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# GRACE

== FOR ==

# PRESIDENT

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



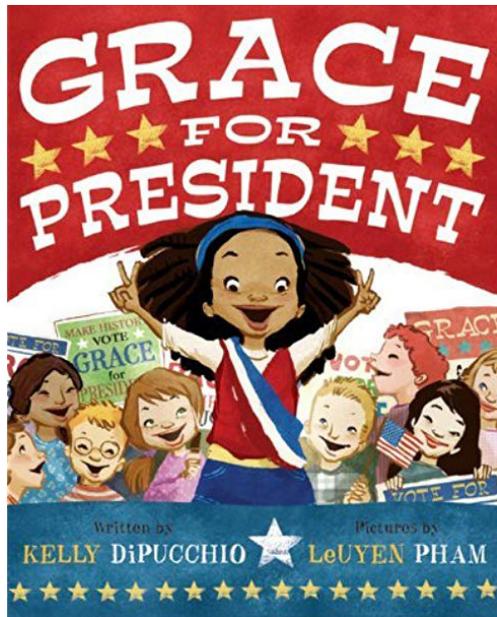
## Activity Packet

under  
**CIRCA** 9 **21**  
children's theatre

# Study guide

## and lesson plan activities

This study guide includes information about our production along with creative activities to help you make connections in your classroom both before and after the show.



Book, music and lyrics by Joan Cushing  
Based on the book written by Kelly S. DiPucchio

### About Our Theatre

Circa '21 is housed in the historic Fort Armstrong Theatre. Built in 1921, the theatre was originally a vaudeville and silent movie house, among one of the most popular and unique of its day. The architect drew heavily from Fox and Sauk Indian symbols for his design. A fine example is Chief Blackhawk's face overlooking the stage from the proscenium arch.

The theatre originally contained a 1,566-seat auditorium, a dance salon, a photography studio, Hickey Brothers Cigar Store, a nursery, and attractive green rooms for actors.

After extensive remodeling, Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse opened in June 1977 as the Quad Cities' professional theatre. The concept of dinner theatre was unique to the Quad Cities at the time, and has since provided the area with over 300 productions of comedies, dramas, musicals, mysteries, children shows and celebrity attractions.

The actors at Circa '21 hail from all parts of the country. Auditions are held in New York, Atlanta, and other major metropolitan areas. In addition, local auditions are held for every show.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Circa '21!

### Synopsis

In Mrs. Barrington's third-grade class, the students are presenting their reports on former presidents of the United States because Election Day is just around the corner. Grace asks, "Where are the girls?" She knows she can't change the past, but she can change the future. So Grace decides she'd like to be class president. Mrs. Barrington uses the opportunity to stage a class election. No one in her class is interested in running against Grace, so she invites Mr. Waller's third-grade class across the hall to join in the election and it nominates Thomas to be its candidate. Thomas convinces the classes to vote for him by bragging about all the awards he has won, and Grace feels badly because she doesn't have all the accomplishments he has. Mrs. Barrington reminds Grace even though she doesn't have awards, she's a kind person who's respected by the others in her class. The teachers divide the class into states, giving each student the same number of votes they would get in the Electoral College. The first candidate to reach 270 votes wins! The campaigns begin as each candidate is asked about the issues facing the school—bullies, littering and math tutors. Some of the votes start falling between boys supporting boys and girls supporting girls, and poor Sam is caught in the middle. He wants to vote for the best person, but Thomas tells Sam, "Boys stick together." It comes down to election day, when Sam casts the final vote for the state of Wyoming, the equality state, to decide the winner, which is Grace! As class president, she reaches across the aisle for Thomas to be her vice president, and he agrees. Grace then sets her sites on campaigning for her next big election . . . running for president of the United States!

### THEMES EXPLORED

school, government, elections and voting,  
goals, perseverance, women's history,  
patriotism

## Discussion questions

1. How did Grace feel when she discovered there had never been a president who was a woman? Why do you think she felt this way? Do you think the United States will ever have a female president?
2. What were some of the campaign promises made by Grace and Thomas? If you were running for class president, what campaign promises would you make?
3. Sam is caught in the middle when Grace and Thomas are campaigning for his vote. Thomas even tells him he has to vote for a boy because, "Boys stick together." Have you ever been stuck between two people making a decision? Did you choose a side or was there another way around the problem?
4. Grace and Thomas both talk about their qualifications to be class president. What qualities do you think are most important to be a leader? What qualities should be avoided to be a leader?
5. Musical theatre is a form of theatre that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting, and dance. Each element helps to tell the story. Did any single song stand out to you in particular? Which song was it and why?

## Vocabulary enrichment

**philosophic** *adj.* rationally or sensibly calm, composed

**vote** *v.* when people choose one thing over another

**presidential** *adj.* relating to the presidency

**candidate** *n.* a person who seeks office

**qualifications** *n.* the conditions required by law or custom to hold office

**democracy** *n.* government by the people, exercised by voting

**accomplishment** *n.* anything acquired or achieved

**triumphant** *adj.* rejoicing over success

**representative** *n.* a person who represents others, usually in government

**rights** *n.* what the law says you can do or have

## WHAT IS THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

A nominee needs a majority of the electoral votes to win the presidency. By the end of election night or early the next morning, the nation usually knows the winner of the election. Although the president is not officially elected until the members of the Electoral College cast their state's votes in December, and then Congress counts those votes on January 6. A winning candidate needs at least 270 votes.

