

Big Theatre for Little People



By **Eric R. Pfeffinger**

Directed by **David Saar**

A Co-Production with **Childsplay, Inc., Tempe, Arizona**



Geva
Theatre
Center

Big Theatre for Little People

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Dear Educators,

What's around the next corner?

This question is one of my favorite reasons for going to the theatre. I am on the very edge of my seat, watching a character who is about to face something new, and the possibilities are endless! A surprise may appear in a cloud of smoke, or a villain will swallow the only key, or the best friend won't be waiting right where he said he would be. But my hero will be brave enough to turn that corner anyway. And what will she do? Will she have to sing or run or riddle or tickle or hug her way to a solution? As I watch that actor, standing just across the room from me, I can't help but wonder if I could step into her place and face the same surprise.

Lost and Foundling is a story of turning corners and making discoveries, of finding new opportunities in familiar surroundings. The brave and curious heroine finds her way through the labyrinth of the store, daring to explore something new instead of sticking with what's "satisfactory." And while her friends warn that she'll suffer the danger and disappointments of the unknown, our hero relishes her newfound ability to solve problems and travel to new horizons. She's a plucky, resourceful, and fearless young person. We can't have enough of those in our world.

I hope this guide will be a resource to start conversations and prepare for your visit to the theatre. Whether you're studying the Oregon Trail or the South Pole or *The Odyssey*, education makes us all explorers. You, your class, Pryce and I all want to keep learning just a little more about what's around the next corner.

Intrepidly Yours,



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Eric R. Pfeffinger . 4

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Cast of Characters

Pryce

Staci

Jesse

Custodian

The Slasher

The Demanding
Shopper

The Free Sample
Lady

The Never-ending
Line

Lost and Found

P.A. Announcer

Associates

"Happiness. Aisle twenty, right by the
gummy candies."

Staci

Synopsis

Have you ever been lost? How did you find your way back?

Have you ever lost something? Did you get it back? What happened if you didn't get it back?

Does your school have a lost and found? Make up a story about an object from the lost and found and how it got there.

“It is a glorious and magical place where every kind of person under the sun comes whenever they need something and always leaves happy.” This is the Mega Price-Mart, the place for all of your one-stop shopping. A baby is discovered one day in the truck mirrors and oil filters aisle - so the associates take her in and move her to the employee break room. After several weeks pass and no one claims her, the associates decide that the baby needs a name. It is agreed that her name should be Pryce and that she will be raised in the Mega Price-Mart. When Pryce discovers that there is a Lost and Found Department at the western edge of the store, she's curious: has anyone ever come there looking for her? Is she lost or is she found – or both? Pryce sets off on a hero's journey that takes her into strange and scary territory where price slashers and demanding shoppers lurk in the aisles and where the never-ending line, well, never ends. When Pryce finally arrives at the Lost and Found, it isn't quite what she expects – did she come all this way for nothing? Pryce eventually realizes that her journey is about more than just answering a question – it is about courage, determination and self-discovery. The story ends with Pryce making the biggest decision of her life: will she stay at the Mega Price-Mart, or will she leave?



About this Play

Lost and Foundling made its first appearance at Geva Theatre Center as part of the Hibernatus Interruptus Festival of New Plays in the fall of 2005. The play made its full-production debut at the Tempe Performing Arts Center in Tempe, Arizona, in October, 2006. This production was co-produced with Childsplay Inc. in Tempe, Arizona.

“Maybe you’ll even find places where happiness and satisfaction don’t have price tags at all!”

Custodian

From the playwright, Eric R. Pfeffinger

Where did this play come from?

