items? Why?
- Excluding the giving of presents, what do all the holidays mentioned above have in common? (spirit of love, family, helping the poor, etc.)

Believe it or not the United States is one of the few countries where cultural diversity is looked upon as a great strength. Discuss the basic concepts of freedom of religion and free speech with your students.

- How do our differences make us stronger?
- Name 5 great humanitarians who have helped America become the greatest symbol of freedom and human rights that civilization has ever known.

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**Holiday Fun Facts**

**The North Pole or Turkey?**
Santa Claus got his name from Saint Nicholas, a bishop of the town of Myra, who was known for being specially kind to all children. Today, Myra is part of the country of Turkey.

**All Ears**
During Kwanzaa, families set out ears of corn to show how many children there are in the family. People without children set out one ear of corn to show that they are parents of their community.

**12 Lucky Animals**
In the Chinese lunar calendar each of the 12 years is named after an animal. According to legend, Lord Buddha asked all the animals to come to him before he left the earth. Only 12 animals came to wish him farewell, and as a reward Buddha named a year after each one.

**Moooooo!**
To celebrate the Hindu holiday of Diwali, farmers dress up their cows with decorations and treat them with respect. The farmers show their thanks to the cows for helping the farmers earn a living.

**La Befana or Baboushka**
The nativity scene originated in Italy. St. Francis of Assisi commissioned Giovanni Vellita to build a manger scene. Italy’s big celebration centers around the Epiphany. According to legend, the Magi stopped and asked an old woman for food and shelter during their journey. She refused them. A few hours later the woman had a change of heart, but the Magi were gone. La Befana, which means Epiphany, still wanders the earth in search of the Christ Child. She brings presents to the good and punishment to the bad. Throughout the world La Befana is known as the Christmas witch. Epiphany (January 6) is when she delivers the gifts. Russia has a similar legend, but the old lady is named Baboushka!
Thalian Association Children’s Theater (TACT) are created in the city of Wilmington, by a talented team of artists such as designers, carpenters, lighting & sound technicians, prop masters, musicians, seamstresses, directors and actors, with the help of numerous parents and community volunteers.

A play is very different from a movie or television show, because it is presented live. As a class, discuss what you experienced when you went to the theater and how you felt afterwards.

1. What was the first thing you noticed on the stage?
2. Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed? How could you have used recycled materials?
3. What did you like about the costumes? Did they fit the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed? Can costumes be everyday clothing?
4. What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
5. Describe the actors. Were there moments you were so engaged in the story that you forgot you were watching a live play? What characters remind you of someone you know in real life?
6. Is there a movie version of the play you saw today? Have you read the book? What made your experience of seeing the live play unique?
7. If you could adapt a story into a play, which story would you choose? Describe how you would use special effects, lighting, costumes, characters, sets and music to create your play.

North Carolina Essential Standards in Theatre Arts 3.A.
1.2: Evaluate formal or informal theatre productions in terms of the emotions or thoughts they evoke.

Next Onstage for the Children’s Theater:
School House Rock!
“One of those rare shows that work both as an evening of amusing, mildly campy nostalgia and as a compelling piece of children’s theater” – Chicago Reader
February 20 - March 1, 2015
Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center

Inquire NOW how your class could attend a special Pre-View Night!
910-251-1788

Study Guide References: MTI, Wikipedia, NC public schools, playbill.com
Common Core, NC Highway Historical Marker Program, NC Department of Cultural Resources, Song Writers Hall of Fame, stlyrics.com, Make-A-Wish, Lake Worth Playhouse, Stages Productions, NHCS, Macy’s, Yes Virginia The Musical, Ciker

Now it is your turn to be creative and do something for your community.

This holiday season Thalian Association is partnering with Make-A-Wish® as part of Macy’s “Believe” campaign. During the annual holiday program, Macy’s collects letters to Santa, and for every letter collected, will donate $1 to Make-A-Wish, helping to grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions. If you would like to help, please write your letter to Santa on the letter template provided and drop it off at the Santa Mail letterbox at

Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center
120 South 2nd Street at the corner of Orange Street.

Our goal is to mail over 1,000 letters to Santa’s Mailbox at Macy’s
For your help,
at each performance of Macy’s Yes Virginia,
2 letters will be drawn from a raffle, for a chance to win:
2 tickets to A Christmas Carol
Onstage at Thalian Hall December 11 - 21, 2014
or
2 tickets to School House Rock Live
Onstage February 20th - March 1, 2015

All 10 winners will be posted on our Facebook page the week of December 8th

Contact Susan Habas, shabas@thalian.org or David T. Loudermilk, davidtloudermilk@thalian.org for more details.

Together, we can help Macy’s and Make-A-Wish as they collect a million reasons to believe.

North Carolina Essential Standards in Social Studies  2.C & G.2
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of citizens.  2.C&G.
2.2 Explain why it is important for citizens to participate in their community.

Like us on Facebook to stay informed!

Big Shows,
By Young Performers!

School House Rock!
“One of those rare shows that work both as an evening of amusing, mildly campy nostalgia and as a compelling piece of children’s theater” – Chicago Reader

February 20 - March 1, 2015
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Dear Santa,

From