## Electoral vote vs. popular vote

Instruct the students you will provide a snack for the entire class the next day. Give them the option of two equally desirable snacks and explain that they are going to vote for the snack you'll provide. Arrange students into small groups of varying sizes and assign one student to be the representative for each group. Have members of each small group vote on the snack they want and ask each group's representative to tally the votes and then cast one vote for the entire group. After the representatives have cast their votes and the snack has been determined, poll the entire class to learn their individual votes. Determine whether the "popular vote" and the "electoral vote" produced the same result.

Discuss with students how it may be possible that the candidate who gets the most votes might not be the election winner.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KELLY DIPUCCHIO is the award-winning author of several children's books, thousands of to-do lists, and a few recipe cards. Two of her books, *Grace For President* and *The Sandwich Swap*, were *New York Times* bestsellers. Like most kids who grew up in the 1970s, Kelly had a pet goat and bought all her clothes from the Sears catalog. Like most teenagers who grew up in the 1980s, Kelly had really big glasses and feathered hair. To learn more about Kelly DiPucchio check out her website at [kellydipucchio.com](http://kellydipucchio.com).



## Other injustices: write a letter

Ask students to think about other things they think are unfair or unjust, either in the world/country, in their community or in school. Remind them Grace thought it was unfair there had never been a woman president and she decided to do something about it. Brainstorm a list of ideas they come up with and then have each student select one and write a persuasive letter (to their parents, to their school, to their mayor, congressperson or president) about what they think is unfair, why and what should be done about it.

## Create your campaign

In pairs or individually, have students imagine themselves running a campaign for an election in their school. Ask them to consider the following in order to develop their campaign:

1. What issues are important to you?
2. What will you try to do or what changes will you try to make in the school if you win?
3. What is your campaign slogan?
4. Draw your campaign posters and then. . .
5. Write a short speech you will deliver to your classmates to convince them to vote for you.

Afterwards, display the campaign posters around the room. What qualities make you prefer one poster over another? Do they give you an idea about what the candidate represents? If there is time, share your campaign speeches with the class.

## Environments

Using locations within a school (cafeteria, art room, playground, etc.), the class creates frozen images by becoming characters in that location including students, teachers and support staff. The picture will then be activated one student at a time by the teacher with a tap on the student's shoulder with that student saying one line that their character might say in that location or situation. After the line, the person returns to stillness. If the class group is large, you can activate the entire scene at once after a few solo lines and then bring them back to stillness.

### ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

JOAN CUSHING, a former elementary school teacher and cabaret performer, is best known for her political satirical revue *Mrs. Foggybottom & Friends*, which opened in 1986 at New Playwrights Theatre, and moved to the Omni-Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., where it ran for 10 hit years, and four



years on the road, including performances at Don't Tell Mama and The Triad in NYC. She also has appeared in Gary Trudeau's *Tanner for President* series on HBO, directed by Robert Altman and studied musical theatre writing at the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop with Lehman Engel and Maury Yeston.

More recently, she has adapted 13 popular children's books as musicals, receiving more than 350 productions and two national tours including: *Miss Nelson Is Missing!* (winner of the 2003 National Children's Theatre Festival) *Junie B. Jones & a Little Monkey Business!*, *Petite Rouge: A Cajun Red Riding Hood* (2007 NY Musical Theatre Festival), *Heidi* (with playwright Martha King De Silva), all commissioned by Imagination Stage in Bethesda, Maryland. For Children's Theatre of Charlotte, she has premiered two musicals, last year's *Ella's Big Chance* and this year's *Grace For President*. According to TYA Magazine, she is "the most produced playwright in children's theatre" and *Miss Nelson Is Missing!* is "the most produced play."

In 2002 she worked with Young Playwrights Theatre to help turn their play *Pieces of Life*, written by local middle school students, into a musical, which was performed at the Kennedy Center and toured the Washington, D.C. schools. Oak Crest High School commissioned her to write a musical for 100 girls using Broadway songs, *Belles Are Ringing!*



**If you enjoyed the show,  
take a trip to your local library  
and check out these books!**

**Recommended for Elementary**

**Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters**

**by Barack Obama**

In a letter to his daughters, President Barack Obama offers a tribute to 13 historically important Americans and the ideals that have shaped the nation— from the artistry of Georgia O’Keeffe to the courage of Jackie Robinson and the patriotism of George Washington.

**The Class Election From The Black Lagoon**

**by Mike Thaler**

Mean Mrs. Green is forcing everyone to run in the school election, but everyone just wants to run for their lives! Yikes! Hubie is running for president against Doris. Hubie’s chances look slim, but in the end he wins by being the candidate who stands for something, not just on top of something!

**Duck For President**

**by Doreen Cronin**

When Duck gets tired of working for Farmer Brown, his political ambition eventually leads to his being elected president.

**Recommended for Middle School**

**Class President**

**by Johanna Hurwitz**

Julio hides his own leadership ambitions to help another candidate win the nomination for class president, but when the elections commence Julio finds himself a surprised nominee— and an even more surprised winner.

**The Misfits**

**by James Howe**

Four students who don’t fit in at their small-town middle school decide to create a third party for the student council elections to represent all students who have ever been called names.

Every play purchased by Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse is created by a talented team of designers, technicians, actors and a director. A play is different from a television show or a movie because it’s presented live. As a class, discuss what you experienced when you saw the performance.

**THEATER  
CORNER**

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?
3. What did you like about the costumes? Did they fit the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
4. What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
5. Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story that you forgot you were watching a play?
6. Were there any actors who played more than one character? What are some ways that you can be the same person but play different characters?



**Write to Us!**

**Circa 21 Dinner Playhouse  
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