This play sprang from the central idea: a baby is lost in a big-box store and is raised by sales associates. This struck me as funny, and I just went from there and started writing. When I was a writer/performer in a comedy-improv troupe years ago, I helped develop a sketch in which a baby was lost in the woods and raised by shrubs. Audiences didn't much like it, but I thought the idea was funny.

improv: *from improvisation: to perform without preparation*

*Were there particular elements of mythology or heroic journeys that you referenced as you created *Lost and Foundling*?*

There were lots of those quest and mythology elements at work, probably more so than I'm even aware. A person can find out about these kinds of things by reading [the writing of] Vladimir Propp and Joseph Campbell, but if you've seen and read enough stories you internalize most of the rules and patterns that guys like them wrote down. That's pretty much the reason Pryce is convinced that her obstacles are supposed to come in threes. Sometimes she's too smart for her own good

mythology: *a set of traditional or legendary stories often addressing a group's origins, history, ancestors and heroes.*

obstacle: *something that stands in the way of progress*

Make up a story about a journey through your school. Who are the characters? What are the dangers?

In this play some of the things that are supposed to scare Pryce turn out to be pretty funny. Do you think that people are afraid of too many things?

Fear can be useful; it tells you when to run, when to hide, when not to wear a particular shirt out in public. The problem, I think, is that there are people whose jobs seem to consist of coming up with things they think we should fear, and then convincing us to be afraid of those things, when really we have more productive things we could be doing instead. Many – though not all – of these people work for nighttime news-magazine television shows.

What scares you? How would you like to overcome that fear?

What do you like best about writing plays?

When you're done writing a play, it's still only halfway finished. At that point you still have to get actors and directors and designers involved, and they all have different ideas about what's in the play, and the play they see is better than the play you thought was there. When the play is performed on opening night it's completely different from what you'd imagined when it was just on paper, and the next time it's performed it's different in a different way, and so on. The other thing that makes playwriting better than any other kind of writing is that you get to sit and watch the play with an audience and see how they respond. When you write stories and books you don't usually get to watch people as they read them. Not without seeming creepy.

“I’ve been here so long maybe I don’t know what scary is anymore.”

Slasher

A Hero's Journey

Director David Saar compares the story of *Lost and Foundling* to an odyssey or mythic journey. Often stories of heroic quests include an opportunity or challenge that leads the characters to explore their own resources and to take control of their worlds. Pryce takes a risk when she decides to leave the comfort of her well-known corner of the store in search of the truth about who she is and where she came from. By traveling alone and trying new things she learns about independence and problem-solving. Bravery, creativity, and curiosity will lead her through many future adventures.

odyssey: *an adventurous voyage, trip or quest*



In his book titled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, scholar and writer Joseph Campbell compared the mythic journeys of heroes from different cultures and outlined common elements of many heroes' stories. The steps of the journey can be found in this play, and many other stories that we read and tell.

Choose a story that you've read in class and look for these elements. After watching *Lost and Foundling*, try to remember where in the play you saw the same pieces of the hero's journey.

What are the qualities of a hero? Make a list of real-life heroes.

Origins – Does the hero have a special beginning? Is the hero somehow unique from all the other characters?

Call to adventure – What is the event or opportunity that causes the hero to begin a journey?

Resistance – Are there good reasons that would cause the hero to resist the call to adventure?

Crossing a threshold – What does the hero leave behind in order to begin a journey?

Trials – What obstacles must the hero overcome on the journey? What does the person fear? What strategies, skills, insights, and known or unknown strengths does the person develop to survive or resolve these trials?

Intervention – What assistance, seen or unseen, does the person receive to deal with these trials? Does any of the assistance take a magical or supernatural form?

Temptation – Is the hero tempted to abandon the journey?

Return – Was there a stated goal of the quest? If so, did it change on the journey? Has the person learned more or less than he or she expected? What are the rewards of this person's journey? What relationships have changed? Does the hero return home?

threshold: *a place or point of entry or beginning*

supernatural: *not explained by nature or natural law*

“What’s lost and found?”

Pryce

What is a Big Box?

You can spend the night in any public place that usually closes at the end of the day. Where would you choose? Tell a story about what you would do there.

