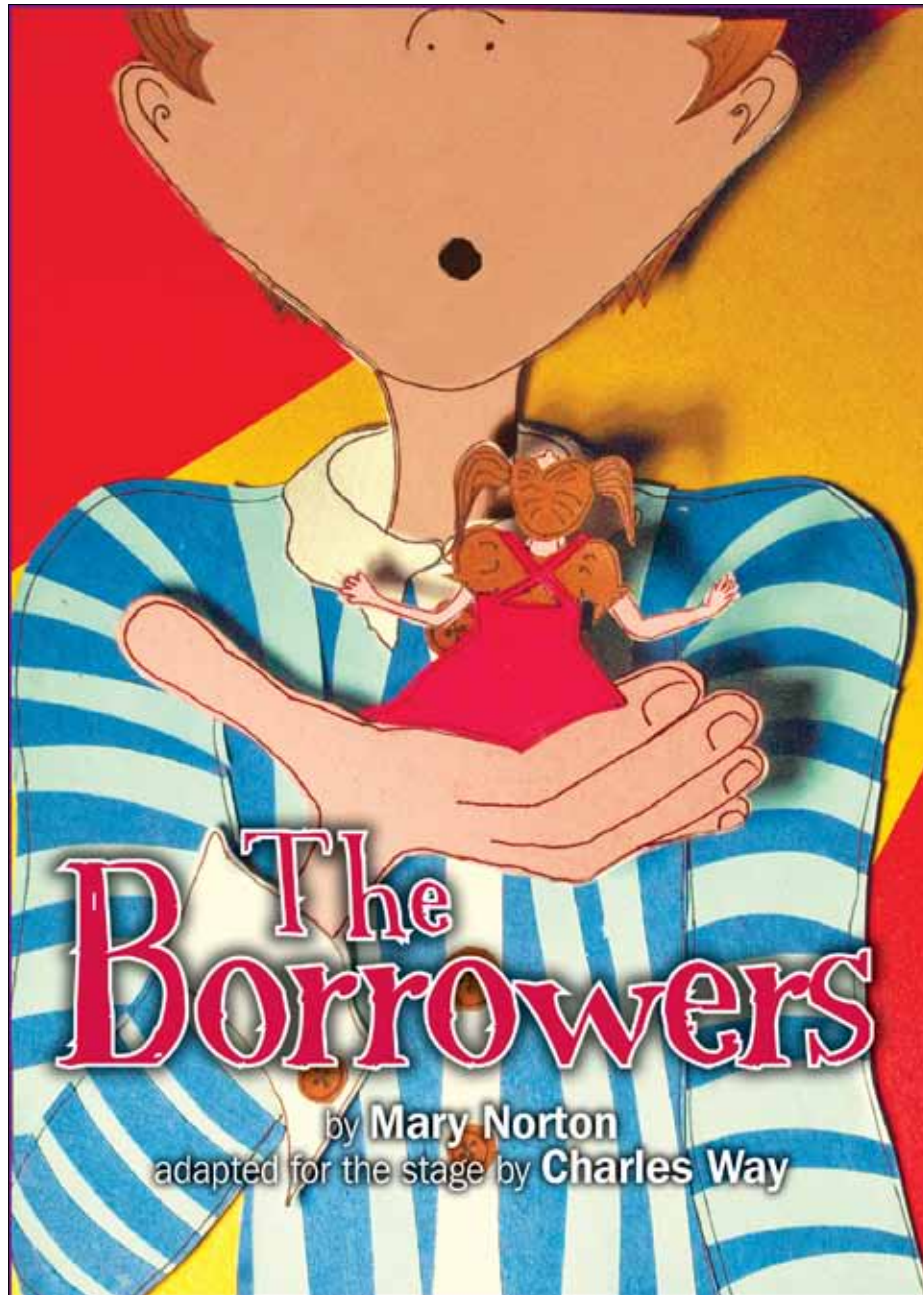


South Coast Repertory

STUDY GUIDE



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I: THE PLAY

The Characters

The Story

About playwright Charles Way

About author Mary Norton

An Excerpt From the Book

Part II: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Before the Show

Vocabulary

Critical Thinking Activities

After the Show

Discussion and Activities about the Theatre

Discussion and Activities about the Play

Drawing Activities

Letters of Thanks

Part III: AT THE THEATRE

Welcome to the Argyros

Theatre Etiquette

Student Tips for Theatre Trips

Theatre Etiquette Quiz

Programs

Theatre Vocabulary

Part IV: EDUCATION STATION

Five Strands of Arts Education

California Visual and Performing Arts Framework

Part V: RESOURCES

The Borrowers books by Mary Norton

Other Adaptations

Other Study Guides and Lesson Plans

Answer Key

PART I: The Play

The Characters

The Borrowers

Arrietty
Pod
Homily
Spiller
Eggletina

The Humans

The Boy
Mrs. Driver
Crampfurl
Gypsy Boy



Synopsis

Charles Way's adaptation of the story incorporates elements from the first two of Mary Norton's books about the *Borrowers*: *The Borrowers* and *The Borrowers Afield*.

