

Adapted  
by  
William  
Massolia

# THE STINKY CHEESE MAN

## & Other Fairly Stupid Tales



By Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith

### Welcome!

We are delighted that you've chosen to bring your students to attend our production of *The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. This is a wonderful opportunity for teachers and students to explore the performing arts. You can discover new ways of integrating arts exploration into ongoing work in the classroom. We hope to give you some ideas, and we hope you will share the arts methods you already use to maximize instruction.

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## Study Guide

### Synopsis:

Jack has a problem. He's successfully grown an enormous beanstalk, scaled to the top, and stolen a golden harp and gold-laying goose from the sleeping giant. However, the giant has now awoken and Jack has scurried back down the beanstalk in the hopes of chopping it down before the giant can catch him. Jack could possibly even make a clean escape if only the Little Red Hen would quit harping on and on about all the lazy animals who refuse to help her with her wheat.

As the hungry giant catches up to Jack, Jack is forced to find ways to divert the giant's attention in order to avoid becoming an afternoon snack. When he is unable to find a suitable hiding place, Jack convinces the giant that a good story or two would be the perfect way to begin a meal.

And so it happens that Jack begins telling his own versions of some very familiar stories. With each tale the giant becomes more and more dissatisfied, and Jack becomes more and more determined to make it up to the giant by spinning a new yarn.

The giant (and the audience as well) is treated to some new treatments of some old favorites, such as a tortoise racing a hair-growing hare, Cinderumplestiltskin, Little Red Running Shorts, and a couple of princesses who kiss frogs and sleep on peas. Jack must not only tell tales as fast as he can for as long as he can to avoid being eaten, but he must also overcome the disturbances caused by that pesky, bread-obsessed Red Hen and a very smelly hero made of cheese.

*The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, both as a book and stage play, shares with its audience the joys of making stories your own and creating new possibilities for the familiar.

# The Griffin Theatre Company

## *Mission*

Established in 1988, the Griffin Theatre Company is a non-profit theatre company committed to performing affordable and imaginative live performances of original works and adaptations. By selecting award-winning materials based on popular children's literature and encouraging groups to read the work before seeing the play, the Griffin seeks to educate as well as to entertain. The Griffin's goal is to remind its audience that imagination is not an escape from reality; it is a creator of possibility.

## Other Griffin Theatre Touring Productions

### The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales

Based on the book by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith  
adapted by William Massolia

### Frindle

based on the book by Andrew Clements  
adapted by William Massolia

### LETTERS HOME

Adapted for the stage by William Massolia

# ABOUT JON SCIESZKA

Jon Scieszka also wrote *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, *The Frog Prince Continued*, and the *Time Warp Trio* series. He cannot tell a lie and says that he and Lane celebrate the Stinky Cheese Man's birthday on the second Monday of every February.

# ABOUT LANE SMITH

Lane Smith wrote and illustrated *Glasses, Who Needs 'Em?*, *The Big Pets*, and *Flying Jake*. He illustrated the *Time Warp Trio* series, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, and *Halloween ABC*. He has won the Golden Apple of Bratislava, the Silver Buckeye, the Silver Medal from the Society of Illustrators, and a bunch of other gold and silver stuff.

## ACTIVITIES\* & CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

**\*These activities cover a range of grade levels from 4-8. Feel free to adapt any of them to make them appropriate for your grade level and students' abilities.**

**BEFORE** you see the show:

- Create a classroom display of books written by Jon Scieszka or illustrated by Lane Smith.
- **OR** you might choose to focus on *The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales*.
- Read and discuss *The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales*.
- Introduce vocabulary words and use various activities (see page 5).
- Ask students to discuss the stories they have grown up hearing and reading. What are some of their favorites? Why?
- Ask students to discuss what they think makes a good story. Is it an exciting plot? Interesting characters? Use of humor?
- Most stories follow a main character with a specific goal. Ask students to discuss goals and obstacles. What kind of obstacles have they faced? Were they able to overcome them? If so, how did they do it? If not, what kept them from achieving what they wanted?
- Either individually or as a group, have students combine two familiar fairy tales and read their new fairy tale for the class.