How did Pryce get to the Mega Price-Mart? What happened to her family? Write a letter to Pryce explaining how she ended up there.

The Mega Price-Mart is a fictional version of a big-box store. “Big box” is a colloquial term used to describe a style of retail store and the company that owns it. These stores can be broken down into one of two types – general merchandisers (such as Wal-Mart or Target) and “category killers” (such as Best Buy or Home Depot). They are usually one story high and rectangular in shape with few windows and very high ceilings. A big-box store can range in size from 50,000 square feet all the way up to over 200,000 square feet. By comparison, the average American house is roughly 1,700 square feet – meaning that your home might be about the size of a single department in a big-box store.

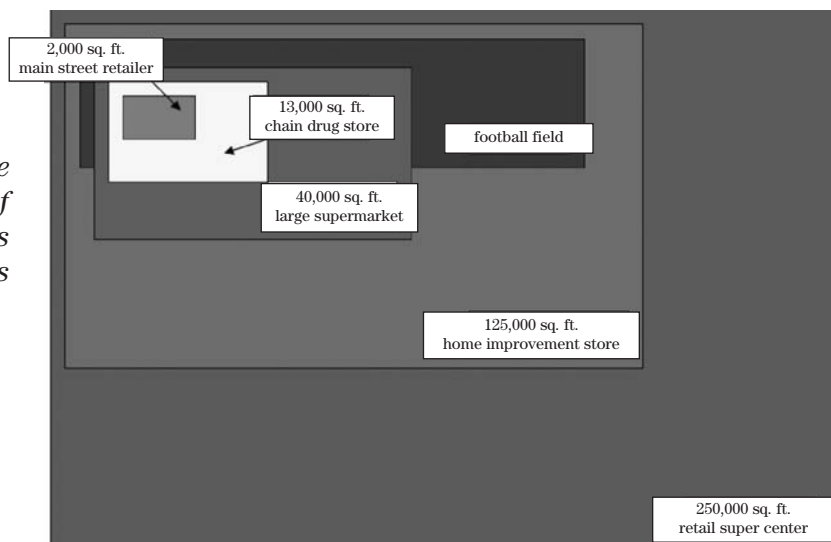
Some people oppose big-box stores because of their large buildings and parking lots and the vast amounts of waste often associated with them. Opponents also point to the negative effects that big-box stores frequently have on smaller, community-based businesses that cannot compete with the heavily discounted prices of most large retail chain stores. The money spent at the big-box stores, they contend, seldom stays in the community.

Conversely, supporters point out that big-box stores carry a greater variety of merchandise at lower prices than many smaller, more traditional stores – a convenience that many time-pressed and budget-conscious shoppers appreciate. Supporters also mention that bigger stores employ large numbers of people and draw shoppers from a wide area, which increases tax revenue for the city or town. The opening of any new big-box store is usually the topic of much debate and discussion before the first pieces of merchandise ever make it to the store shelves.

colloquial: *an informal style of conversation*

contend: *to maintain or assert a position or opinion in a debate*

Right: a scale drawing of several types of retail stores



“That’s the reason people come to Price-Mart from all over - because it’s easy and convenient.”

Staci

About the Stage Design

Has your school or a community group ever worked to collect something together, like the recycled products on this set? What other kinds of jobs require a big group to pitch in?

Pryce learns about darkness when there's a blackout in the store. How do you think you would feel if you were in the dark for the first time in your life?

Why do you think the Prop Master decided to use recycled containers instead of buying new items for the store shelves?

In her job as the Scenic Designer for *Lost and Foundling*, Holly Windingstad researched the look and feel of actual stores like Wal-Mart, Target, and Costco. The subdued colors and grey in her design for the store were inspired by her research trips. Throughout the play the actors roll two moveable store shelves into many different positions and arrangements. Because the layout is always changing, Pryce and the other characters in the Mega Price-Mart seem to appear in new areas. This moving and changing set is a good example of how a designer, director, and cast have to plan together and cooperate to tell the story. For the final scene the shelves roll to the side, revealing two large swinging doors. A view of the outdoors is created by a film projection.