At the beginning of the play, we meet The Boy, sickly and recently arrived at his bedridden Aunt Sophy's house to get well in the air of the English countryside. His caregivers are the sour Mrs. Driver and the gardener, Crampfurl. Then, we see the Borrowers who live beneath the floorboards—the Clock family: father Pod, mother Homily, and the adventurous Arrietty. Homily and Arrietty are preparing dinner when Pod bursts in with the news that he has been seen by a human. The family discusses fleeing, but in the end Pod and Homily decide they will teach Arrietty how to borrow. She's thrilled, and her excitement is undeterred by their warnings about danger in the outside world. Pod agrees to take Arrietty on his next borrowing adventure. They make their way above-ground. Pod tells Arrietty to stay near the opening that will lead her back to their home. Despite his orders, Arrietty wanders away and discovers The Boy. Arrietty explains to him what it means to be a borrower. The Boy upsets Arrietty when he tells her she might be the last of her kind. Arrietty pleads with The Boy, tells him that she can't be the last borrower left

because of her Uncle Hendreary, who lives in a badger's set only two fields away from Aunt Sophie's mansion. Pod discovers Arrietty talking to The Boy, and chastises her. The Boy discovers where the Clocks live and gives them gifts, but inadvertently alerts Mrs. Driver and Crampfurl to the Clocks' hideaway. The Clocks frantically escape into the great outdoors and set off in search of the long lost Uncle Hendreary.



They trudge through the wilderness, with little food and few supplies, and encounter many dangerous elements of nature on their journey. They discover an old muddy boot that they transform into a new home and they

befriend the mysterious and stoic Spiller, a fellow borrower from the wild who helps the Clocks survive a harsh winter. Pod searches the field for the badger hole daily, but can find only foxes and debris—he is exhausted. Spiller promises to take Pod's place and find Uncle Hendreary. The Clock's situation grows increasingly desperate, as they meet a family of gypsies and battle Mrs. Driver before they are finally reunited with Uncle Hendreary and his family!

About the Playwright, Charles Way



Charles Way has written more than 40 plays, many of them for young people, and his works have been produced all over the world. These include *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Search for Odysseus* and *A Spell of Cold Weather*, which were all nominated as Best Children's Play by the Writer's Guild of Great Britain.

Other plays include *The Flood*, *Red Red Shoes*, *One Snowy Night*, *The Tinderbox* and *The Night Before Christmas*. He was commissioned by the National Theatre to write *Alice in the News*, which children all over Britain have performed. He has won several awards and was the recipient of the "Children's award" given by the Arts Council of England for *Red Red Shoes* as best play for young people 2004. His play *Merlin and the Cave of Dreams*, for Imagination Stage, was nominated for a Helen Hayes award for the Outstanding New Play of 2004.

Way has said that he sees no difference between writing for children and writing for adults, and has "without a doubt found great joy and inspiration by creating plays for children and young people."

His plays for adults include a version of Bruce Chatwin's *On the Black Hill* and an adaptation of *Independent People* by Halldor Laxness. Recent new plays include *Still Life*, *The Long Way Home* and *The Dutiful Daughter*.

About Author, Mary Norton



Mary Norton (Author, 1903 – 1992), was born in London, the only girl in a family of five children. She was brought up in the Manor House in Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, which later became the setting of her most famous book, *The Borrowers*. She was educated at convent schools and, after a brief and unsuccessful time as a secretary, she became an actress. She was a member of the Old Vic Theatre Company for two years and always thought of herself more an actress than a writer. She remembered her most thrilling moment as the time she first went on stage as an understudy at the Old Vic. She gave up the theatre when she got married and went to live with her husband in Portugal. There her two sons and two daughters were born, and she began to write.

When war broke out in 1939, Mary's husband joined the Navy and she brought her children back to England via the United States—she lived there for a while waiting for a passage home. She returned to the stage in 1943. *The Borrowers* was published in 1952 and won her the Carnegie Medal, the most important prize in children's fiction. The story was based on fantasies from her childhood when her short-sightedness made her aware of the teeming life in the countryside around her. C. S. Lewis, the author of the *Narnia* books, wrote

to her in 1956: "May a stranger write his thanks and congratulations for *The Borrowers* and *The Borrowers Afield*? They have given me great and (I anticipate) lasting pleasure..."

Biography of Mary Norton from Puffin Books:

<http://www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,1000027438,00.html>

Going by the Book

A short excerpt from The Borrowers by Mary Norton

“It’s that curtain,” cried Homily. “He can’t climb a curtain at his age—not by the bobbles!”

“With his pin he could,” said Arrietty.

“His pin! I led him into that one too! Take a hatpin, I told him, and tie a bit of name-tape to the head, and pull yourself upstairs. It was to borrow the emerald watch from Her bedroom for me to time the cooking.” Homily’s voice began to tremble. “Your mother’s a wicked woman, Arrietty. Wicked and selfish, that’s what she is!”