**AFTER** you see the show:

- Review the list of characters on page 5. Create a new story around two or more of those characters.
- Use the same activity, but this time add a new character of your own to the story.
- Make a list of your character traits. Include your strengths and weaknesses.
- Use the triple Venn diagram (see page 7) to compare and contrast any three characters from the play.
- Use some of the vocabulary activities suggested on page 5.
- Pretend you are a theatre critic: Write and present to the class your view of the play, *The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. You may want to present your review with another class member in an “Ebert & Roeper” type format.
- Write a review of the play for the school newspaper.
- Read other books written by Jon Scieszka and/or illustrated by Lane Smith.
- Practice writing dialogue by imagining a scene between one of the characters and his/her parents.
- Write a letter from one character in the play to another.
- Use a story map (see page 8, or use a map of the students’ own design) to follow one of the characters in the play.
- Discuss the differences between the play and the book. What kind of changes did the playwright have to make to adapt the book for the stage? What works well in the book? What works well in the play?
- Interview your mom or dad about some of their favorite stories. Are some of them the same as yours?
- Break up into groups and select a scene from one of Jon Scieszka’s stories to perform for the class. Remember to consider costumes, props, sets, etc.
- Work together as a group to mount a full-scale production of one of Jon Scieszka’s stories, or one of your own making. Select students to act as director, actors, property/set managers, costumers, stage manager, and possibly writer(s) if it’s an original production.

## Vocabulary Words

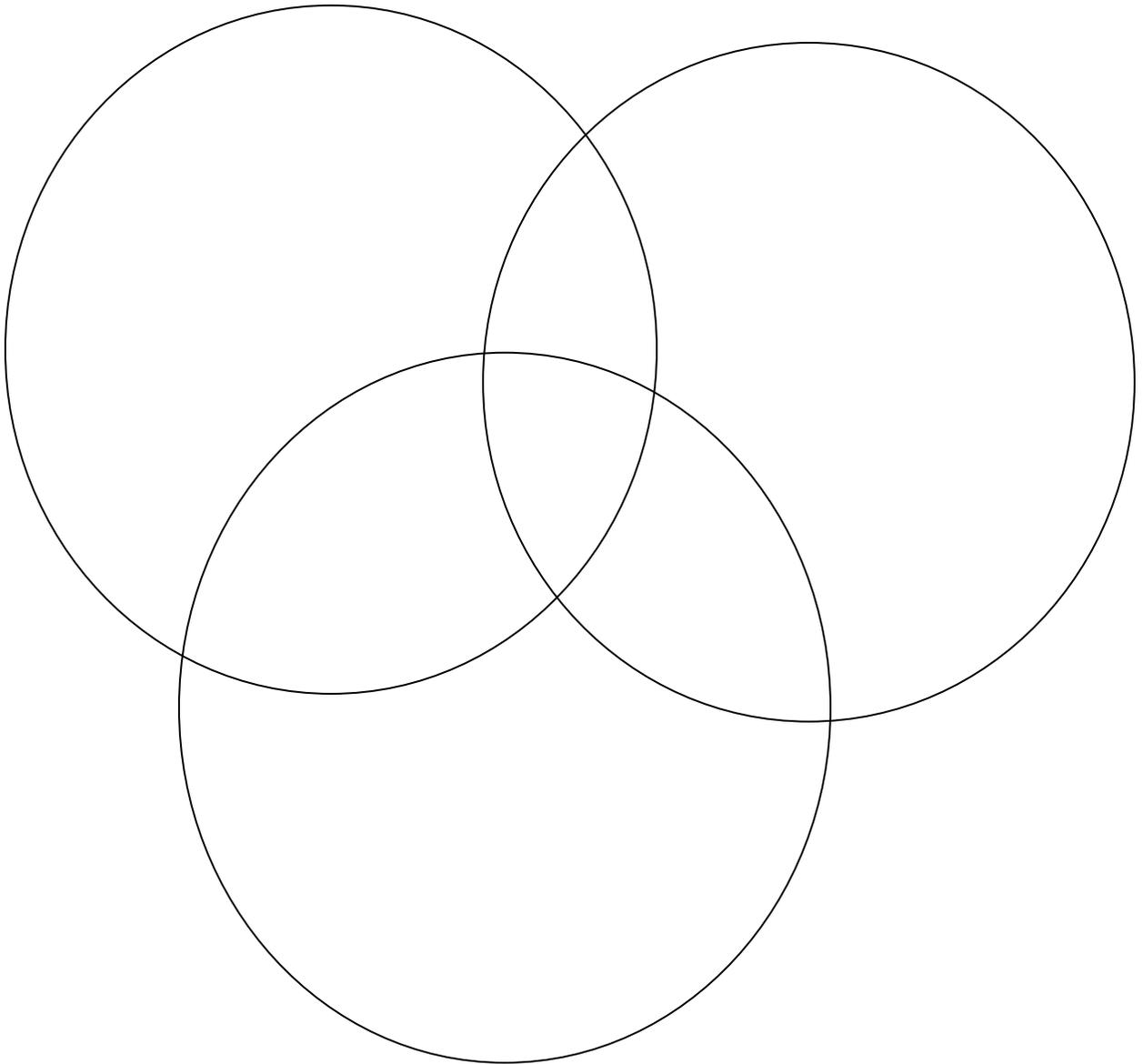
grind	position	fail	tortoise
lazy	story	pleasant	hare
kernel	wicked	patient	hair
harp	gross	pessimistic	require
mumble	odor	miserable	enjoy
bother	appetizing	lump	traitor
rhyme	maiden	favorite	lifestyle
harvest	decree	misunderstood	tale
smash	delicate	important	yarn
clever	irritation	dessert	
healthy	slight	fair	
trick	discomfort	several	