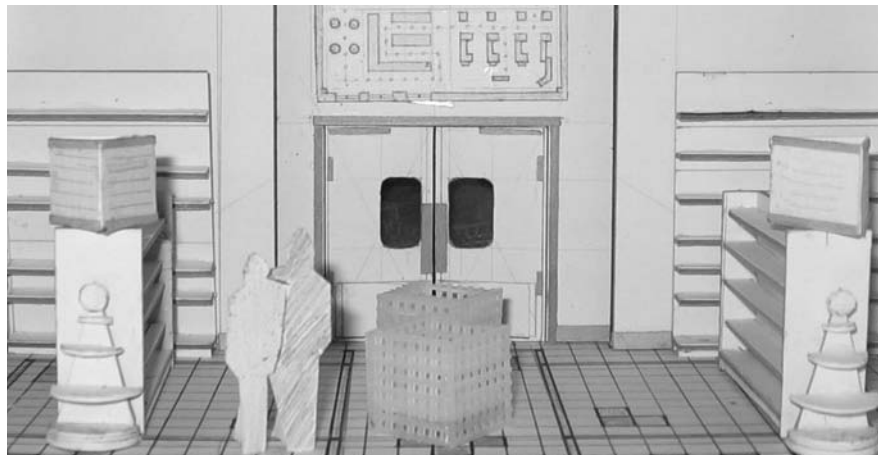
The Lighting Designer, Rick Paulsen, also influences the look of the store. Darkness is one of the new discoveries in Pryce's adventure, because she has never seen the store with its lights off. When most of the stage has gone dark, the lighting designer uses green stage lighting to give the audience members the feeling that they are wearing night-vision goggles. The characters fumble around in pitch-blackness, but because of the designer's trick the theatre audience still gets to see everything.

The Prop Master, Jim Luther, was given the huge task of stocking full-sized store shelves with generic yet recognizable product packaging. He visited a recycling center every day during the preparation for *Lost and Foundling* and also put out a call for help to his entire theatre company to request bottles, boxes, and cans for the set. He collected hundreds of containers of all different types. Many of the containers on the set have been painted or covered in paper. While they may look like brand-new products, all are re-used items. Any of the packages that were collected but not used for the play went back to the recycling center.

subdued: *lowered in intensity or strength*

generic: *any product that can be sold without a brand name*

Right: photo of the set designer's scale model of the stage



"I've never seen the dark. It never gets dark in here."

Pryce

Groceries into Garbage

Look for one example of a package that might be designed with health and safety in mind. Find one package that you think is specially designed to make your life more convenient. Find one package that you believe creates unnecessary waste. Find one package that you'd like to redesign.

Discuss the strategies for reducing waste in your classroom or home. What products can you Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle or Compost?

Look at the products lining the shelves of the Mega Price-Mart, or those filling your neighborhood grocery store. Bread is wrapped in a plastic bag. Soup comes in a can. Cookies are arranged on plastic trays that are slipped inside paper bags. Six bottles of soda are wrapped together in plastic. That packaging serves many useful purposes. The bread wrapper keeps the bread fresh and clean. The soup can keeps soup fresh for months on grocery store shelves. The cookie tray keeps cookies from getting crushed. The plastic wrapping around soft drinks makes it easy to grasp six bottles in one hand.

Packaging makes the transportation of food and other products convenient and sanitary. But packaging can also be used to help sell more products, and containers are often designed to look bigger and better than the other items on the shelves. Whenever we pay for food, we also pay for all the wrapping and printing on the package. Eleven percent – or eleven cents of every dollar – of what an average American family spends on groceries ends up in the garbage.