“You know what?”
exclaimed Arrietty suddenly.

Homily brushed away a tear. “No,” she said wanly, “what?”

“I could climb a curtain.”

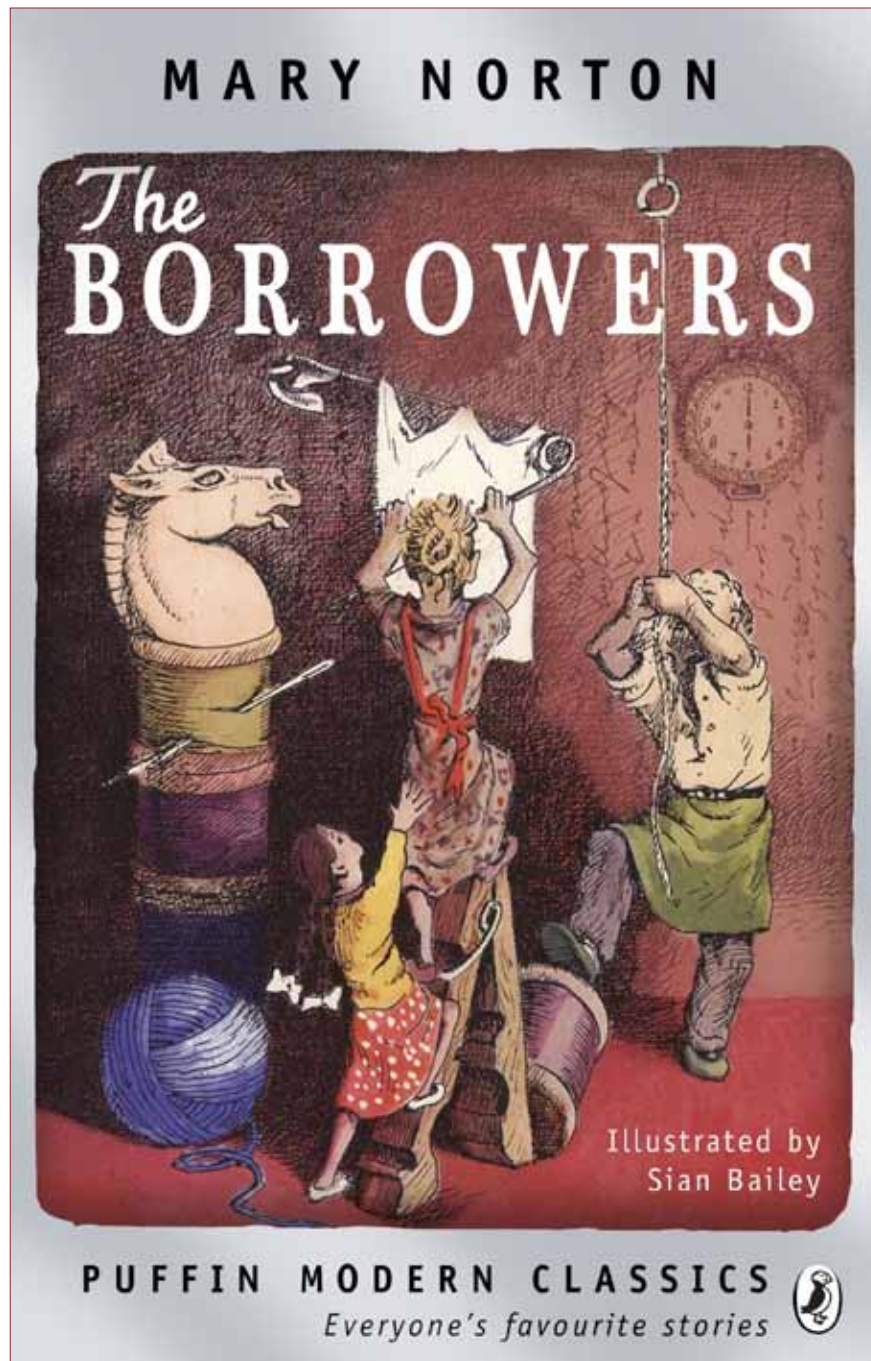
Homily rose up. “Arrietty, you dare stand there in cold blood and say a thing like that!”

“But I could! I could borrow! I know I could!”

“Oh!” gasped Homily. “Oh, you wicked heathen girl! How can you speak so!” and she crumpled up again on the cork stool. “So it’s come to this!” she said.

“Now, Mother, please,” begged Arrietty, “now, don’t take on!”

