



# PRESCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE

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The Arts Start program is supported by



## **The Little Engine That Could Earns Her Whistle**

Tuesday, October 22, 2013

10:00 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

SANGAMON AUDITORIUM 

The text 'SANGAMON AUDITORIUM' is written in a large, black, serif font. A light gray, brushstroke-like underline is positioned beneath the text. To the right of the text is the logo for the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS), which features a black silhouette of a dome above the letters 'UIS' in a black, serif font.



## Welcome!

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This guide was created for use by teachers in the Springfield Urban League Head Start program, but it will also be sent to other teachers attending the performance who indicate they teach preschool students. Another Teacher's Guide, with content for older students, is available on the Sangamon Auditorium website at [www.SangamonAuditorium.org/classacts](http://www.SangamonAuditorium.org/classacts). We hope the information and activity ideas included in this guide will help your students better understand the performance they see.

We look forward to seeing you!



Youth programming in the *Class Acts* series and in conjunction with other Sangamon Auditorium events is supported in part by the Helen Hamilton Performing Arts Endowment for Youth Fund, gifts from Elizabeth and Robert Staley, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.



The Arts Start program is an initiative of **University of Illinois Springfield's Sangamon Auditorium** and the **Springfield Urban League Head Start**, funded by **PNC's Grow Up Great®** initiative. Through this arts education program, Head Start students, their teachers, and their families will become involved in live performances, enhancing the students' educational opportunities and school readiness.



## Write to Us

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We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to [azepp2@uis.edu](mailto:azepp2@uis.edu) or through the mail to

*Class Acts*  
Sangamon Auditorium, UIS  
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397  
Springfield, IL 62703-5407

We love sharing student work with our *Class Acts* sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.



## Attending a Live Performance

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Please use the information below to help prepare your young students for attending a live theatrical performance. For many, this will be their first experience with live theater.

Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. That’s why theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

- Tell your students that when they arrive in the parking lot, there will be a lot of other buses there too. They will need to follow the instructions of their teachers and walk in a straight line (or maybe in a buddy-system line) to come into the building. Once inside, they need to stay in line because of all the other students who will be there.
- Ask your students how they think an audience should behave at a live performance. What are some of the things they should do and not do? If it is not covered by the student answers, make sure you talk about:
  - *\*Listen\** to the performance (this ties into “don’t talk,” but it can be helpful to keep all the discussion points phrased in the positive and not in the “don’t-do-this” mode); use a “cupped ear” gesture to emphasize listening when it is mentioned
  - *\*Watch\** the performance; point at both sides of your face near your eyes with your index fingers to emphasize watching when it is mentioned
  - *\*Clap\** at the end of songs and at the end of the performance when the performers take their bows. Take the time to practice clapping with the students. Call one student forward who will pretend to take a bow at the end of a performance and the rest of the room will practice clapping for this student.

Repeat the gestures for the three points above and have the students do it with you.

- Let your students know that like in a movie theater, the area where the audience sits for the performance will be rather dark, but there will be lights on the stage and some small lights will remain on in the aisles. If they need to use the bathroom in the middle of the show, they can come to the end of the row and an usher will use a flashlight to make sure they can find their way to the correct bathroom.



## Activities

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The activities can be used together in any combination that works for the teacher. It would be best to do some activities before the performance, to help students understand the plot of the story, and some activities after the performance, to reinforce what they have seen.

### **Pre-show Discussion Questions**

Discuss the different types of performing arts (music, dance, theater) to help students understand that they are going to see people perform. Ask if they have ever experienced a live theater performance before. What did they see? What was it like?

How is live theater different than movies and TV?

- There are real people on the stage.
- The performance will never be exactly the same again.

Familiarize your students with the following words – theater, play, actor, stage, costume, usher

### **Literacy and Writing**

Ask your students to draw or write about where they think the train in the story is going. The story says that the train is taking toys and food to the boys and girls on the other side of the mountain. What does it look like on the other side of the mountain? Is it a big city or a small town? What do the houses look like? Encourage them to be creative!