- Arrange these words in alphabetical order.
- Using a dictionary, find definitions.
- Write a story using these words.
- Create (students or teachers) a crossword puzzle.
- Find root/base words within vocabulary words.
- Explore origins and meanings of various base words.
- Explore origins and meanings of affixes.
- Categorize words according to their parts of speech.
- Many words have smaller words within them (not necessarily their root/base words). Find example of these small words in the vocabulary words. Letters need to be consecutive.

## Cast of Characters

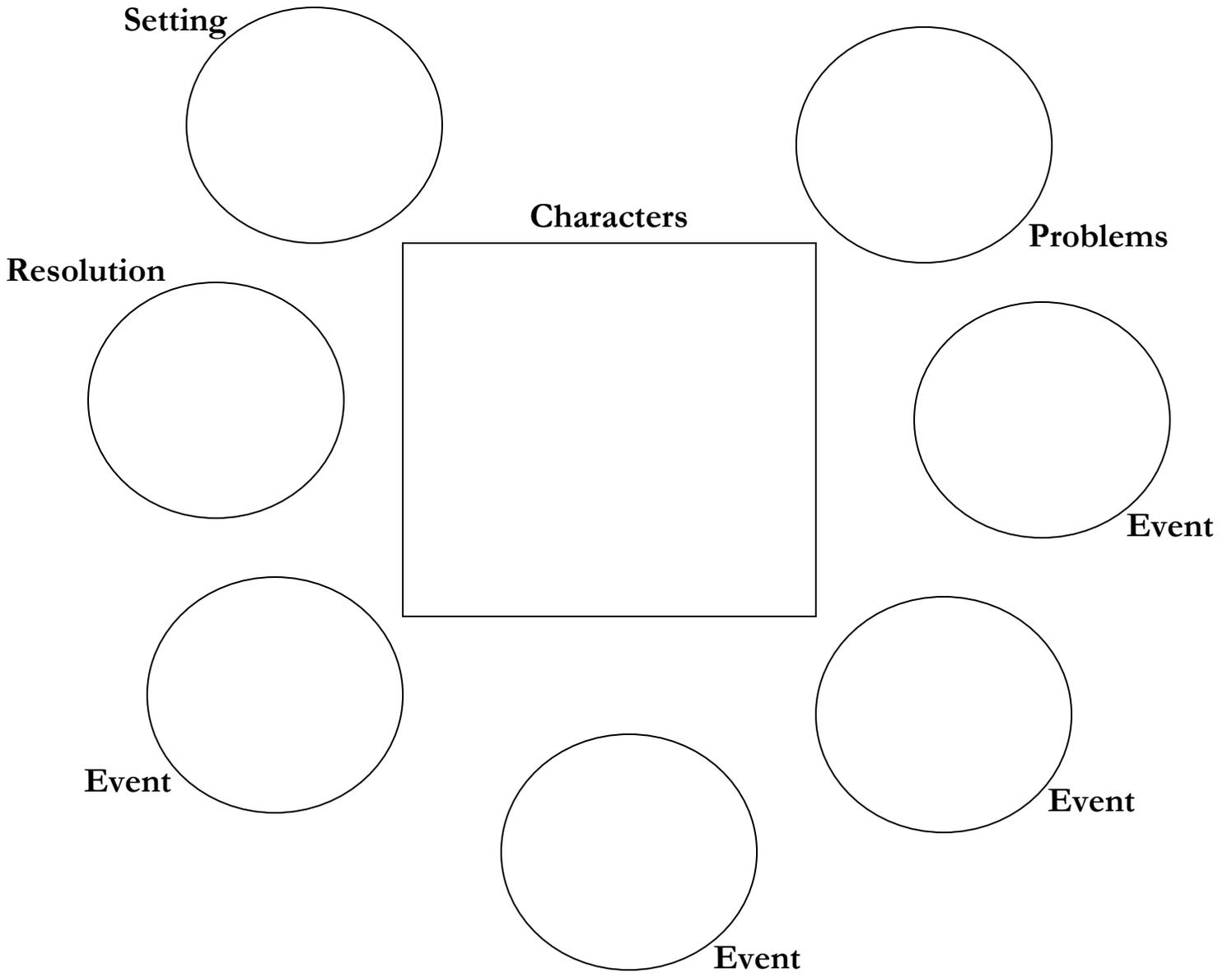
- **Jack**, our main story teller and beanstalk adventurer
- **Giant**, a very hungry and impatient listener
- **Little Red Hen**, a grain-obsessed squawker
- **Cinderumptiltskin**, poor girl beset by an ugly step-family and a strange little man who spins straw into gold
- **Stinky Cheese Man**, a smelly hero who loves to play tag
- **Little Red Running Shorts**, the track star who must race the wolf
- **Frog Princess**, princess duped by a somewhat “cute” frog
- **Pea Princess**, a beautiful young girl who gets an awful night’s sleep.