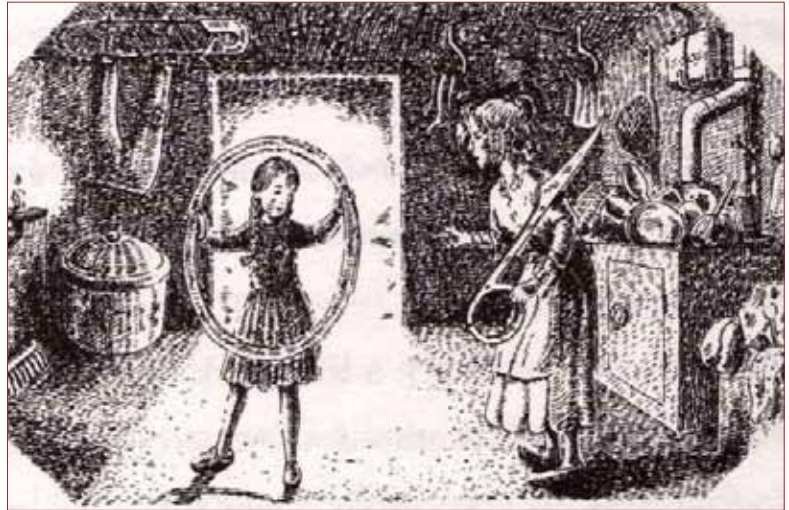
“But don’t you see, Arrietty...” gasped Homily; she stared down at the table at a loss for words and then, at last, raised a haggard face. “My poor child,” she said, “don’t speak like that of borrowing. You don’t know—and, thank goodness, you never will know” she dropped her voice to a fearful whisper—“what it’s like upstairs...”



PART II: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Before the Show

1. Introduce Mary Norton's novel *The Borrowers* to the class by either reading aloud, or asking students to read aloud.
2. Ask students to:
 - a. Identify the main events of the plot, their causes, and their effects on future actions.
 - b. Discuss the traits of major characters, their motivations and contributions to the dramatic action.
 - c. Identify speakers or narrators.
 - d. Determine underlying theme or message.



3. Allow students to retell or dramatize this story by employing different vocal tones and attitudes to explore multiple possibilities in a live performance. How do students think the world of the Borrowers might be represented?
4. Examine the structural differences between fiction and drama. Explore what it means to “adapt” literature from one form to another, specifically from fiction to drama. Discuss various ways that the content of books might have to change in order to be suitable for staging using information in the book, as well as prior knowledge of the conventions of live theatre.
5. Ask students to make predictions about the play they're going to see based upon their knowledge of the source text. For example, not every character or event in the book appears in the play. Which ones do you expect to see onstage? Who will the actors be? How will the scenery, costumes and props look? Will there be music? If so, how will it sound?

Vocabulary

Listen for these vocabulary words in the show:

- Scuttle
- Emigrate
- Hankering
- Stealing
- Borrowing
- Blotting paper
- Noxious
- Ferret
- Elderberry
- Caravan
- Hatpin

Unscramble each of the vocabulary words. Then unscramble the letters that are circled to spell out where Arrietty most wants to go!

1. GBIONRW(O)R
2. L(T)SUC(ET)
3. NPH(I)TA
4. (U)OXNISO
5. RREF(T)E
6. REGMTA(I)E
7. REEEB(D)LRRY

After the Show

Discussion About the Theatre

Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance and ask students the following questions about their experience at SCR.

1. What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the theatre? What did you notice first on the stage?
2. What about the set? Talk about things you remember. Did the set change during the play? How was it moved or changed? Was there any space other than the stage where the action took place?
3. How did the lights set the mood of the play? How did they change throughout? What do you think “house lights” are? How do they differ from stage lights? Did you notice different areas of lighting?
4. What did you think about the costumes? Do you think they fit the story? What things do you think the costume designer had to consider before creating the costumes?
5. Was there music in the play? How did it add to the performance?
6. What about the actors? Do you think they were able to bring the characters to life? Did you feel caught up in the story? What things do you think the actors had to work on in order to make you believe they were the characters? What about when the actors used puppets?
7. If you were an actor, which of the characters would you like to play and why?
8. Which job would you like to try: Acting, Directing, Lighting designer, Sound designer, Stage Manager, Set designer, Costume designer or Stage crew? What skills might you need to complete your job?
9. How was the play different from the way you thought it would be?
10. How is being at the theatre different from being at the movies?
11. Think about the set, lighting, costumes and music used in the play. If you were asked to design a production of *The Borrowers*, what would you do differently?
12. Write about how you think it might feel to be one of the actors. Would you notice the audience when you're on the stage? How might you feel about the reactions of the audience? How would you feel before the play began? What about after it ends?

Discussion and Activities About the Play

1. Discuss ways in which the play differed from students' predictions, paying special attention to the differences between written and stage versions.
2. Ask students to use the vocabulary of theatre (see Part IV of this guide) to describe the performance.
 - a. How did the actors look (costumes, makeup, movement)?
 - b. How did the adult actors prepare to play the child roles?
 - c. How did the stage look (scenery, lighting, props)?
 - d. How did the play sound (music, singing, special effects)?