**Vocabulary** – Be sure your students are familiar with the following words from the story:

- rumble
- tracks
- puff
- shiny
- engine
- tug

## Fine Arts



**Dance/Movement** – Use masking tape or painter’s tape to make a train track on the floor. Make two parallel lines, approximately 18 inches apart, and then make the cross ties approximately 12 inches apart. Your track can be straight or it can curve around objects in your classroom. Or you can even make your track a big circle. Be sure your track is long enough that your whole class can fit and have room to move.

Depending on your class, the students can just stand in front of each other, or they can connect like a train by holding hands or by putting their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them.

You can start simply by having the teacher be the “engine” (the line leader) and just practice walking at different speeds without bumping into the person in front of you. Then try going in reverse, or try moving a different way, such as hopping along the train track. After some practice you can designate a student as the “engine.”

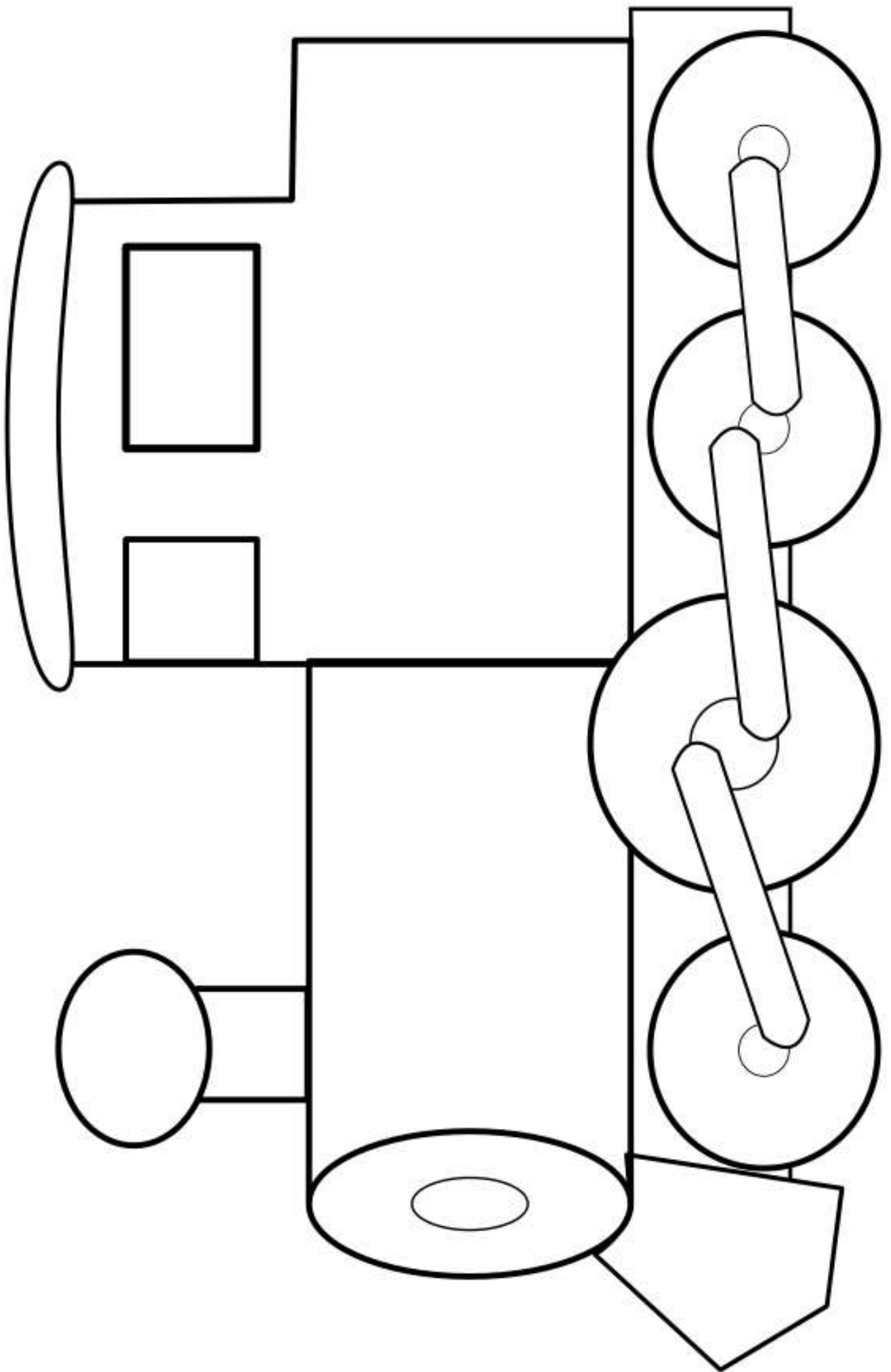
**Visual Art** – Make a classroom train! Give each student a piece of construction paper, which will become his or her boxcar on the class train. You can allow students to decorate their boxcars any way they choose, or you can focus on practicing a particular skill.