In the United States relatively little food goes into the garbage because it has spoiled, which is a positive result of the packaging we use. On the other hand, almost one third of an average American family's garbage comes from containers and wrapping. Our country produces more garbage per person than any other country in the world, about four and a half pounds per person each day.

Manufacturers today are looking for ways to consume less material and to reduce waste. Some cleaning products are now sold in concentrated form and packaged in small paper cartons instead of big plastic jugs. One fast food company recently made its drinking straws twenty percent lighter, a change that eliminated one million pounds of solid waste per year. Each product that is made with smaller and lighter packaging consumes fewer resources, requires less energy to transport and deliver, and creates less waste that must be recycled, burnt or added to a landfill. All these are steps that help to protect our environment.

*Information from:
EIA (Energy Information Administration) Kids Page
<http://www.eia.doe.gov/kids/>*

sanitary:
providing healthy cleanliness

“We do have everything you could ever possibly need.”

Staci

Want vs. Need

Gather all the pictures in a magazine or newspaper. Which communicate information (for instance, about a news story) and which are advertisements?

Pretend you are from another planet. Collect ten ads from magazines or newspapers. From these, determine all you can about the earthlings' interests, values, lifestyles and quality of life.

Watch for which persuasive advertising techniques are used by the characters or products described in *Lost and Foundling*

The Mega Price-Mart tries to give people everything they could ever want or need. But long lines, free samples, bargains, and endless choices distract many of the characters from where they're going, what they're looking for, or the problems they are trying to solve.



Companies use many forms of advertising in order to tell people all the reasons why they should buy certain products. Can a company really know why a product is perfect for every individual who watches a commercial or looks at a package on the shelf? Of course not! Advertisers use techniques that they think will appeal to many people, hoping that some will decide to make a purchase.

Bandwagon: Everyone else has it or uses it.

Testimonial: A famous person or an expert says it's great.

Image: The setting or actors around the product are appealing.

Weasel: "Chances are" – it sounds like a promise, but it's not.

Omission: Facts about the product are not told.

Repetition: The same message is given again and again.

Scale: The product looks bigger or smaller than it really is.

Name-calling: Another product is less desirable or unpopular.

An estimated 15 billion dollars a year is spent on advertising directed at children. But young people aren't completely convinced by the advertisers' messages. A recent poll of kids ages 9-14 found that 90% of the kids who were surveyed said that friends and family are much more important than things that money can buy.

technique: specialized procedure or method used to obtain a desired result

"For eighty-eight cents I can't not need it. I have to buy this."

Demanding Shopper

Glossary of Terms used in Lost and Foundling

Propriety - *the quality of being proper*

Theoretical - *existing only in theory*

Gumption - *courage, spunk, resourcefulness*

Convenient - *favorable, easy or comfortable to use*

Sabotage - *any underhanded interference*

Undermine - *to attack by indirect or secret means*

Loathsome - *causing feelings of disgust*

Inevitable - *unable to be avoided or escaped*

Skeptical - *showing doubt*

Sarcasm - *witty language used to communicate scorn*

Insightful - *showing clear and deep perception*

Unpredictability - *not to be foreseen or foretold*

Tell Us What You Think

We'd love to hear your questions and thoughts! You can send them to Kathryn Moroney, Associate Director of Education, Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Boulevard, Rochester, NY 14607 or e-mail them to her at kmoroney@gevatheatre.org. We are always interested in knowing what our audiences think about our plays, especially . . .

- What was the most exciting part?
- When were you most surprised?
- Which character did you like the best, and why?
- What part did you talk about on the bus on the way back to school?
- What was the first thing you told your family about the play when you got home?
- Why would you like to see this play again?
- What part did you think about the most afterwards?
- If you could play on the set, what would you want to do, use, or touch?
- What would happen if the story continued after the end of the play?

“People have no idea what they need. What they want.”