3. Have the students define borrowing. Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Have them give at least three reasons to support their answer.
4. Pod and Homily initially try to shield Arrietty from the larger world outside of their home underneath the floorboards. What are some things parents try to shield or protect their children from? Can parents go too far in making rules and guidelines? Can children go too far in defying parents' rules? Give examples.
5. Who is your favorite character and how would you describe him/her?

Drawing Activities

1. Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from the stage. Are you and your friends in the picture?
2. Draw a picture of the rest of Pod, Homily, and Arrietty's house beneath the floor. What kind of items, other than the ones you saw onstage, do you think they would use to furnish their house?

Letters of Thanks

Write letters of thanks to SCR describing the most memorable aspects of attending a performance of *The Borrowers*, and what you enjoyed most about your visit to SCR.

Send letters to:

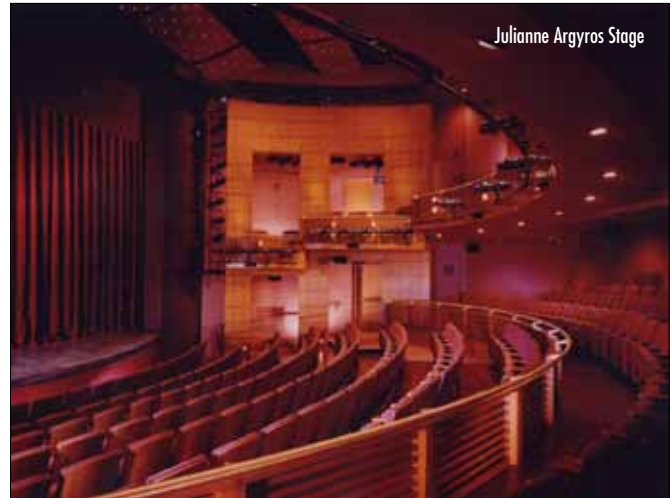
South Coast Repertory
Attn: TYA
PO Box 2197
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197



PART III: AT THE THEATRE

Welcome to the Argyros

The 336-seat Argyros Stage is the newest theatre space at SCR. It opened in 2002 with a huge celebration and we are delighted that thousands of Orange County school children fill this state-of-the-art facility each season to enjoy our Theatre for Young Audiences productions. The Argyros is a proscenium theatre designed to provide audiences a feeling of intimacy, with no seat more than 39 feet from the stage.



Theatre Etiquette

Theatre is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. A performance is influenced by an audience, just as an audience is influenced by a performance. The artists and staff of South Coast Repertory are creating a special new world for you to visit. When you walk into the theatre, you will feel that behind the curtain lies the secret of that new world which is about to come to life before your eyes. Sometimes it's so exciting, you can barely hold still. But remember that once the play begins, you have a very important job to do. Everybody in the theatre is a part of the play. You are connected to all the other people in the audience, as well as to the actors on the stage. Remember, you're all in the same room. They can SEE you, HEAR you, and FEEL you, just as you can SEE, HEAR, and FEEL them. Your attention, involvement, responses, and imagination are a real part of each and every performance. The play can actually be made better because of you!

Student Tips for Theatre Trips

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Listen carefully to the SCR staff member who will board your bus with last-minute tips.
- Take your seat in the theatre before going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Please do not stand up, walk around, or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no chewing gum, eating, or drinking in the building.
- No backpacks, cameras, or electronic devices are permitted in the theatre.
- Feel free to talk quietly in your seats before the show.
- Show your appreciation by clapping for the actors at the end of the play.
- After the lights come back up, wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.

Theatre Etiquette Yes/No Game

Ask students the following questions to test their understanding of how to behave before, during, and after the performance.

Should you...

- Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun? (Yes!)
- Share your thoughts out loud with those sitting near you? (No!)
- Wave and call out to the actors on stage? (No!)
- Sit on your knees or stand near your seat? (No!)
- Bring snacks and gum to enjoy during the show? (No!)
- Reward the cast and crew with applause when you like a song or dance and at the end of the show? (Yes!)
- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything or disturb other audience members while you are being seated? (Yes!)
- Keep all hands and feet and items out of the aisles during the performance? (Yes!)

Programs

Everyone who attends a Theatre for Young Audiences performance at SCR receives a program, also called a playbill. Patrons at weekend public performances receive their programs from the ushers upon entering the theatre. At the conclusion of each weekday matinee, teachers will be given programs for their students which can be distributed back in the classroom. In addition to the customary information about the play and the players, the program contains features and activities that students will have fun working on after the show, either in class or at home on their own.

Basic Theatre Vocabulary

Acting The process by which an individual interprets and performs the role of an imagined character.

Action The core of a theatre piece; the sense of forward movement created by the sequence of events and the physical and psychological motivations of characters.

Ad-Lib To improvise stage business or dialogue; to make it up as you go along.

Apron The area of the stage that extends toward the audience, in front of the main curtain.

Backstage The space behind the acting area, unseen by the audience.

