Dear Teachers,

Welcome back to another season of the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts! We are so excited to invite you back to the theater and are eager to share Belinda’s story with you and your students.

The familiar Cinderella tale is remade by Glass Half Full Theatre in this creative bilingual adaptation. A “story within a story” Belinda uses ordinary objects in the basement to become actors in her performance, finding potential while others see nothing!

This guide provides additional teaching materials to help deepen your experience, provide information about the story, history and performers on stage and help connect the theater to the classroom.

Thank you for your commitment both to your students and to providing them opportunities to experience the arts. We are SO happy you are coming to visit us.

See you at the theater,
Des Moines Performing Arts

Thank you to our donors

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Ten-year-old Belinda is a budding poet and loves to tell stories, but when she’s stuck in the basement preparing for a party upstairs that her stepmother and stepsisters will host, she’ll have to get creative. It’s a story within a story; Belinda lives out her version while also re-enacting the classic tale of Cinderella, using whatever objects are at her disposal: napkins, teapots, and doilies, to name just a few. With these everyday items, a healthy dose of imagination, and a love of poetry passed down by her father, Belinda imagines a bigger world for herself!

When she learns that the party’s special guest is (real life) writer Gary Soto, Belinda wants desperately to attend the party and share her own writings with Soto. But to do that, she must learn to stand up for herself and take charge of her life and dreams. This bilingual one-person performance is a modern spin on the beloved fairy tale and tackles cultural heritage, family, and the power of language.
About the Artists

Glass Half Full Theatre, based in Austin, Texas, creates original works for youth and adults, with a focus on environmental and social justice. They have received B. Iden Payne Awards for Direction, Design, Writing, Acting, Puppetry and Visionary Innovation, and Austin Critics Table Awards for Design, Acting and Best New Play. The company follows the training of Jacques Lecoq and employs sophisticated puppetry forms such as Tabletop, Shadow Puppetry, Body Puppetry, Hand and Rod, Czech marionette, and Object Puppetry. Their original works, including *Petra and the Wolf*, *Once There Were Six Seasons*, and *The Orchid Flotilla*, have toured nationally. Glass Half Full is known for their “precise, engaging, and humorous” approach to real-world issues and imaginative solutions.

Learn more about the company and their work on their website: https://www.glasshalffulltheatre.com

“Students were fully engaged with Cenicienta throughout, even if they didn’t understand one of the languages being spoken. Such moments emphasize the importance of Latinx youth seeing and hearing actors who look and sound like them on stage—such representation is necessary in fostering youth’s connection with theatre.”

– Howl Round Theatre Commons

Show History & Credits:
• Written by Caroline Reck and Rupert Reyes
• Original Music Composition by Ammon Taylor
• The role of Belinda is performed by Madison Palomo
• Offstage voices are performed by: Gary Soto by Rupert Reyes, Stepmother by Caroline Reck, Reina by Lilli Lopez, Preciosa by Marina DeYoe-Pedraza
• Directed by Caroline Reck
• Lighting Design by Rachel Atkinson
• Sound Design by Pete Martinez with additional sound and mixing by K. Eliot Haynes
• Stage Management by Zac Crofford
• Scenic, Costume, and Prop Design by Caroline Reck
Preparing to Watch

Setting context for students might include reviewing the story of Cinderella as well as reminding students that the performance is in both Spanish and English so that they sometimes will use context clues to understand words within the story.

What to Look and Listen For

• objects like lamps, funnels, and teapots speaking in Spanish and English
• a poem written about someone special
• a stepmother and stepsisters—How are Belinda’s family members similar to the characters in Cenicienta or Cinderella?
• a Fairy Godmother—What advice does Hada Madrina give?
• poetry about family
• a party or ball—What does Cenicienta’s ball look and sound like? What does Belinda’s ball look and sound like?

After the Performance

Connect to the story by considering some of the following in pairs or small groups, before sharing out with the large group.

• What challenge is Belinda facing in the story?
• How does Belinda use her imagination?
• How does Belinda demonstrate bravery?
• When Belinda is upset, she works through her problems with her (imaginary) friends Gustavo, Ernesto, Hada Madrina, and Cenicienta. What do you do when things don’t go the way you want?
• When Hada Madrina asks Belinda, “What would your ball be like?” Belinda imagines getting to meet her hero, writer Gary Soto. Who would you want to have attend your ball?
In the story, Belinda wrote a poem comparing her mother and father to objects, and describing the way they make her feel. Read Belinda’s poem aloud to the class. Have students write or say a line about their parent, grandparent, or someone else who inspires them. Collect all the lines of poetry and display them together.