Found

Resources

Staff

Skip Greer
Director of
Education/Artist-in-
Residence

Kathryn Moroney
Associate Director
of Education

Eric Evans
Education
Administrator

Arthur Brown
Christopher Gurr
Conservatory
Associates

Marge Betley
Literary
Manager/Resident
Dramaturg

April Donahower
Associate
Dramaturg

Mark Cuddy
Artistic Director

John Quinlivan
Managing Director

Nan Hildebrandt
Executive Director

Our Co-Producer

Childsplay, Inc., Tempe, Arizona
www.childsplayaz.org

Older Readers and Reading Aloud

Alice in Wonderland - Lewis Carroll
Melonhead - Michael DeGuzman
Hobie Hanson: Greatest Hero of the Mall - Jamie Gilson
Among The Hidden - Margaret Peterson Haddix
The Pepins and Their Problems - Polly Horvath
The Odyssey - Homer
From The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler -
E.L. Konigsburg
A Series of Unfortunate Events - Lemony Snicket and Brett
Helquist

Younger Readers

Mama and Papa Have a Store - Amelia Lau Carling
Leaving Home - Sneed B. Collard
Some Things are Scary - Florence Parry Heide
Come With Me: Poems for a Journey - Naomi Shihab Nye and
Dan Yaccarino
Oh, the Places You'll Go - Dr. Seuss
Words West: Voices of Young Pioneers - Ginger Wadsworth

Websites

<http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/>
<http://www.ibuydifferent.org/powerup/>

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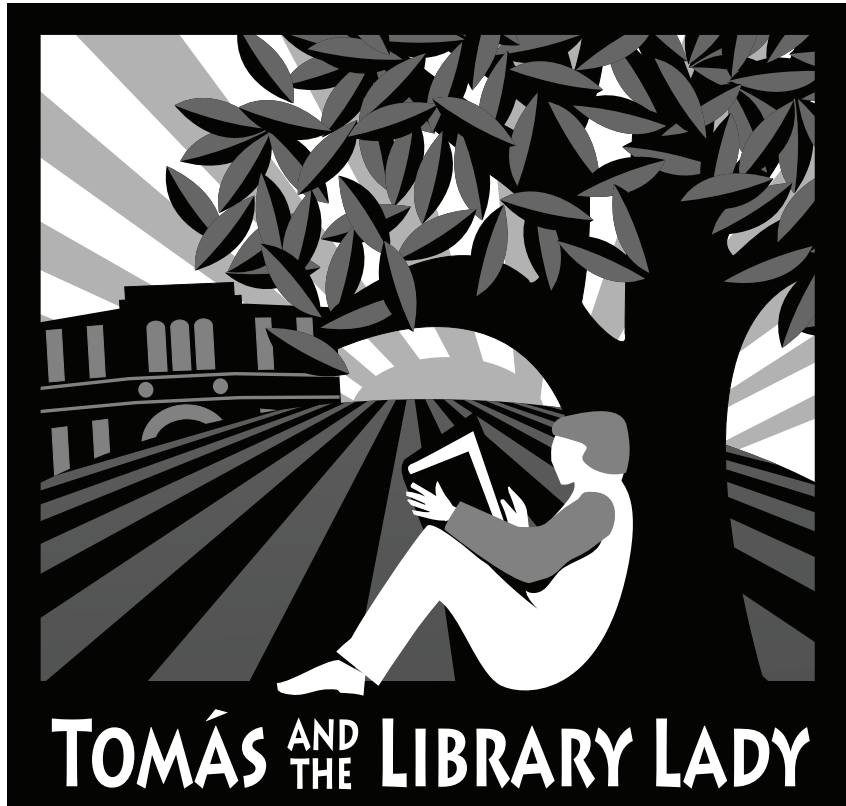
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*“Everything is new, and different,
and unfamiliar.”*

Pryce

Tickets Still Available



**April 24th - 27th and May 1st - May 4th
at 9:45 a.m. and Noon**

Recommended for young people ages 5-12 and their families

Tickets available by calling (585) 232-1366, ext 3035



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