Balcony An upper floor of seats projecting out over the main seating area of a theatre.

Blocking The movement and stage business, designed by the director and performed by the actors.

Boxes Seats separated from the main seating area located on the upper level near the stage.

Box office A windowed space at the front of the theatre building where tickets are sold.

Business Any action performed on stage.

Character The role played by an actor as she or he assumes another's identity.

Choreography The art of creating and arranging dances onstage.

Conflict The problem or incident that creates the action and is resolved by the end of the play.

Costume The carefully selected or specially designed clothing worn by the actors.

Cross The actor's movement from one stage location to another.

Cue The last words or action of an actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor.

Dialogue The stage conversation between characters.

Diction The clarity with which words are pronounced.

Director The person who oversees the entire process of staging a theatrical production.

Downstage The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time stages were raked, or sloped, with the lower ("down") part closest to the audience, and the higher ("up") part further away.

Ensemble A cast of actors working together effectively to present a theatrical performance.

Flats Canvas or wood-covered frames that are used for the walls of a stage setting.

Green Room A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests. The room's name comes from Elizabethan times, when actors waited on a real "green" (or patch of grass).

Improvisation The spontaneous use of movement and speech, made up by an actor to create a character.

Lobby The public waiting area outside the theatre space.

Mezzanine Lower level seating area beneath the balcony overhang.

Monologue A solo speech during which the character reveals personal thoughts.

Narrator A character who tells the story of the play directly to the audience.

Orchestra Lower level seating area immediately in front of the stage.

"Places" Direction given by the Stage Manager for actors to be in position before each act begins.

Plot The "what happens" in a story: beginning (the setting, characters, and problem); middle (how the characters work to solve the problem); and the ending (resolution of the problem).

Project To speak loudly so the entire audience can hear you.

Props All the stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.

Proscenium Stage A traditional theatre with the audience seated in front of a proscenium arch framing the stage. SCR's Argyros Stage is a proscenium stage.

Run Length of time the play will be presented (i.e two weeks, two months, two years).

Script The text of the play, including dialogue and stage directions, all written by the playwright.

Set All of the scenery that makes up the physical environment of the world of the play.

Stagecraft The knowledge and skills required to create the physical aspects of a production; i.e., scenery, lighting, costumes, props and recorded sound and music.

Stage Left That part of the stage to the actor's left when the actor faces the audience.

Stage Manager The person who supervises the physical production of a play and who is in charge of the stage during the performance.

Stage Right That part of the stage to the actor's right when the actor faces the audience.

Strike Dismantling the set, costumes and props at the end of the run of a show.

Theme The central thought, idea, or significance of the action of a play.

Upstage The area of the stage farthest way from the audience and nearest to the back wall.



PART IV: EDUCATION STATION

Study guide activities directly support the California State Standards in the areas of:

1. English Language Arts
 - 1.0 Word analysis and systematic vocabulary development
 - 3.0 Literary response and analysis
 - 1.0 Writing strategies and applications
2. Mathematical Reasoning
 - 1.0 Students make decisions about how to approach problems
 - 2.0 Students use strategies, skills and concepts in finding solutions
 - 3.0 Students move beyond a particular problem by generalizing to other situations
3. Visual Arts/Performing Arts Theatre
 - 5.0 Connections, relationships, applications
 - 2.0 Creative expression
 - 3.0 Aesthetic valuing

The SCR Study Guide is designed to put activities in the teacher's hand which will make the theatre experience more meaningful for the students. The packet is designed to incorporate many of the California State Standards making the learning relevant and integrated.

Five Strands of Arts Education

Students in a comprehensive program are expected to master the standards of an arts discipline, which includes the following five strands:

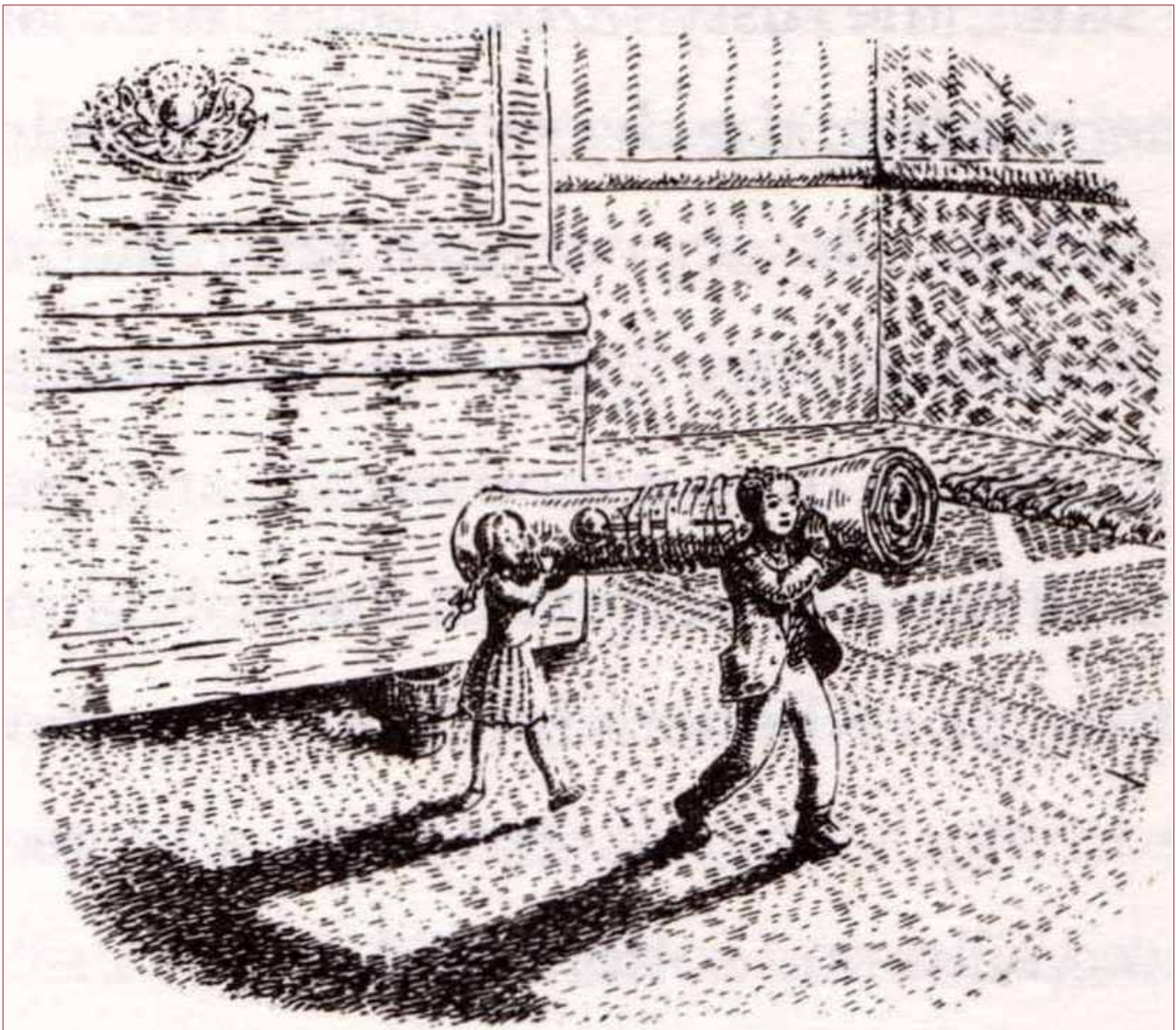
- 1.0 Artistic Perception refers to processing, analyzing and responding to sensory information through the use of the language and skills unique to dance, music, theatre and visual arts.
- 2.0 Creative Expression involves creating a work, performing and participating in the arts disciplines. Students apply processes and skills in composing, arranging and performing a work and use a variety of means to communicate meaning and intent in their own original formal and informal works.
- 3.0 Historical and Cultural Context concerns the work students do toward understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of an arts discipline. Students analyze roles, functions, development in the discipline, and human diversity as it relates to that discipline.
- 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing includes analyzing and critiquing works of dance, music, theatre or visual arts. Students apply processes and skills to productions or performances. They also critically assess and derive meaning from the work [...] and from performances and original works based on the elements and principles of an arts discipline.
- 5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications involves connecting and applying what is learned in one arts discipline and comparing it to learning in the other arts, other subject areas and careers. Students develop competencies and creative skills that contribute to lifelong learning.

<http://www.caea-arteducation.org/www/pages/standards-prek-6.html>

From the California And Visual Arts Framework

Education in the arts is essential for all students. California's public school system must provide a balanced curriculum, with the arts as part of the core for all students, kindergarten through grade twelve, no matter what the students' abilities, language capacities or special needs happen to be. Each of the arts disciplines maintains a rich body of knowledge that enables the students to understand their world in ways that support and enhance their learning in other core subjects. In addition, through this rich body of knowledge, students learn how each of the arts contributes to their own sensitivity of the aesthetic qualities of life. Students learn to see what they look at, to hear what they listen to, feel what they touch and to understand more clearly what they integrate into their own experience.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/rlafw.pdf>



PART V: RESOURCES

The Borrowers Books by Mary Norton

The Borrowers (first published in 1952)

The Borrowers Afield (first published in 1955)

The Borrowers Afloat (first published in 1959)

The Borrowers Aloft (first published in 1961, which includes “Poor Stainless” (a story from Homily’s childhood)

The Borrowers Avenged (first published in 1982)

Other Adaptations

1973: Emmy award winning Hallmark Hall of Fame TV special, first broadcast on NBC. The film stars Eddie Albert, Tammy Grimes and Judith Anderson and was directed by Walter C. Miller and in 2004 was re-released on DVD.