**Mi Mamá**
My mother is like a blanket.
She protects me
and keeps me calientita.
Mi Mamá es como cristal.
Sharp, strict,
beautiful and delicate.
Mi Mamá es como un río,
she smoothes out
all my rough spots,
is graceful
and is constantly moving.
Reflejando la mujer
que quiero ser.
Mi Mamá es como las estrellas.
She is always everywhere,
holding up the universe.
She lights up the sky, even when
the moon goes into hiding.

**Mi Papá**
My father is like a furnace,
even though sometimes
he can get too hot,
he always keeps
the house warm with love.
Mi Papá es como una almohada,
he comforts me when I am sad.
He keeps my head upright
and reminds me to dream.
My father and I are like
a partly cloudy day.
We may have our moments
of darkness and gloom,
but when we are together
the sun always peaks through.
Mi Papá es como un libro de poesía.
He taught me how to read
and to love words.
He is sweet, lyrical,
and paints a beautiful world.

**Dig Deeper**
Curious about Belinda’s hero Gary Soto?
Learn more here: https://garysoto.com

Who is YOUR literary hero? Do a little exploring to see if you can find their website or publisher’s page!

Gary Soto responds to letters. Maybe your author does too!
Character Comprehension
Belinda has several imaginary friends. During the play, these friends are represented by objects, which Belinda uses to act out the characters and story of “Cinderella.” How is Belinda’s version different or similar to other Cinderella stories? What characters were added or are missing? Challenge students to match the object with the character’s name:

• the lamps - las lámparas (Gustavo and Ernesto)
• the teapot - la tetera (Fairy Godmother - Hada Madrina)
• the napkin - la servieta (Cinderella - Cenicienta)
• the funnels - los embudos (Step Mother & Step Sisters - La Madrastra y Las Hermanastras)
• the magnifying glass - la lupa (The Prince - el Principe)

Can students remember any objects or characters missing from this list? What characters did they represent?

How did the object appear to be alive? When did it change from object to character? How did it move? How did the characters change their movement to show different feelings?

Click here for an excellent unit from The Kennedy Center on Cinderella: A Cross-Cultural Fairy-Tale for explorations and examples of the classic Cinderella story!
Object Puppetry Activity

Activity
Choose several everyday objects from around the classroom or home, like tape dispensers, clothespins, markers, a book, yarn, etc.
1. Set one object on each student’s desk. Have them look at the object without touching it. Ask: "Is this object alive? How can you tell?"

2. Focus is an important tool of puppetry, because it tells the audience where the character is looking. Ask: "What part of your body do you use to show where you are focusing? Using just your eyes, decide which part of the object could be the face. (There might be more than one!) Now pick up your object and have it look around!"

3. Movement is how a puppeteer makes an object seem alive. Ask: "How does your object move? (example: walk, run, swim, fly, scoot, bounce, drag). What does it look like when it is sitting still and breathing?"

4. Changes in movement helps to show what a character is feeling. Ask: "What is another way your object could move?" (Example: a spool of thread walks or bounces upright, then lies on its side and rolls). "What is a reason that the object would change its movement? Is it scared? Excited? Happy? Try to show the object feeling one way, then change how it feels."

5. Voice helps a puppeteer tell the story of the object. Ask: "Does your object have a voice? What sounds does it make when it is focusing, moving, and feeling different emotions?"

Performance ideas
- Introduce your object to other objects nearby. Take your puppet through a stretching warm up - remember to breathe!
- Create an obstacle course around the room that object puppets must overcome.
- Take student suggestions for different gravity levels and environments the puppets must travel through. Challenge students in groups to work together to solve a problem one puppet might be having.
- Reenact a story using the object puppets as characters. When a group or individual is performing, can the object puppets model good behavior as an audience by focusing? Have students return the objects by keeping them alive until they are safely home.

Watch and Learn

- How to Puppeteer Objects with Caroline Reck
- How to make a Bilingual Play with Rupert Reyes
Guide Sources

Explore
Glass Half Full Theatre Website
https://www.glasshalffulltheatre.com

Glass Half Full Theatre Facebook Page
https://www.facebook.com/GHFTheatre

Gary Soto Website
https://garysoto.com

The Kennedy Center on Cinderella: A Cross-Cultural Fairy-Tale

Watch
Glass Half Full Theatre YouTube Channel
www.youtube.com/GlassHalfFullTheatre

Cinderella
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGiSLmDi1cA

How to Puppeteer Objects with Caroline Reck
https://youtu.be/FLicXr-Q4bk

How to make a Bilingual Play with Rupert Reyes
https://youtu.be/_nF9VSjWE8w

Read

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