Here are a few ideas:

- a shape train – each boxcar is filled and decorated with a particular shape
- a color train – each student chooses one color and decorates a boxcar with only that color
- a number train – add a number to each box car; as a class activity have the students put the boxcars in the right order
- a name train – have student practice writing their names on their boxcars



When the students are done, collect all the papers and glue or tape two black circles to the bottom to be the wheels. The teacher should also create the engine (or use the one on the next page). Tape all the boxcars to the wall of the classroom or hallway, with the engine at the front.



**Theatre** – In the story of *The Little Engine That Could* we meet five different train engines. Ask students how the engines are different. How does each engine feel? How would each engine move? Encourage students to use their facial expressions and body language to act like each of the five engines.



- The first engine – happy at first; then broken, frustrated, and sad
- The Shiny New Engine/Passenger Engine – proud, pompous, likes to brag
- The Big Strong Engine/Freight Engine – powerful, big, proud
- The Rusty Old Engine – tired, slow, old
- The Little Blue Engine – happy, kind, small, persistent



**Music** – By adapting the words to the familiar song “The Wheels on the Bus,” we can have a new fun song about a train.

### The Wheels on the Train

The wheels on the train go ‘round and ‘round  
‘Round and ‘round; ‘round and ‘round  
The wheels on the train go ‘round and ‘round  
All over town.

*Move your arms in circular motions*

The people on the train go up and down  
Up and down; Up and down  
The people on the train go up and down  
All over town.

*While remaining seated, bounce up and down*

The baby on the train goes “wah, wah, wah!”  
“Wah, wah, wah!”; “wah, wah, wah!”  
The baby on the train goes “wah, wah, wah!”  
All over town.

*Hold your fists up to your eyes, pretending to cry*

The whistle on the train goes toot, toot, toot  
Toot, toot, toot; toot, toot, toot  
The whistle on the train goes toot, toot, toot  
All over town.

*Raise one arm and pretend to pull the cord on the train whistle*

Have the students help you think of more verses to add to the song!

## **Other Activities**

**Take home activity** – Before or after the performance send home the coloring sheet found on the last page of this study guide.

**Math** – Using the train track you created for the Movement/Dance activity, practice counting and number recognition. Tell students to move forward 4 spaces, or backward 2 spaces. Or, you can tape numbers to the floor at certain places on the track, and have the line leader move forward until he or she reaches the number you say.