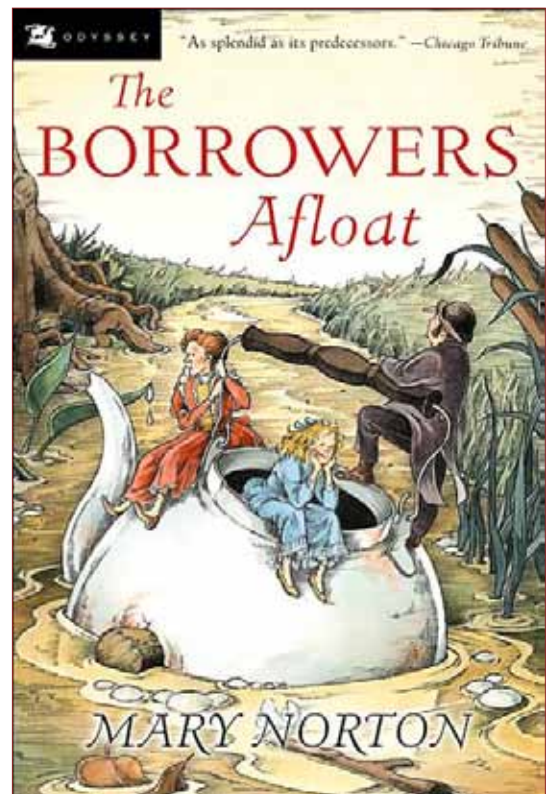
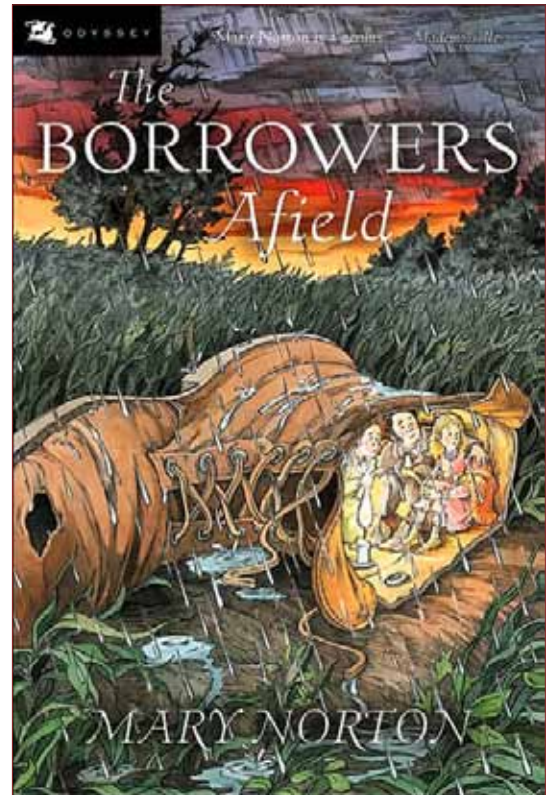
1993: TV miniseries version from the BBC, first broadcast in 1992 on BBC2 and then later on American television station TNT. The film stars Ian Holm, Penelope Wilton and Rebecca Callard and was directed by John Henderson. The miniseries was named on the British Film Institute’s list of 100 Greatest British Television Programmes. (Not available on DVD)

1997: from director Peter Hewitt, this film version starred John Goodman, Jim Broadbent and Hugh Laurie (currently available on DVD).

2010: A film called *Arrietty*, which is a Japanese animated fantasy film based on *The Borrowers*. It went on to become the highest grossing film in the Japanese box office for the year of 2010 and won the Animation of the Year award at the 34th Japan Academy Prize award ceremony.

2011: television adaptation by the BBC (first airing on BBC December 25, 2011) starring Stephen Fry, Christopher Eccleston and Victoria Wood.

It’s not an adaptation, but interestingly, John Peterson wrote an American series of children’s books in 1967 featuring the Littles, a family of tiny but intelligent humanoid creatures who live in a house owned by the Bigg family. Unlike the Borrowers, they had mouse-like characteristics including a long, furry tail, long teeth and pointy ears. They were adapted into a children’s television series in 1983 and a feature film in 1985.



Other Study Guides and Lesson Plans

Arden Theatre study guide for this *Borrowers* adaptation by Charles Way:

<http://issuu.com/ardentheatre/docs/theborrowersstudyguide>

Book club discussion questions about *The Borrowers*:

[http://www.lanairoad.org/files/Download/TheBorrowers\(4thgrade\).pdf](http://www.lanairoad.org/files/Download/TheBorrowers(4thgrade).pdf)

Random House link to activities based around the books:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/junieeb/activities/activities.html#>

Literature Unit on *The Borrowers* from EdHelper.com:

http://edhelper.com/books/The_Borrowers.htm

Answer Key

Answers to Word Scramble:

1. Borrowing
2. Scuttle
3. Hatpin
4. Noxious
5. Ferret
6. Emigrate
7. Elderberry

Where does Arrietty most want to go? OUTSIDE