# VENN DIAGRAM



# STORY MAP

Name of Story \_\_\_\_\_



# AUDIENCE RESPONSIBILITY



*Look*



## A way for your students to make the most of this experience

Live theatre can be magical. Many students have never attended a performance of live theatre. Those who have may only have limited experience. Throughout the past few decades, children have become accustomed to being entertained by television and videos in their own homes. The setting is relaxed and casual; talking and walking around are commonplace. Even in the movie theatres people take liberties with the “Silence is Golden” rule.

Just as there are rules and etiquette within the classroom and school setting, there are standard rules of etiquette in theatre. Children need to learn or be reminded of that. There are also ways in which audience members can enhance their experience with live theatre. Please help us make this performance enjoyable for everyone by reviewing theatre etiquette with your students and by suggesting ways to experience the magic of theatre.

**STOP:** When the lights in the theatre (house lights) begin to dim and go out it means the performance is about to begin. Stop talking. Just as the audience can hear the actors, the actors can hear the audience. Remember that the actors are in the same room with you. Laughing when something is funny, sighing or even crying when something is sad is acceptable; talking with friends, talking out loud to the actors and disturbing people around you is not. Applause is a way of saying “Thank you” to the actors; whistling and catcalling are not.

**LOOK:** Watch the performers. Notice what they are doing and when they are doing it. Look at the imaginative costumes. See the way in which the actors move in and around the scenery. Pay attention to the props (any object that is used, touched, displayed, or carried on stage). Notice the way the lights are used in the production. Make-up may also be used to get attention or suggest something about a character. Watch closely for the actors’ facial expressions; sometimes their faces allow the audience to know what’s happening without saying any words.

**LISTEN:** Pay close attention to what the performers are saying and how they are saying it. Do they all sound the same? How are their voices different from each other? Are the actors using any accents; do they all sound like they are from the same place? Are they making noises other than words? Listen for music and other sounds that are not words. Listen for sound effects such as a phone ringing, street sounds, chimes, or animal sounds. Can you see any microphones on stage? How are the actors making their voices heard throughout the theatre?

**ENJOY!** Attending any performing arts event is a special treat. Because the performance is live, the actors will feed off of the energy you contribute. When you use your concentration and imagination while watching, you are helping the performers on stage to deliver the very best performance.