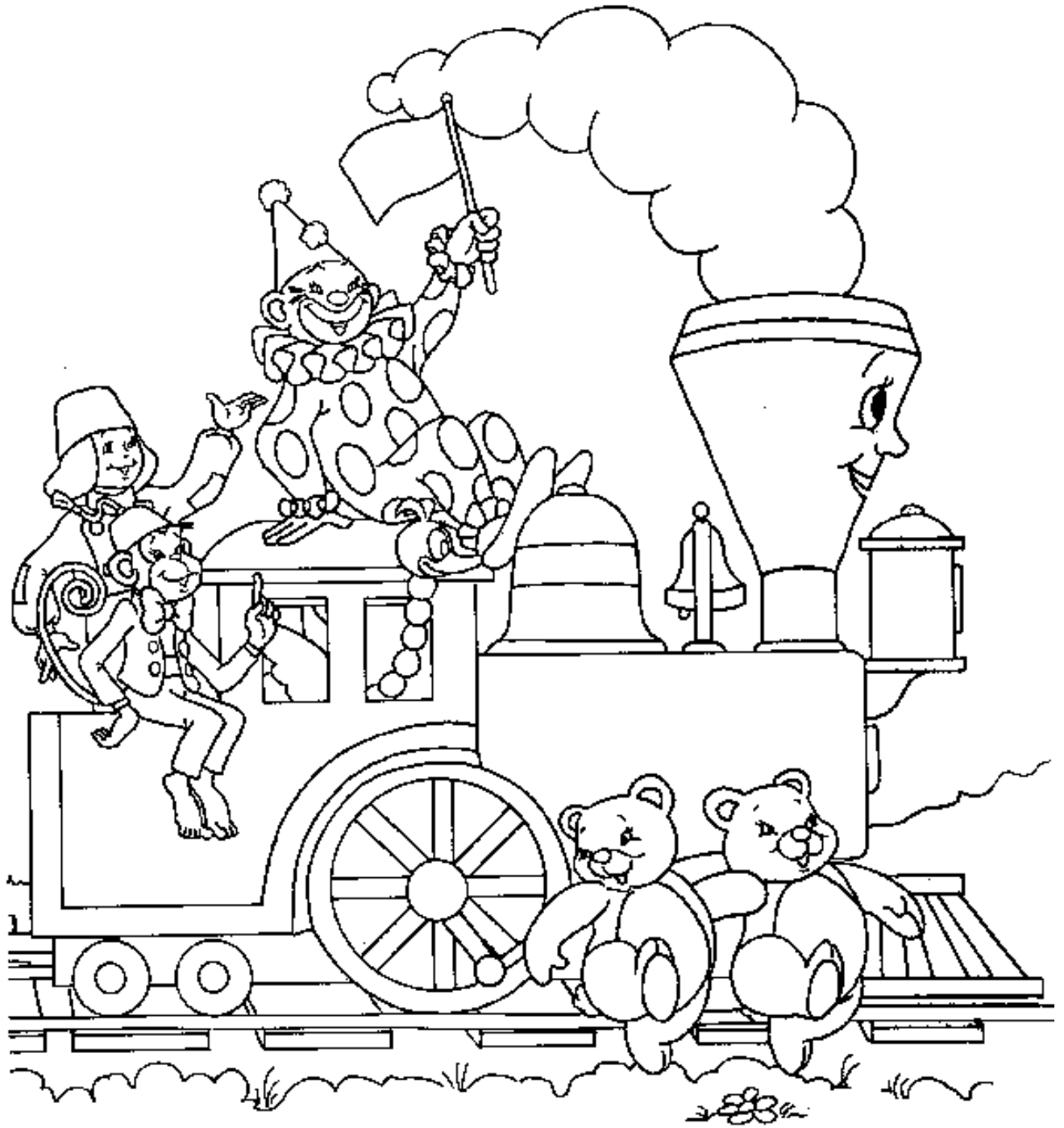
**Snack** – Cargo Train – Set out several different snack “cargo” options in bowls, and put a serving spoon in each bowl. Include easy-to-scoop options like raisins, mini marshmallows, small crackers, and cereals. Have students line up like a train, each holding a bowl. As your “train” slowly goes past the snacks, each student should fill their bowl with “cargo.”

## **Post-show Discussion Questions**

After attending the performance, it is very important to talk to your students about their experience, memory, and reaction to the live performance. These are some possible questions:

- Tell me about what you saw on the field trip.
- Tell me about what you heard on the field trip.
- What will you remember about the performance?
- What surprised you about our field trip?
- What was the most exciting part of our field trip for you?





I think I can.